

## **Sovereign of the Three Realms #Chapter 61: Encountering an Attack - Read Sovereign of the Three Realms Chapter 61: 70 Encountering an Attack**

### Chapter 61: Encountering an Attack

“Jiang Han territory... Jiang Chen?” Madame Jade murmured, chewing over this name. Suddenly, a beam of startlingly bright light shot out of those alluring eyes. “Jiang Han Territory! Jiang Chen!”

Madame Jade slapped her thigh and sighed, “Qi’er, you’ve missed out on quite a bit of fortune that would’ve been the making of you. Could this Jiang Chen be the young duke of the Jiang Han territory?”

“Young duke?” The girls of the Star Argus Palace had all recovered their movement ability by now, and were in no hurry to put their clothes back on since there wasn’t anyone else in the cave.

Upon hearing the words, “young duke”, some of the girls displayed lovesick expressions.

Although they were the disciples of a sect, and even the geniuses of a sect, the Star Argus Palace was after all, just a sect in the Tianhu territory.

The Tianhu territory was ranked in the lower half of the 108 dukes of the kingdom.

Whereas Jiang Han was an upper second rank dukedom, garrisoning the southern border of the kingdom. Its position was high, and its power hefty. When this position was compared to them, the former was in the heavens, and the other was on the ground.

They had all personally seen that person’s methods just now, not mentioning anything else.

Even the Lotus Harvester, who no one on this earth could seem to beat, was as if a child that had just learned how to walk in front of him. One throwing dagger was enough to end the Lotus Harvester, who had rampaged through the Tianhu territory.

“Young duke, really a young duke?” A female disciple on the left rubbed her jade shoulders as her tone turned exceedingly lovesick. “Dammit, why didn’t he look at me a few more times? Honored master, would you say this young duke has heavy tastes? He seems to like looking at you, you old woman?”

Madame Jade’s face darkened, “Am I old?”

“Hehe, a bit older than us at least.” These disciples were obviously very spoiled as they showed no respect for their elder Madame Jade.

As for Wen Ziqi, she had been silent all along and didn’t display any particular lovesick appearance. Her easily embarrassed fair face seemed to be deep in thought.

Madame Jade cast a glance at Wen Ziqi and sighed, “Qi’er, a joke is a joke, you must be more carefree. Don’t sink into it. Some people are destined to be an existence that you and I cannot clamber up to.”

Wen Ziqi’s face flushed red again, “Honored master, what are you talking about! He and us met by chance, like patches of drifting duckweed. He came chasing the Lotus Harvester under orders, and only happened to also simultaneously save us. Your disciple only feels gratitude for him saving our lives, nothing else.

“Is that so?” Madame Jade sighed lightly. “You, the infatuated one, have always had a personality that would sink into infatuation since you were small. As your master, I am afraid that once something takes root in your heart, you will be unable to extricate yourself from it for the rest of your life.”

Wen Ziqi didn’t say another word, but in her mind, a lingering feeling hovered around the image of a dashing and handsome figure.

“Looks like this young duke Jiang is participating in the Hidden Dragon Trials, and has come here to execute one of the missions of the Trials.” Madame Jade was the master of a sect after all, and still had this bit of knowledge.

“Hidden Dragon Trials? What’s that?”

“That is held to determine if all the great dukes in the kingdom can retain their dukedoms. The youths who can participate in the Hidden Dragon Trials are all the cream of the crop. Take Qi’er, who, at six meridians true qi is a genius that

appears only once in a hundred years for our sect - it's said that she would be at the bottom of the ladder in the Hidden Dragon Trials."

Madame Jade was also full of awe - as if she beheld a high mountain - when she spoke of the Hidden Dragon Trials.

The lovestruck disciple asked, "Honored master, what level is this young duke Jiang?"

"Your master cannot see clearly either. But someone who can kill the Lotus Harvester should be equal in influence and power... so his training must be at least eight or nine meridians. Taking it one step further, he may even be a true qi master!"

"What? True qi master?" The lovesick disciple was utterly dumbfounded, saying gloomily, "Honored master, I wish the young duke Jiang was a frivolous type. That way, I, Ouyang Fei's, first time, could at least be given to a future true qi master."

"Hehe, Fei'er, continue to be lovesick. Even if the young duke Jiang wished to grace someone with his presence, he would grace the honored master or junior sister Ziqi. You were completely naked just now and he didn't even look twice at you."

"Huh! Qiao'er you're just jealous. Although I didn't give my first time to the young duke Jiang, but I, Ouyang Fei can say proudly that the first man to see me naked was an exalted young duke Jiang, a future true qi master. But you? Your clothes were still on your body just now, weren't they? Do you feel regret? Dejected? Hahaha...."

This Ouyang Fei was indeed a lovesick girl of the first class to actually use this matter to compare, as if having Jiang Chen look at your body was the greatest honor.

Madame Jade could only shake her head and smile wryly. She was the one who knew her own disciples the best.

Except, when the disciple named Qiao'er said that Jiang Chen would grace her, Madame Jade first, her ears grow hot without any cause and it felt as if countless numbers of small insects were crawling all over her body, creating a numbing and ticklish sensation. Several sensitive areas on her body also

agitated with hot currents as they all turned as moist as a bog in the span of a moment.

A baffling hint of desire flashed through Madame Jade's eyes as she thought of those scenes, and she even had the feeling of extreme expectation.

Some terribly embarrassing scenes flashed through her mind, like those of Jiang Chen being as depraved as the Lotus Harvester and taking advantage of their perilous state to take both her and her disciples.

If she hadn't known of Jiang Chen's identity, Madame Jade would have surely felt humiliated.

But now that she knew Jiang Chen's identity, the mindset of worshipping and admiring the strong made her feel that even if she were to service this young genius along with her disciples, it didn't seem to be an entirely outrageous and unacceptable thing.

When she thought of the moments of passion, her whole body shook lightly as if it had been electrocuted. Madame Jade shook her head forcefully and threw those ridiculous thoughts to the back of her mind.

"Jiang Han territory... Jiang Chen..." Wen Ziqi, on the other hand, was beyond innocent. She repeated this name in her mind many times.

She knew that her honored master had been right about her.

Some seeds were planted unknowingly, and could no longer be cast off once it'd taken root and germinated.

But, why extricate herself from it? Wasn't this a type of happiness, to be able to sink into it? Strands of sweet emotions floated up in Wen Ziqi's heart.

There was a dream of a young boyish hero in every young girl's heart. Particularly when she met danger. This young boyish hero would appear in the nick of time, and make vigorous efforts to turn back the tide.

Wen Ziqi also had the same young girl's dream.

Therefore, Jiang Chen's dashing back profile when he left, was destined to become a brand in Wen Ziqi's heart that would forever be difficult to obliterate.

After completing the first mission, Jiang Chen pushed on his return to the capital without stopping.

Jiang Chen did not relax his guard as he galloped at full speed. The closer he drew to the capital, the more wary he became. He knew that he could employ some methods to shake off his pursuers when he left the capital.

But this was the only portion that must be passed upon returning to the capital, and couldn't be avoided.

"It's most likely that an opponent will lay an ambush for me here, if he wishes to scheme against me."

This was a mountain pass with a dark mass of trees and shrubbery on the sides, an exceedingly easy place to set up an ambush.

Jiang Chen highly deployed his Ear of the Zephyr as he galloped on the horse, partnering it with the mental strength of "Boulder's Heart". Although he was galloping swiftly on the back of a horse, he could fully take in all the potential dangers around him within a thousand meters.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen's arms pressed down lightly on the saddle as he flipped himself like a hawk, his body suddenly shooting towards the sky from the saddle.

Under habitual urging, the steed actually didn't stop and continued rushing forward.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

More than ten sharp arrows shot out from the sides of the mountain pass, and they all landed on the steed, covering almost all possible angles.

The horse gave one long scream and fell down with a thud, meeting a violent death then and there.

The long whip in Jiang Chen's hand shuddered as this specially made long whip was suddenly flung out. It was about ten feet long and coiled like a dragon.

The whip oscillated and gave rise to layers of true qi ripples, rippling out with Jiang Chen as the center. The oscillating true qi expanded through the long whip and caused strings of sonic booms to sound in thin air.

“What scoundrels are there, show yourself!”

Jiang Chen stood in the middle of the path with the long whip in his hand, with his aura growing steadily by itself.

With him as the center, the true qi given rise by the long whip had actually formed currents in a true qi vortex, protecting himself.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh...

Five black clad killers leapt out from the sides of the road.

“He’s the one, kill him!”

The five black clad killer were obviously well trained, as they didn’t waste time talking with Jiang Chen. They didn’t waste a single word as they locked onto their target, and rushed towards him without a care for their lives.

Jiang Chen’s long whip danced again as it gave rise to circles of true qi, blocking these five people and keeping them outside the circle.

“Don’t be afraid everyone! At most we’ll be hit once, the long whip can’t kill all of us!”

These people were indeed exceedingly fierce and brave. They actually ignored the damage brought upon by the long whip, and, whilst wielding the weapons in their hand and protecting their vitals, pounced on Jiang Chen with extreme speed.

Bang, bang!

The long whip simultaneously hit two black clad killers.

The two were exceedingly fierce and brave, and they actually entwined the long whip around their arms after being hit and thoroughly hampered the whip’s movement.

“Brothers, go, chop him to death with random blows!”

The two hit by the long whip were spewing out blood, but still grimaced in a smile as they waved their companions forward. They absolutely had the posture of pitting their lives against Jiang Chen's.

"A bunch of crazies!"

Jiang Chen apparently hadn't anticipated just how foolhardy the others would be.

However, Jiang Chen had actually already made his preparations before the five had started their attacks. He completely ignored the three's attacks.

His body moved like lightning to evade the attacks from the three, the nameless saber in his hand never made it out of its scabbard, instead materializing its cutting edge out of true qi, flashing past the necks of the two injured killers.

First form of the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" - Wave Slash!

Pfft, pfft!

Two excellent heads were harvested and repeated by Jiang Chen.

In the switch off between positions, Jiang Chen had executed two, and the remaining three had ended up behind Jiang Chen.

"Being able to activate the blade's edge without drawing it from the scabbard, this kid is also of the advanced realm of true qi?" The other three killers were all startled.

"Kid, you killed my companions, you must die today!"

"Kill him!"

The three killers had already deployed vanishing body forms as they formed a 品 formation, attacking towards Jiang Chen.

"Huh."

Jiang Chen laughed coldly as his body wavered, bounding ahead to the front. He darted on without looking back.

"Kid, where are you going?"

Jiang Chen's body abruptly halted as he smiled faintly, "Do I need to tell someone who's about to die where I'm going?"

"Someone who's about to die? Kid, do you think with just you?"

"Oh no, I can't bring up my true qi."

"Poison? The kid had already laid down poison with the first true qi activation of the long whip?"

"Tell me, are you working to the death for the duke of Soaring Dragon?!" Jiang Chen said coldly. "If you answer straightforwardly, then I will also deal with you straightforwardly. Otherwise, you can wait to see each part of your body rot away and turn putrid, dying in slow agony when the poison activates."

## Chapter 62: Sharply Counterattacking the Long Family

These three men were all trained warriors who were willing to die for their mission from the Soaring Dragon manor. They were, ordinarily, wholly unafraid of dying - but there was a sense of terror in Jiang Chen's smile that made them shiver all over, yet not from cold.

"Jiang Chen, why ask if you know everything? Deal with us straightforwardly!"

"Kill us!"

"You want to die? It's not that easy. Tell me, how many are there in your operation this time, and who's in charge?" Jiang Chen had no doubt that all of this had something to do with the duke of Soaring Dragon.

Except, what was most important was how many people the duke of Soaring Dragon had sent out.

"You won't be able to escape anyways, so what's the harm in telling you? The person leading the operation to kill you this time is a true qi master. Jiang Chen, although you got rid of us, you're destined to die!"

"True qi master?" Jiang Chen hadn't thought that he would occupy such weight in the duke of Soaring Dragon's heart for him to send a true qi master!

But, the more the duke of Soaring Dragon was thus, the more it incited Jiang Chen's pride.



“So what if he’s a true qi master?”

As strong as a true qi master was, it wasn’t as if he, Jiang Chen, was completely without advantage. The “God’s Eye” and the other two abilities he had, gave him many advantages that true qi masters did not boast of.

Not to mention many of the numerous preparations he had made before hadn’t even been employed yet.

When these preparations and personal advantages were combined, Jiang Chen was confident that he could also contend with a true qi master. If he employed them well, it wasn’t impossible for him to kill a true qi master!

After coaxing out the information, Jiang Chen naturally didn’t leave the three of them alive. After executing them one by one, he selected a death warrior that was built vaguely like him.

Jiang Chen began disguising himself at the scene. His powers of disguise were not empty bluster.

Very quickly, Jiang Chen had made himself mostly like this person with a shake of his body. He then conveniently took possession of the person’s black colored clothing and facial mask.

After completing his great transformation, an idea grew in Jiang Chen’s heart. He disposed of the four corpses and cleaned up the area, continuing on his way.

“This can’t be the only ambush, but I don’t know if the true qi master will be waiting for me up front... I must catch him unawares, if I’m to take on a true qi master.”

However, if it was his purposeful intent against someone else’s unformed planning, and he was able to catch the other by surprise, then he would have a sixty to seventy percent surety of this working.

After all, the technique “Moonshatter Flying Daggers”, accompanied by the nine unpredictable Layered Feather Throwing Daggers, was most adept at catching an opponent by surprise, and in obtaining the upper hand by catching someone unawares.

After walking roughly fifteen to twenty five kilometers, he had drawn even closer to the capital.

The official road would start after this bit of mountain pass, and if the others wanted to start something, they would have to think twice before engaging him on the official road.

Therefore, this last obstacle would be sure to appear before he circled around this mountain ridge.

Indeed, as he closed within one thousand meters of the mountain ridge, Jiang Chen's "Boulder's Heart" detected a hint of an opposing sensation.

This kind of pressure was concealed quite well, almost to the point of being undetectable.

If Jiang Chen hadn't trained in "Boulder's Heart", he would've never discovered this with purely the instinct of a martial dao practitioner alone. Even a true qi master would have been hard pressed to notice, not to mention his mere seven meridians true qi.

However, the ability of "Boulder's Heart" trained one's mental strength, making Jiang Chen's instinct abnormally sensitive and much stronger than many true qi masters.

"Forget it, if it's a face to face conflict, I'm out in the open whereas the other is concealed. There's no chance of winning. I can only take a risk and make a gamble. I only hope that the other has sent just one true qi master. If there are two true qi masters, then I can only make my getaway and escape to the depths of the mountain."

Jiang Chen had settled on a plan, and didn't drag his feet, sprinting towards the front.

When he'd reached about three hundred meters from the ambush site, a few figures shot out with whooshing sounds from the shadows, halting him in his path.

"Old Ge, number five, why are you alone?"

The person speaking had a tone that cut like the edge of a blade. His eyes seemed to be that of a keen edge which could penetrate metal and stone as it raked over Jiang Chen's body.

"My Lord, I have intelligence of that Jiang Chen."

"What intelligence?" The leader was the duke of Soaring Dragon's confidante, Long San, and the main organizer of the operation to kill Jiang Chen.

"We've discovered something along the way." Jiang Chen respectfully handed over with both hands a package he'd long since prepared.

The leader was obviously quite circumspect as he unwrapped the package with a flick of his longsword.

At this moment, Jiang Chen's body suddenly moved and his hand tremored, a current of true qi flinging the package directly at the leader.

At the same time, his left hand moved with a powerful, continuous motion.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

The Layered Feather Throwing Daggers transformed into five beams of cold light and shot towards the five on the side.

With the properties of the Layered Feather Throwing Daggers and the mysteries of "Moonshatter Flying Daggers", attacking at such a close distance added wings to the tiger that was the throwing daggers.

Apart from one person who was slightly further away and flinched instinctively when he saw the flash of cold light, the other four didn't have any reaction at all.

When they felt a cold draft on their necks, their throats had already been pierced.

The one who evaded this calamity hadn't dodged all of it. The Layered Feather Throwing Dagger shot into his left shoulder.

Of course, Jiang Chen had merely incidentally attacked these five.

His main target was still locked on the leader's body. The second the package had shook itself open, he had used true qi to agitate the streams of smoke inside to spread out in the span of a moment.

The leader Long San had witnessed many large happenings before. When he saw the smoke percolating through the air, he knew something was amiss with this smoke, and hastily covered his nose, slight emotion flickering in his eyes. His body rapidly backed up until he was a hundred steps away.

He then took a look at his five underlings. Four were already down, and one was injured.

"You... You're Jiang Chen!" Long San roared lowly, his eyes like those of a violent beast's shooting out thick killing intent.

"You've guessed correctly." Jiang Chen stared faintly at Long San. "I saw you in the Soaring Dragon manor."

"Huh. So what. Your Jiang family is setting yourself against the duke of Soaring Dragon. That's bringing destruction down upon yourself." Long San didn't conceal his identity in the slightest.

"Bringing destruction down upon myself?" Jiang Chen laughed contemptuously. "Do you think that you, someone who's about to die, has the right to say such things to me?"

"What do you mean?" Long San's gaze grew nervous.

"You must surely think that you evaded the poisonous smoke because you covered your nose."

The edges of Jiang Chen's lips moved slightly as they revealed some hints of mockery. "However, my poison is all pervasive. You covered your nose, but did you cover your ears?"

Even if you could cover your ears, could you cover every single pore?

Unless you were prepared well in advance, and prepared a defense of true qi within your body, defending yourself while the poison invaded and used the true qi to force it out."

Jiang Chen's tone was diffident and remote. Whether it was a true qi master or an ordinary practitioner, anyone who allowed Jiang Chen within ten meters of themselves was equivalent to laying half their life in Jiang Chen's hands.

Long San's pupils contracted rapidly as they shot out the violent, brutal light of a wild beast.

Jiang Chen however, was in no hurry to walk up to him. Rather, he stayed a hundred meters away from Long San, walking in circles.

Out of Long San's five underlings now, four were dead and one was injured. A peculiar poison had invaded Long San's body. Jiang Chen would naturally not attack brashly.

He had all the time in the world to dawdle.

However, Long San didn't have the luxury of wasting time. The more time he wasted, the more the poison would seep through his body.

He continually fished out various antidotes from his self, but they were all useless to a fault.

"Zhang Qi, are you a death warrior under the command of me, Long San, or not? Have you lost your will to fight after your shoulder was hurt?" Long San knew that continuing to waste time like this was not the thing to do.

His only point of reliance now was on this injured underlying. An injured shoulder was not a fatal injury.

That Zhang Qi kept circling not too far and not too close.

When he heard Long San's admonishment, he roared lowly, "Lord San, I will return to pass on this information and bring reinforcements to avenge you!"

When he'd finished, this Zhang Qi actually sprang off the balls of his feet and leapt towards the depths of the trees and shrubbery, making a clean getaway.

Jiang Chen laughed softly, "Why don't you stay."

Two Layered Feather Throwing Daggers, one taking the left and the other taking the right, sealing off Zhang Qi's escape.

Pfft!

Moonshatter Flying Daggers could scatter the sun, moon and the stars.

Although this Zhang Qi was of eight meridians true qi, his will had been seized from him and he was fleeing in abject panic. He was a walking target in Jiang Chen's eyes.

Add to that Jiang Chen's "God's Eye" scanning the surroundings, he could make exceedingly accurate judgements about Zhang Qi's escape path and his next move.

Therefore, there was absolutely no chance of missing the mark this time!

Long San's face was ashen as he muttered, cursing, "Coward, coward. To think that I, Long San, would raise such a coward as a death warrior."

After half a day, some wandering practitioners riding a horse carriage stopped in front of the door to the Soaring Dragon manor.

"Who are you to dare loiter in front of the manor of the duke of Soaring Dragon?" The manor's guards immediately appeared and sought to banish these wandering practitioners.

One of the middle aged practitioners smiled apologetically, "Don't be mad sir, don't be mad. We haven't come to act wildly on this trip. We're purely helping a fellow deliver someone here, fulfilling the spirit of helping each other while in the outside world."

"Deliver someone? Deliver who?" The manor guard's tone was quite unfriendly.

"The man who entrusts us to deliver this man said this man's name is Long San. He said this is a strong practitioner in your Soaring Dragon manor, and that he was poisoned in the course of executing a mission outside. This is most urgent for us to bring him back. He said to ask the strongest poison master within the manor to take a look. We are also trying our best to do what someone else asked us to do."

"Lord San?" The manor guard was dumbfounded when he heard Long San's vaulted name. "Where is he?"

"In the carriage, please take a look sir guard, and see if he's someone in your manor. If not, then we were the ones played for a fool."

The manor guard jerked at the curtain on the carriage and took a look inside. His expression changed drastically upon seeing the person inside as he hollered, "All of you, wait here. I'll go in and make a report!"

A group of those notable people with power in the Soaring Dragon manor soon surged out. Although Long San was merely a hired thug for the duke of Soaring Dragon, he was one of the strongest five people within the duke of Soaring Dragon's manor.

Although he was just a leader of the guards, he had committed many covert actions for the duke of Soaring Dragon, and thus the duke of Soaring Dragon relied heavily on him.

And now, this Long San had been poisoned and sent back by some wandering practitioners, his status unknown. How could this not bewilder and shock the entire Soaring Dragon dukedom?

Long San was a true qi master! The number of people who could harm him in the Eastern Kingdom could basically be counted on one hand!

Chapter 63: An eye for an eye

Within the manor, even the Duke of Soaring Dragon himself was startled and bothered.

The spiritual alchemists in the manor all came forward one by one, including the senior executives of Pill King Garden who had newly given themselves up, to go upstairs and discern Long San's condition.

As for the one whom the Duke of Soaring Dragon relied most heavily on, Courtmaster Wang was also similarly at a loss of what to do.

"Your Lordship, this is not simple. The poison has seeped in through the pores and can be labelled as a tyrant amongst poisons. it's my view... eh, what's this?"

Courtmaster Wang was thinking of ways to excuse his incompetence when he suddenly discovered that there was a small strip of cloth inside the front of Long San's garment.

There were even four words on it - fight poison with poison.

Script as tiny as the heads of flies could also be seen on the back of the cloth - Let the strongest poison master in the manor try this poison.

The Duke of Soaring Dragon was about to reach towards the strip of cloth when Courtmaster Wang hastily stopped him, "Your Lordship, don't touch it. I'm afraid that there's poison."

The entire manor was akin to birds being startled by the merest twang of a bow string. Upon hearing Courtmaster Wang's words, the Duke of Soaring Dragon also retracted his hand, and stared at the cloth with a scary expression.

"Your Lordship, you sent this Long San to kill Jiang Chen, and this piece of cloth seemed to insinuate at something. Can it be that this Long San has fallen into Jiang Chen's hands?" Courtmaster Wang felt quite a measure of dread when it came to Jiang Chen.

"Impossible! How old is that Jiang Chen? In terms of training, at the very most, he can only be at the advanced realm of true qi. How could he have injured Long San to this degree?" Long Zhaofeng shook his head.

"However, it says 'fight poison with poison here. This plainly means that he won't suffer losses for more than one night. This is must be revenge for the poison that Jiang Feng fell victim to, no?"

Long Zhaofeng still shook his head. "I thoroughly investigated the inner secrets of the Jiang family. Whether it's Jiang Feng or Jiang Chen, both of them don't have such strength. Long San is a true qi master, and not an ordinary one at that. I suspect that someone is secretly helping the Jiang family. Furthermore, it's very possible that it's someone from the Eastern family clan."

The Jiang family and Eastern royal family clan were walking very closely together now. It was not an impossible thing to say that the royal family had sent strong practitioners to secretly aid him.

It wouldn't conform with logic at all if it was Jiang Chen himself who had the ability to harm Long San.

"Old Wang, you've blathered on for so long. Do you have the ability to cure Long San of his poison or not?" The Duke of Soaring Dragon truly did value Long San highly.



“Your subordinate is merely adept at spirit medicines and truly doesn’t have much right to speak when it comes to using poisons. We can now only wait for Master Violet to emerge from training to even have a ray of hope.”

Courtmaster Wang knew more than anyone as he spoke that there was no way Long San would survive long enough for Master Violet to emerge from training.

Not to mention, the poison was already close to attacking the heart. Even if Master Violet lent a hand, Long San may not even be saved. Besides, although Master Violet was quite adept in using poisons, he may still not be able to penetrate the mysteries of this poison in a short time and resolve it in a timely manner.

The lamp of Long San was obviously expiring as it had run out of oil.

“Jiang family!” A frightening light sparkled in Long Zhaofeng’s eyes.

“Your Lordship, what should we do about those wandering practitioners who sent Lord San back?” A core guard captain of the manor asked.

“I don’t want to hear wild rumors outside.” Long Zhaofeng said faintly.

“Understood.” The guard captain nodded, comprehending Long Zhaofeng’s meaning. The duke apparently didn’t wish for details of Long San’s matter to be spread widely.

What kind of men could keep secrets the best? Dead men, of course.

After returning to the capital, Jiang Chen dressed up a bit and returned to the Jiang Han manor. This back and forth trip had taken precisely half a month.

The first mission had been completed to perfection.

However, Jiang Chen was in no rush to report the completion of his task. Rather, he first explained to his father, Jiang Feng, the matter regarding Long San.

“Long San?” Jiang Feng’s eyes shot out looks beyond belief after listening. “Chen’er, you’re saying that you used poison to cripple Long San?”

“To be more accurate, he should be dead.” Jiang Chen was an alchemy master of all planes beneath the heavens in his past life - an unorthodox branch such as employing poison was a piece of cake.

He naturally had calculated precisely when he had sent Long San back.

He would absolutely not allow the possibility that the others would be able to save him!

Jiang Chen wasn't a particularly grudge carrying person, but he also wasn't someone at the mercy of others. Today, Long San was merely the first step in his counterattack for what the Soaring Dragon dukedom had done to his father last time. This could at most only be counted as interest. He would be sure to present even more of the principal in the future!

He had purposefully put the words onto the small strip of cloth in order to take a jab at the Soaring Dragon dukedom.

As for those wandering practitioners, Jiang Chen would naturally not send innocent people to their deaths. Those fellows had all fooled around together on the outskirts of the capital. They appeared to be wandering practitioners on the surface, but had in actuality raided homes and plundered houses covertly, committing acts of murder for personal gains.

To put it frankly, they were a bunch of robbers and bandits.

Jiang Chen had sent them to the Soaring Dragon manor because he was betting that the Soaring Dragon manor would kill anyone who might become an eyewitness against them.

“Chen'er, Long Zhaofeng is a fierce and ambitious person who will seek revenge for the smallest of grievances. Long San is one of his confidantes that he relies most heavily on. Long San's strength can also absolutely be ranked in the top five of the Soaring Dragon dukedom. If this man dies, then the duke of Soaring Dragon will inevitably visit an even more ferocious vengeance upon you.”

Jiang Feng's tone was prudent. He already wasn't using conventional vision to measure up this son.

“Mm. One cannot be without a cautious heart.” Jiang Chen nodded. “However, we cannot halt in hesitation merely because they wish to take revenge, right? I

will train for a few days first and fight to breakthrough eight meridians true qi this time, thereby taking another step forward towards increasing my strength!”

In the training of martial dao, one would sometimes face bottlenecks if he relied solely on training behind closed doors.

Traveling in the outside world and toughening up from experience would often lead to new inspiration and understanding, priming the pivotal turning point for a breakthrough.

This time’s travels in the outside world for executing the mission had also resulted in a greater step of improvement for Jiang Chen, both in terms of mentality and experience. The knowledge and experiences that he had encountered during his travels had all been distilled down to their essence for him to absorb, providing great benefits, becoming the catalyst for his martial dao breakthrough.

Jiang Chen successfully broke through three days later.

After breaking through, Jiang Chen had the capabilities of eight meridians true qi. He could clearly feel that his strength had risen yet another level again.

After entering the advanced realm of true qi, the difference between increasing each meridian true qi and improving each personal level would become more and more apparent. One would be able to feel the distance increasing with each additional step taken upwards.

Along with Jiang Chen breaking through to eight meridians true qi, he also indistinctly comprehended many of the mysteries of the techniques that he was training in by drawing parallels from inference.

Of course, Jiang Chen had still only trained up to the second form of “Vast Ocean Current Splitter”. It would take some time of contemplation and a critical turning point for him to train to the third form.

As for “Divine Aeons Fist”, Jiang Chen had still halted on the third level of reincarnation, in the third cycle of blooming and wilting. But he had a better comprehension of the true meaning of this boxing technique.

If these comprehensions and advancements were used in actual battle, they would greatly enhance his personal battle capabilities.

That day when Jiang Chen was on the path of returning to the capital and met the first wave of ambushes, Jiang Chen hadn't even unsheathed his nameless saber when he'd chopped off the other's head.

This was the true meaning of the martial dao contained within, and also the astounding mysteries of, the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter".

And now that he possessed eight meridians true qi, Jiang Chen was confident that even if he confronted Long San face to face now, he would absolutely not be afraid of the other.

Whether it was "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" or employing "Divine Aeons Fist", either would be enough to directly contend with Long San, someone at the true qi master level of training.

The benefits brought to Jiang Chen from breaking through to eight meridians were quite apparent.

"God's Eye" and "Ear of the Zephyr" both smoothly broke through to the fourth level. As the "Boulder's Heart" that had previously progressed at a slow level, also showed signs of loosening up in the second level, allowing for a greater likelihood of advancing to the third level.

Jiang Chen would absolutely not become lax about these three abilities. Not only were these three abilities highly useful in actual combat, but they were also prerequisites for the training of "Moonshatter Flying Daggers".

Jiang Chen had basically fully grasped the initial steps of "Moonshatter Flying Daggers" by now.

However, the strength of "Moonshatter Flying Daggers" lay in the mysteries of those unpredictable and constantly changing moves, and Jiang Chen had currently only practiced some foundational movements.

As of now, he didn't even possess the qualifications to begin practicing and comprehending the profound meaning of those truly strong moves.

In order to practice the first move of "Moonshatter Flying Daggers", he would have to train "God's Eye" and "Ear of the Zephyr" to the seventh level.

"Boulder's Heart" would also have to be at least the fourth level.

The most profound ability “Psychic’s Head” would have to be trained to the second level.

The current Jiang Chen was still a long shot away with his four abilities. Particularly the “Psychic’s Head”, he hadn’t even started that yet.

When he reviewed his personal strength, Jiang Chen felt a sense of urgency.

“It looks like in order to receive the qualification to train in the mysteries of the moves of ‘Moonshatter Flying Daggers’, I must first practice these four accompanying abilities to a satisfactory level.”

Although Jiang Chen felt a certain urgent need, he would also not do something utterly beyond him, like forcing a duck onto a perch.

On the road of martial dao training, going about things steadily and surely was the only proper way forward.

The next day, Jiang Chen went to the testing site for the Hidden Dragon Trials to turn in his first mission.

“Jiang Chen, mission of the first rank, to kill the rapist Lotus Harvester in the Tianhu territory.” An organizer for the Hidden Dragon Trials started to verify his mission.

“According to verification, this head is indeed that of the violent and wicked Lotus Harvester. This short sword and these personal effects are all authentication tokens that are up to standard.”

The organizer nodded and proclaimed, “Jiang Chen, first mission of the first rank, complete!”

Following this organizer’s proclamation, Jiang Chen’s first mission was thus completed.

“Jiang Chen, according to the rules, you still need to complete two more missions of the first rank to be able to enter the first rank. The remaining two missions are both fixed.”

These were old rules and Jiang Chen didn’t have too much to stress about. He conveniently picked up the scroll for the second mission and prepared to leave.

“Jiang Chen, a moment.”

Jiang Chen didn't even need to turn his head to know that Princess Gouyu had arrived.

In actuality, his “Ear of the Zephyr” had already captured Princess Gouyu's unique breathing when he had first set foot into the Hidden Dragon Trials testing site.

In the entire testing site, this was the only unique breathing that belonged to a true qi master of eleven meridians true qi.

“Your Highness, what instructions do you have?”

“Come with me.” Princess Gouyu acted with a bit more reservation in front of others.

After he'd followed Princess Gouyu into a private secret room, a ray of astounding splendor shot out from her phoenix eyes. “Jiang Chen, I've heard that something's happened to Long San?”

“Is that so? What does that have to do with me? Who's Long San?” Jiang Chen riposted with three questions in a row and had a face of complete disinterest.

“Ai!” Princess Gouyu was a bit disappointed. She had really wanted Jiang Chen to thump his chest and admit to this matter.

## Chapter 64: The Second Mission

Upon seeing that Jiang Chen was noncommittal, Princess Gouyu didn't overly compel him. She also knew that he could be persuaded by reason, but not cowed by force.

She herself had suffered many losses in front of him before, in this regard.

“Jiang Chen, the amount of time you've taken to complete the mission of the first rank counts amongst the faster candidates, you've spent only twenty or so days. Up until now, only the two candidates from the Soaring Dragon dukedom have completed their first mission, and that was just two days ago.”

This was to say, Jiang Chen was the third to hand in his first mission amongst the group vying for first rank.

“Heh heh, initial success doesn’t mean one will succeed in the future, only one who succeeds in the end has the true ability. It doesn’t mean much to allow them to be first. If there’s nothing else, I’ll be leaving now.”

Jiang Chen was indifferent to the question of who came first. If he hadn’t shut his doors for training at home for a few days and broken through to eight meridians true qi, stabilizing his martial dao foundations, he could have actually reported in three days ago. These rankings of who was early or late actually had no significant impact on the greater picture.

In the end, the final rankings were determined by the martial arts demonstration.

Gouyu didn’t say much upon seeing Jiang Chen’s indifferent attitude. She knew very well that beneath that seemingly completely unconcerned exterior, his heart had more magnanimity than anyone else’s.

Gazing at the figure that had already left, Princess Gouyu suddenly obtained courage from some unknown place, “Jiang Chen, our agreement from earlier still stands!”

Jiang Chen’s body halted briefly as he laughed involuntarily, thinking, “This lass is stubborn alright! If Zhiruo, that little girl, knew that her idiotic aunt had already promised her to Jiang Chen without obtaining her approval, I wonder if the girl would be at a loss of whether to laugh or cry?”

The second mission was more complicated in comparison to the first mission, but it looked to be a bit more interesting.

Mission of the first rank: Recruit eight personal guards.

Mission requirements: Each personal guard had to be at six meridians true qi or higher, with the potential to continue ascending.

Age requirements: No lower boundary, but may not exceed twenty years old.

Identity requirements: Member of the personal guard must be a practitioner from the Eastern Kingdom, with no other nationality.

Mission criteria: An inspection will be conducted when the mission is over and personal guards must pass the final martial arts exam.

Jiang Chen found this mission rather innovative.

At least this wasn't a mission that could be completed through brute force and acting rashly. Due to the peculiarities of this mission, candidates weren't barred from revealing their identity.

This was to say, candidates were strictly barred from revealing their identity, mobilizing family and personal connections in other missions.

However, this mission was quite unique in that it was a mission open the public. One had to reveal their identity and use their network and connections. Otherwise, with the pride and motives of a practitioner, who would be willing to be a personal follower of an unknown somebody?

"Chen'er, this mission isn't a simple one. Of course, if you want to assail the position of a first rank duke, you must have this kind of personal guard."

Every duke needed to have a batch of death warriors who were willing to offer their lives up for him.

And this lot of death warriors was basically the equivalent of the core layer of power beside the duke in future days. The duke's power would continuously expand from this core.

As for the age requirement of not exceeding twenty years, that was only par for the course. Any person with six meridians true qi over twenty years old wouldn't have much potential.

And as for the identity requirement, that was even easier to understand. Identity verification was nothing but to guarantee that spies from another country wouldn't permeate the people who were by the side of the dukes.

This mission wasn't as simple as merely recruiting eight personal guards.

At the conclusion of the mission, these eight personal guards would have to go through a strength examination, and specific tests at that. If they didn't pass these tests, this mission would count as a fail.

'Chen'er, our Jiang family has managed the Jiang Han dukedom for hundreds of years, we have quite a bit of local prestige. I have strong relationships with some local powers, and they support and endorse me a great deal. Although your mother passed away early, there are also some fine young disciples on



her mother's side. Make a trip back to the Jiang Han territory and I can help you fill four or five places.”

It was as Jiang Feng said, his mastery over the Jiang Han territory was quite well. In the few hundred years of the Jiang family ruling over the Jiang Han territory, they had long since forged the local territory into a solid sheet of iron support.

Jiang Feng had great prestige in ordinary times to begin with - no matter which local power engaged in a conflict, they were sure to ask the Duke of Jiang Han to make a ruling.

Jiang Feng conducted himself in an upright manner and was honorable and impartial. His judgements oftentimes compelled not just mere obedience, but submission with good grace.

Therefore, although Jiang Feng was greatly suppressed by the Duke of Soaring Dragon in the capital, he was a greatly beloved leading personage in the Jiang Han territory with high prestige.

If the next Duke of Jiang Han was recruiting for his personal guard, there would undoubtedly be innumerable volunteers answering the call. After all, coming under the Duke of Jiang Han's banner meant forming a relationship with an absolute power, and was the equivalent of taking a step into layer of the core power in the Eastern Kingdom. This was a completely separate matter from being an absolute local power.

The exceeding power and influence of a duke of the nation was not something that a local power could imagine.

The time allotted for completing each mission was one month.

Jiang Chen had saved ten days out of his first mission. That meant he had forty days during this second mission. There seemed to be quite the sufficient time, yet that might also not be the case.

“Looks like you and I need to make a trip back to the southern frontier.” Jiang Feng had also left the Jiang Han territory for quite a while, and he felt rather nostalgic about his home.

“Father, the situation in the capital is quite complicated. A slight move in one part may affect the situation as a whole. Why don’t you stay in the capital, your son can make the trip back.”

Jiang Feng was startled briefly, then thought of something immediately after. He smiled, “Chen’er, you wish to go back alone?”

“I will go back alone.” Jiang Chen nodded very firmly.

“Alright, I have always respected your wishes as your father. Then, you shall go back alone, and make use of this opportunity to test your control of the greater picture.” Jiang Feng chuckled.

A true Duke of Jiang Han was very different from being a young duke.

The Duke of Jiang Han was very illustrious in his territory, but that didn’t mean that the young duke would similarly received the same treatment. Particularly as the previous Jiang Chen was a rather useless dandy. His reputation of having neither learning nor art was renowned, not only in the capital, but also quite famously in the Jiang Han territory.

Therefore, for Jiang Chen, there would be a certain degree of inherent difficulty for him to achieve certain deeds and successfully recruit eight personal guards in the Jiang Han territory without his father coming forward on his behalf.

“Chen’er, I’ve decided to hold a private banquet tonight and invite some dukes we have friendly relations with, in the hopes that they will advertise a bit for us and cast a wide net when recruiting talent.”

It would actually be quite difficult to suddenly find eight promising youths with six meridians true qi in a mere Jiang Han territory.

It wouldn’t be difficult to merely find eight youths with martial dao potential.

But to recruit personal followers, strength and potential weren’t the only questions to be asked. One had to also consider temperament, willingness, and competency, amidst a host of other questions.

Putting all of these factors into consideration made for a more difficult search. Asking a few dukes that they were more friendly with to spread the word in their territories would actually be an ideal channel.

Jiang Chen didn't object. After all, the more venues the better now. As for what type of person they recruited and whether or not they were dependable, that would still be up to him.

That night, the Duke of Jiang Han held a banquet and invited seven or eight dukes with whom their friendships were quite solid and firm.

It was a common thing for dukes to visit frequently with each other and to have harmonious dispositions.

Even when they knew that the relationship between the Duke of Soaring Dragon and the Duke of Jiang Han wasn't good, it still hadn't affected the relationship between these dukes and Jiang Feng.

After all, there was a large number of conflicts between the dukes. It wasn't as if the Duke of Soaring Dragon would be able to shut out the heavens with one hand.

Not to mention that the situation regarding the Jiang family was lost in the mist and clouds, and many didn't understand it. The always good-for-naught Jiang Chen had suddenly shot to the skies with one amazing feat, and had continued to commit many astonishing acts.

Many even suspected that the Jiang father and son had long since harbored ambitions, and had concealed their strength in order to not attract attention. They were actually aiming for the position of the four great dukes!

Jiang Chen's selection of a first rank mission this time had corroborated the speculations of many sides.

Therefore, when the Duke of Jiang Han summoned them, even those with a previous lack of relations wouldn't openly deny Jiang Feng face, not to mention those who did have a pre-existing relationship with him before.

When the banquet was over, the news of Jiang Chen recruiting for his personal guard also began to spread.

One had to say, the speed in which news traveled in the capital was a lot faster than Jiang Chen could imagine.

The resulting cascading reaction also came with a swift speed.

Important figures began to call upon Jiang Chen early the next morning.

The first one to arrive was Qiao Baishi.

“Honored master, your disciple has two nephews within his family clan. They’re twin brothers and have always trained within the family, with an occasional bit of guidance from me. With the aid of my spirit medicine, they have also trained to six meridians true qi at the age of seventeen this year. It would be a waste of the prime of their lives if they stayed where they were. Baishi has heard that honored master was recruiting for his personal guard, therefore...”

Jiang Chen understood, Qiao Baishi was recommending candidates to him.

“Twin brothers? This is actually quite nice. It’s rare for you to have such thoughts Baishi. I will leave two spots for your two nephews. Write them a letter and tell them to convene with me at the Jiang Han territory.

Qiao Baishi was overjoyed upon hearing these words. Although he called them nephews from the family clan, Qiao Baishi actually had an ambiguous relationship with their mother. He had committed his share of ridiculous acts when he was young.

Qiao Baishi’s relationship with these two nephews was that of an uncle and his nephews, but in actuality Qiao Baishi viewed them as his sons.

He had the desire to help these two nephews advance in life, but unfortunately these two fellows had not the slightest interest in spirit medicine business. They only wanted to train well and flock to a royal or noble banner in the future, rising head and shoulders above the others.

Jiang Chen’s mind was at ease when it came to the people that Qiao Baishi had recommended. At least there wouldn’t be any problem whatsoever in terms of loyalty.

After Qiao Baishi had left, Princess Gouyu came again. Even she had come to recommend someone to Jiang Chen.

“Jiang Chen, I come to recommend someone with my personal guarantee. He is the eldest grandson of my first martial dao teacher. His family is in an abject financial situation now, but he is an honest, sincere, and tolerant individual.”

Princess Gouyu also came straight to the point.

## Chapter 65: First Candidate for the Personal Guard

The Capital, Qingyang Lane.

The morning's sunshine spilled into a yard, as a youth wearing coarse hemp with sweat pouring down his face trained a set of blade techniques.

The yard was exceedingly roomy, as the red lacquered main door, strong and tall walls, with its spacious layout overall, all spoke of the great fortune and prosperity that had once graced this yard.

Except, much of the red lacquer had been chipped away from the main door under the erosion of time, appearing rather in mottled disorder. The strong and tall walls also showed some tattered gaps, and seemed to be unable to withstand the wind and rain from the outside.

The spacious internal layout appeared empty and deserted as well, with no trace of any decent furniture to be found.

No matter how illustrious and wealthy this house had once been, the owner who lived here now had absolutely come down in the world. This was verified by every detail.

Except, the youth in the yard didn't seem to want to accept this harsh reality. He trained in an exceedingly desperate fashion, with the emotions of his family once again prospering inspiring him. He had practiced this set of blade techniques whenever he heard the rooster's crow, everyday, for no less than eight years.

He had no other choice. He seemed to wish to regain the lost splendor, and find the illustrious eminence of this house through the blade in his hand once again.

The red lacquered doors were banged open.

A crowd of nefarious servants like a pack of tigers and wolves barged in, gathered around a youth around twenty years old.

“Guo Jin, you’re keeping your poise alright. You’re still in the mood to practice? Today is the final deadline. Are you giving up this house and its surrounding yard or not?”

The youth’s smile was sinister and ruthless, and his tone was that of complete confidence in that the practicing youth was at the former’s mercy.

The youth Guo Jin stopped and rested his blade on his shoulders, saying coldly. “You, with the Zhuo surname, this house and its yards have been passed down from my forefather, and his forefathers, and is the honor and glory of my Guo family. We can discuss anything else, but you should forever drop the idea of having me sell my ancestral home!”

“Not willing?” The Zhuo surnamed youth smiled threateningly. “Then let’s tally up our accounts clearly. You came to my financing house last year to borrow ten thousand silver. It’s been one full year by now. Combining both principal and interest, you need to return fifteen thousand silver. Either you immediately pay up, or I’ll immediately make a statement to the local authorities to impound your house.

Don’t blame me for not telling you that the local authorities will swallow you whole, without leaving not much behind. I, Zhou Tan, am willing to pay eighty thousand silver to you right now. If we go to the local authorities, if there’s even ten thousand or eight thousand silver left to you, it’ll be because you were lucky enough that the auspicious sign of green smoke rising from your Guo ancestral graves appeared.”

This ‘Zhou Tan’ was the young boss of the biggest firm for exchanging and transferring money in the capital, and he had methods for both legitimate and shady ways. He had taken a fancy to this house and had no doubts in his mind that he could handle this friendless and helpless youth whose family fortunes had declined, whether through the local authorities or through other methods.

Young man Guo Jin only shook his head, “Zhou Tan, kill me if you want, but I will never betray my ancestors or give up this house.”

“Betray your ancestors?” Zhou Tan laughed a rather meaningful laugh. “You think too much. You’re a youth who simply doesn’t know any better. How could you still have the face to mention your ancestors with your infamous father, that army deserter? If it was me, I would have left the capital long ago and found a remote backwater location to hide in.”

Deserter!

It was as if that word was like lightning, causing the youth Guo Jin's body to slightly convulse all over. His originally somewhat restrained eyes shot out killing intent like that of wild beasts gone mad.

“Zhou Tan, just try saying what you said again!”

The hand clasping the blade's hilt trembled lightly as Guo Jin's eyes filmed over with red, as if ready to leap forward and fight to his death at any second.

His father was a taboo subject that could not be touched in Guo Jin's heart!

“Huh. To speak of this matter or not, this reputation already exists in the capital. Even if you forbid me from saying it, can you stopper all the wagging mouths in the capital?” Zhou Tan obviously didn't take much notice of Guo Jin's ferocity.

However, he was here to scheme and seize the house, and didn't wish to fight until one of them died.

“Bullshit, this is all bullshit! I've said that my father wasn't an army deserter, he isn't a deserter! I'll fight whoever says he's a deserter. Zhou Tan, just try saying that one more time!”

The veins on his neck bulged out as the youth roared, his black face flushing scarlet, apparently angry to the utmost.

Zhou Tan's face darkened, “Guo Jin, I have no interest in your father's affairs. I'm here today to give you a final ultimatum. Either transfer the house to me or I'll go through the local authorities to impound your house! You only have these two choices! Don't think you can fool me by putting up a death defying front. That little bit of fortune and glory your ancestors had is long gone by now. And even if it was still present, so what?”

I, Zhou Tan, am giving your Guo family face in taking a fancy to your house. If it was another one, and you were begging me to accept your house, I might not even be willing to!

Kids, get ready. If that kid Guo is insensible like a block of wood, then throw him and the old one out with random blows from your staves. Don't hold back, feed them to the dogs if they die!”

It was apparent that Zhou Tan was pretty much out of patience.

The crew of nefarious servants were all rubbing their fists and wiping their palms upon hearing their master's order. They started hovering closer with malicious intentions.

Guo Jin gave a great wave of his blade and raged, "Whoever dares come forth dies first!"

Zhou Tan said coldly, "Kid Guo, looks like you refuse to give up until all hope is gone. Rush him, it's on me if you beat him to death."

Papapapa!

At this moment, a round of ear piercing applause suddenly sounded from outside the great door.

That was followed up with someone laughing as their clicked their tongue, "Daring to enter someone's home and kill them in broad daylight. Are we still in the Eastern Kingdom's territory?"

This scene was outside of Zhou Tan's expectations. He hadn't thought that there was anyone who dared to poke their nose in his Zhou family's business in the Qingyang Lane. Was there someone who felt that they had lived too long?

"Who are you? This is a debt dispute between my Zhou financing house and the debtor. What business is it to you?" It was obvious that Zhou Tan was accustomed to running wild in the capital.

"It originally was none of my business, but now I'm making it my business." A youth with a confident, unhurried smile, and clear eyes strode in leisurely with four underlings.

This person was naturally the young duke from the Jiang Han Dukedom, Jiang Chen.

Whoosh!

The band of nefarious Zhou servants immediately formed a circle and surrounded Jiang Chen and his Sheng retinue.



Jiang Chen ignored the gleaming of the blades and shadows of their swords. Instead, he remained calm and composed while handling pressing matters, and flicked a glance at Zhou Tan. "How much does he owe you?"

Zhou Tan laughed coldly. "What does it matter to you? It's not an issue of money now, but that he used this house as collateral and has defaulted on his loan. I'm here to take this house. Sir, no matter your background, I advise you to not meddle in this business. Some businesses, you're unable to meddle in. Some people, you're unable to suffer the consequences of provoking them!"

"Oh?" Jiang Chen smiled. "Judging from your tone, you seem to be quite a character."

"Huh. My Zhou financing house numbers amongst the elites in the entire kingdom. Who are you? Who is your father? Is he an official or in business?"

Jiang Chen completely ignored Zhou Tan's existence and instead turned his head to ask Guo Jin, "Your surname is Guo?"

Guo Jin was also surprised to see someone flagrantly interfere. Seeing that this person seemed to have quite the intention of protecting him, he nodded honestly.

"Your grandfather is Guo Shun, tutor Guo?"

"Yes." Guo Jin's chest puffed out upon hearing his grandfather's name and a trace of pride flowed through his eyes. There were still people of great ability who numbered amongst the Guo ancestors, and they had once enjoyed riches and honor.

"Alright, how much money do you owe the Zhou financing house?" Jiang Chen asked again.

"I'd originally borrowed ten thousand silver to cure my mother's illness. Interest compounded, and now, combining the principal and interest, it amounts to fifteen thousand silver." Guo Jin was also a bit downcast when he spoke of the debt that was as heavy as a mountain.

"Fifteen thousand silver." Jiang Chen nodded and said to Sheng One by his side, "Sheng One, count out fifteen thousand silver to them."

In the time that the four brothers from the Sheng battalion had followed Jiang Chen, they had witnessed all sorts of miracles and amazing feats from Jiang Chen. Their relationship with Jiang Chen now had been built up to that of a deeper superior and subordinate relationship.

No longer the mere original relationship of completing a mission.

Notes for fifteen thousand silvers were counted out, and Sheng One directly handed it to Zhou Tan. "Count them up! The young master of my house is repaying the money for him. Don't come here in the future seeking to make a fuss!"

Sheng One hailed from the army and naturally had a threatening presence.

His step forward caused Zhou Tan's heart to tighten. He stared at Jiang Chen, the thought occurring to him more and more that this youth seeming to have quite a background.

However, Zhou Tan had never been afraid of anyone since he was small.

He didn't accept the notes, but rather smiled queerly. "I seemed to have said quite clearly just now that he's defaulted on a loan. I want the house now, and not silver."

"Default? Do you have evidence?" Jiang Chen didn't erupt in anger.

An underling brought out the certificate of indebtedness with a wave of Zhou Tan's hand. Of course, this certificate was riddled with various traps and had Guo Jin's signature and personal mark.

Jiang Chen twisted his hands smoothly and directly shredded this certificate. "Now, do you have more?"

Zhou Tan had been completely caught off guard by this motion. He hadn't thought that this youth who had an uncommon air about him would suddenly be deliberately dishonest and destroy the evidence!

It had always been him, Zhou Tan, committing dog eat dog acts. To think someone would do the same to him today!

"You... you're courting death!" Zhou Tan's temper flared completely in that moment.

Jiang Chen walked into the yard without turning his head, saying noncommittally, “Sheng One, take the notes and people and throw them out together!”

The four brothers from the Sheng battalion were all of the advanced realm of true qi and strong men who had long trod the battlefields. They naturally captured these villainous servants easily.

A few rises up and down and they’d thrown the master and his servants outside the great door.

Throwing the notes for fifteen thousand silver after them, “My house’s young duke is a man of reason. Take the silver, if you still want to create a ruckus, think over it again.”

Young Guo’s heart was filled with all sorts of emotions as he watched the Sheng battalion brothers beat the Zhou servants into a hideous state of disorder, as if they were wolves or tigers.

On one hand, he was very grateful that this group of people had offered timely assistance, like offering fuel in snowy weather. Their demeanor was uncommon and caused the malicious looking Zhou group to be completely unable to act wildly in front of these people.

On the other hand, he was anxious and fearful as he didn’t know what motives this group of people from an unknown origin had.

As he looked at the figure of Jiang Chen walking in, a strand of unusual emotion rose in his heart. “They’re both young men, but this is true noble bearing. These are the methods of the truly strong! I, Guo Jin, must be like him and become heads and shoulders above others, causing these powerful local despots to take the long way around when they see me!”

Jiang Chen felt that the surroundings were familiar even though it was his first time visiting. As he walked into the inner courtyard of the Guo house, he saw that the tablets honoring the past succession of Guo ancestors were sitting in front of the hall.

Upon seeing this situation, Jiang Chen walked up and lit a stick of incense, piously paying his respects. When he stuck the incense into the incense burner, he happened to see some dust on the burner. Jiang Chen waved his sleeve and swept away at the burner.

Such a simple ceremonial gesture - just a few very ordinary movements - were enough to cause Guo Jin's heart to burn up with boiling heat, as a glut of emotion choked his throat, giving him the feeling of being moved to tears.

## Chapter 66: Return to Jiang Han Territory

No matter the other's purpose in coming, and no matter what intentions the other had, these few motions served to win the greatest amount of goodwill from Guo Jin.

This also caused Guo Jin's lines of defense to slightly crumble a bit.

"Who would've thought that only slightly more than a decade after Guo Shun, tutor Guo, had gone to travel the heavens, the Guo family would wither and fall. It is surely true that the god of destiny makes fools of people, and that heaven's way is unjust."

Jiang Chen sighed lightly.

When Guo Jin heard these words, his shoulders trembled in defeat as uncontrollable tears trickled out of his black eyes.

"Sir..."

"Guo Jin, let's cut to the chase. I'm the young duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Chen."

"Jiang Chen? You're the Jiang Chen that farted during the Rites of Heavenly Worship?" Guo Jin started and immediately scratched his head in awkwardness. "I was wrong, perhaps I should've said the Jiang Chen who swore at the various influential officials and nobles at the Soaring Dragon manor?"

"Haha." Jiang Chen laughed heartily. "Whether good or bad, you've named them all. That's right, I'm that Jiang Chen."

Upon knowing the other's identity, Guo Jin's heart softened as more of his defenses were dispelled. However, he didn't know what to say in the heat of that moment.

When he saw Jiang Chen burn incense to pay his respects to the Guo ancestors, Guo Jin spoke haltingly, "Young duke Jiang, the entire capital and

the kingdom as well says that my father is a deserter. Why... why do you pay your respects to him?"

"A wise man does not believe in rumors. Either ulterior motives are hidden in some things, or the mind is slow-witted. Your father returned from a bloody battle and brought back important intelligence, rendering outstanding service. I've heard this a long time ago from Princess Gouyu. This is also the reason why I've come to find you today."

Guo Jin had never heard such an assessment from others before. He was first astounded upon hearing Jiang Chen's words, then immediately broke out into bitter sobs, throwing himself upon his father's memorial tablet.

"Father, did you hear that? Young duke Jiang spoke out boldly to uphold justice and says that you are a meritorious subject of the kingdom, acknowledging your efforts. Can your spirit in heaven hear these words?"

When his words stopped, tears were already roiling in Guo Jin's eyes as he was choked with sobs and unable to speak.

It was apparent that comments such as "deserter" and "shame of the kingdom" had caused Guo Jin to shoulder many burdens that didn't belong to him since he was little.

He toiled and trained, yet ran into a wall no matter where he went.

Wherever he went, others would immediately respond when they heard of his family background -- you're the son of that shame of the kingdom?

Guo Jin lived through his childhood and youth with this ignoble infamy on his shoulders.

The censure and contempt of the common people caused him to become more and more isolated, more and more depressed. Apart from a mother whom he mutually depended upon, the blade in his hand was almost the only thing left in his life.

And yet --

The contempt and scorn of the common people didn't lead him to belittle himself. He refused to give in. He was going to prove to the world, using the

blade in his hand, that his Guo family was absolutely not the shame of the kingdom!

Only, until now, Guo Jin had never been able to find a chance to free himself from misery.

Not a single noble family of power was willing to give him a chance to prove himself!

Jiang Chen was deeply affected by Guo Jin's dejection, as if he had experienced it himself. To be treated unjustly by others, belittled by others, oppressed by others - it was truly not an easy thing to live through such treatment since he was little.

He lightly patted Guo Jin's shoulder, "To make a long story short, my Jiang family is competing for the position of duke of the first rank this time. I've drawn the mission of recruiting personal guards in the Hidden Dragon Trials."

"You... you've settled on me?" Guo Jin's fierce body trembled slightly as he lifted his head, sending out looks of disbelief.

In all these years, he had suffered from everyone's eyerolls and ran into walls everywhere he went, offering his services to others in vain. He had thought that only his blade would accompany him in this life, and had prepared to become a first class independent practitioner wandering the outside world.

However, destiny was truly amazing. Someone had unexpectedly extended him an olive branch when he was at the lowest point in his life!

"I choose you not only for you, but also for the loyalty of your Guo family clan."

Guo Jin became choked up and found it hard to speak when he heard those words. Even though he knew that Jiang Chen might be speaking these words to buy popularity, he was still so touched in the moment that he almost became a blubbering mess.

It was said that "a kind word is remembered for a long time", and Jiang Chen's words of "loyalty of the Guo family clan" happened to touch precisely the weakest, most delicate part of Guo Jin's heart. It was also the area that most needed warmth.

“Young duke, based on those words alone, I, Guo Jin, am willing to pledge my life to follow you eternally, in life and in death!”

Guo Jin was not good at heroic utterances, but an exceedingly resolute voice in the depths of his heart told him that he should do so, that he must do so!

Jiang Chen never stinted on his people.

He immediately ordered for Guo Jin’s mother to move to the Jiang Han manor and asked the alchemists from the Hall of Healing to personally look after her. At the same time, he had Guo Jin lock the main doors of his house and have the neighbors pass on a message to the Zhou family.

“If that Zhou family wishes to create a disturbance, then do so at my Jiang Han manor. If he feels that it’s still not satisfying enough to make trouble there, then he can go to the palace courtyard and make a fuss at Princess Gouyu’s !”

Jiang Chen left these words behind before he departed.

Since Princess Gouyu had recommended this Guo Jin, then Jiang Chen naturally didn’t mind borrowing some effort from Princess Gouyu.

In any case, the royal family owed this much to the Guo family .

Guo Jin’s father had originally been the personal follower of Princess Gouyu’s older brother, Eastern Jun. At that time, Eastern Jun was the exalted crown prince.

Eastern Jun wished to accomplish a military feat during a skirmish with an enemy kingdom once, but fell victim to an enemy ambush. Only Guo Jin’s father emerged from the bloody battle and sent a piece of important intelligence back to the capital, dying from exhaustion afterwards.

The current king, Eastern Lu, was only made heir apparent due to the crown prince accidentally falling in battle.

When Eastern Lu was made the crown prince instead, there was even a rumor within the kingdom that the death of the prior crown prince Eastern Jun was very likely because someone had traitorous relations with a foreign country, betraying the former crown prince. When Eastern Lu was initially made crown prince, his foundations were shaky and thus he was cautious and

prudent. In order to cast off suspicious circumstances, he even ignored the Guo family who had sent back important intelligence on pain of death. He didn't even publicize what had gone on behind the scenes.

As time went on, the rumors of Guo Jin's father being a deserter started circulating.

On account of the love and kindness from her respected martial dao teacher, Guo Shun, Princess Guoyu had appealed several times for Eastern Lu to redress Guo Jin's father's grievances and rehabilitate his honor.

Eastern Lu was not swayed by her speeches.

From his perspective, inaction was better than taking action. Eastern Lu was also unwilling to go to battle and reopen matters of many years ago for a family like the Guo family that had withered and fallen.

The pity was that in doing so, Guo Jin was the one who suffered.

Princess Gouyu harbored great remorse and regret in her heart, but couldn't openly help the Guo family due to Eastern Lu. She could only covertly pay attention to Guo Jin. She had traveled often for training the past few years and neglected to pay attention as time went on.

In this manner, Guo Jin's room for survival became even narrower and thus he had fallen into his present day circumstances.

Princess Gouyu was ashamed and uneasy but couldn't take action. She could only entrust the matter to Jiang Chen and recommend Guo Jin to him, making amends for her previous faults through good service.

Except, Guo Jin had no way of knowing the twists and turns of this matter.

One had to give it to him, Guo Jin was indeed a different sort when it came to training. Although he had the martial arts techniques and methods of his family's heritage, his potential was astounding.

With the Guo family's current economic level, Guo Jin had absolutely no spirit medicine complementing his training. There were, of course, no pills available for him to take either.



However, he had made it to six meridians true qi based purely on his own great willpower.

One had to know, even many of those nobles sons and disciples, with the favor of tens of thousands focused on them alone, couldn't make it to six meridians true qi!

"Although it's quite cruel to say so, but one has to admit that sometimes one's birth can truly decide one's destiny..." Jiang Chen felt even more keenly the truth of this harsh reality through Guo Jin.

High potential and great willpower, was as insubstantial as the reflection of a flower in a mirror or the moon in the water, if one didn't boast of an illustrious birth or the ways to become head and shoulders above others.

Out of the eight spots for personal guards, the first one had gone to Guo Jin. Add to that the two nephews that Qiao Baishi recommended, he had already filled three slots.

The remaining five would most likely necessitate a trip back to the Jiang Han territory.

The mission was pressed for time and Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to drag his heels. After taking in Guo Jin and explaining the situation to him, they set out for the southern frontier in the afternoon of that day with a crew of underlings.

After the experience of being ambushed by the Soaring Dragon manor last time, this time both the royal family and the Jiang Han household placed abnormal emphasis on this trip, and sent out all sorts of hidden guards along the way to scout out the path.

Under such arrangements, the Soaring Dragon manor had nowhere to insert even a needle if they had the desire to make a few moves. They couldn't do anything unless they wanted fall out with the Eastern family clan at this very moment.

Spurring on their horses, Jiang Chen's crew successfully reached the southern frontier after three days.

The southern region was drastically different from the capital. It permeated with the thick atmosphere of the southern border. Unique overtones colored

the region, whether in terms of atmosphere, human sensibilities or geographical style.

Many memories of the southern border were preserved in his past self's memories.

At least he had a clear grasp of the relations of the Jiang family clan.

The family welcome entourage outside the River Wave City was rather sparse, with not that many people.

"Indeed, the treatment of returning a young duke is different to that of the return of the real duke." A trace of a contemplative smile leaked out on Jiang Chen's face.

Jiang Chen also knew that no one could be blamed for this. The previous Jiang Chen had committed fabulously absurd sins when he was in the Jiang Han territory, and the ridiculous things he had done once he'd travelled to the capital had all made their way back home.

The extraordinary things he'd done recently rather, hadn't had time to travel back home.

Therefore, it was quite normal to receive the cold treatment on his return.

"Third uncle, Xiaoyu." Jiang Chen warmly greeted the first two people in the front as he hopped off his horse.

In the entire Jiang family clan, they were probably the extreme minority who could tolerate the previous Jiang Chen's fantastically silly existence.

The middle aged man Jiang Tong was Jiang Chen's third uncle. His personality was honest, sincere, and contained. He scrupulously abided by his duty and was the younger brother that Jiang Feng relied most heavily on.

The slim and fragile youth next to him was Jiang Tong's son, Jiang Yu.

"Chen'er, you've been at the capital for the last two, three years. You've grown quite a lot." Jiang Tong patted Jiang Chen's shoulder as a feeling of happiness exuded from his eyes.

“Brother, you’re back!” Jiang Yu was younger than Jiang Chen by a year or two, and they’d been close since little. Although they were cousins, he’d always called Jiang Chen “brother”.

Jiang Chen smiled, “I’ve returned with a mission this time. Let’s speak of it when we get back.”

Although a small amount of people had come and it was apparent that the others in the family had deliberately not come in order to put on airs, Jiang Chen did not become angry over this.

Jiang Tong was a bit surprised upon hearing Jiang Chen’s words. Seems like Chen’er has grown more mature in his years at the capital.

If it was the previous Jiang Chen, upon seeing that his family members weren’t giving him face, he most likely would be cursing furiously by now.

In fact, it was Jiang Chen’s personal steward, Jiang Zheng, whose face darkened upon seeing this scene. He seemed ready to erupt a few times, but finally controlled himself in the end.

River Wave City was the largest and most prosperous city in the Jiang Han territory, and also the core location of the Jiang Han dukedom. The Jiang family’s control over the Jiang Han territory radiated throughout the territory, with the River Wave City as the core.

Compared to the capital, the prosperity level of River Wave City lacked a bit in comparison. But as the largest city in the southern frontier, it had its own unique geographic flavor.

Jiang Chen traveled slowly and gently on the back of his horse, viewing the flowers along the way, laughing and chattering with the Jiang Tong father and son duo. However, he didn’t say a single word regarding the mission.

They returned to the Jiang Han manor after a short while.

But who would’ve thought that the Jiang Han manor doors would be bustling with noise and excitement at this moment.

Chapter 67: Provoking the Young Duke?

“Don’t try this with me! Jiang Tong wasn’t out earlier, and wasn’t out later, but he’s out when I come?” A voice like a bronze gong rang out loudly.

Jiang Chen and the others heard the hue and cry before they had even drawn near.

“Chief Jing, he really has gone out. Apparently the young duke is coming back, and the third lord went to the outskirts of River Wave City to greet him.”

One could tell that the servants of the duke manor were still quite polite when they dealt with people.

“Young duke? Huh! That ridiculous dandy Jiang Chen?” That voice like a bronze gong carried quite a few traces of disdain.

“I don’t give a damn where Jiang Tong’s gone, I’m going to wait here!” The man surnamed Jing had an extremely dominant tone.

Jiang Chen’s brow creased when he was still far away. Now that he was training in the “Ear of the Zephyr”, his hearing was stronger than even Jiang Tong’s, and could naturally hear the conversation from afar with crystal clarity.

“The chief surnamed Jing? Can he be Jing Man from the Redbud<sup>1</sup> Tribe?” Jiang Chen knew from his past self’s memories that there were ten large tribes under the jurisdiction of the Jiang Han territory.

The Redbud Tribe was one of the strongest tribes, and numbered amongst the foremost out of the ten large tribes in Jiang Han.

Therefore, this Jing Man had always been more domineering. Apart from the Duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Feng, who was able to cow this person, everyone else in the entire Jiang Han territory had to somewhat accede to his wishes.

One only had to hear his wild and arrogant tone today, and listen to him directly saying Jiang Tong’s name, to know that this person was quite domineering.

Jiang Tong smiled wryly and shook his head slightly. “Chen’er, only your father is able to rein in Jing Man. Go directly into the manor later, I’ll take care of him.”

One could tell that Jiang Tong had a measure of dread when it came to this Jing Man.

A few thorns in one's side would pop up in every territory, Jiang Chen understood this rather well.

He also didn't really mind coarse language and an overbearing demeanor, but if this Jing Man went overboard with his domineering attitude, Jiang Chen would absolutely not sit by idly, and remain indifferent.

No one wanted such a recalcitrant thorn under their rule - one that would stir up trouble at any time.

"Let's head over!"

Jiang Chen's tone was diffident as he took the lead in riding his horse over.

"Eh? The third lord is back!" The servants in the manor immediately saw Jiang Tong and his son when the horse entourage appeared.

Except, Jiang Tong and his son were clustered around another youth. This youth had the strong arms of an ape, and the flexible waist of a wolf. A familiar yet strange sense of dignified prestige emanated from his eyes.

Jiang Tong shouted out, "Pay your respects to the young duke!"

Young duke?

After three years, the changes that'd occurred in Jiang Chen had resulted in him casting off his old self and being reborn anew. Apart from his features still somewhat resembling those in former times, he was drastically different in all other areas compared to when he'd left the Jiang Han territory three years ago, whether it was in terms of presence, or of body.

"Greetings to the young duke!"

The servants in the Jiang Han manor had undergone strict training, and immediately fell to their knees to pay their respects.

As for Jing Man and his group, they all looked to their leader, Jing Man, and didn't bother kneeling in respect.

Jing Man placed his hands on his waist and looked askance at Jiang Chen. His motions were quite rude and ungracious, and he flicked a glance at Jiang Chen, sizing him up from head to toe.

“Young duke. Excuse me, I, Jing Man, only greet the Duke of Jiang Han. Forgive me for not kneeling without seeing the Duke of Jiang Han in person.”

Jing Man’s people also smiled superciliously behind Jing Man as they took their measure of Jiang Chen. Not only did their expressions lack the proper respect requisite upon seeing the young duke, but some of them even lifted their eyebrows and winked as signals to each other.

“Jing Man is it?” Although Jiang Chen was slightly enraged inside, he didn’t wish to have a public falling out where they stood. “I am the young duke of the Jiang Han territory, whether you pay your respects or not. I only ask you, for what matter have you brought people to cause a hubbub at the manor doors? Where is your decorum and propriety?”

Jing Man laughed heartily. “For what matter? Then you need to ask Jiang Tong!”

Jiang Tong’s expression was a bit awkward. “Jing Man, let’s talk privately about personal matters. The young duke has just returned today, let’s not disturb him.”

“What disturbance? It’s even better that he’s come back, he can be a witness.” Jing Man leered with his big mouth.

“No matter what, let’s go inside to talk. Stop throwing away the face of nobility by standing here and making a public outcry.” Jiang Chen’s face darkened as he took the lead in entering the manor.

Jiang Tong was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen’s uncommon bearing, and followed him inside.

Jing Man chuckled but brazenly had no respect for anything as he followed them inside.

Jiang Chen cast his gaze upon Jiang Tong after entering the manor, tea had been served, and everyone had taken their seats. “Third uncle, what’s going on. You tell me.”

“Ai, Chief Jing. We have more than decades in our relationship, and you accepted the betrothal gift ten years ago. Must you really commit such an act as tearing up the marriage contract? Not to mention...”

Jing Man waved his hand, “Stop right there! I was not going to bring the children into this, but since you’ve mentioned them, then let’s be frank and put our cards on the table. It isn’t that I’m going back on my word, it’s truly that the child is unwilling. You also don’t wish for the two to not get along, and cause such utter confusion that everyone goes crazy after the two get married?”

Betrothal gift, marriage contract, child is unwilling.

Jiang Chen quickly grasped the heart of the matter.

Indeed, this Jing Man was here to rip up the marriage contract.

“Chief Jing, speak frankly - are you dissatisfied with the betrothal gift? Do you think it’s too little? This can all be discussed. In what regard would my Jiang family be unworthy of your beloved daughter?”

Jiang Tong restrained his fury and didn’t adopt a hard tone as he tried to redeem something from the situation.

“I’ve heard these words many times and I’m not here to listen to your blather this time. I’ve brought back the betrothal gifts, you can take an inventory of them.”

Jing Man obviously didn’t want to continue this conversation. He was here to return the betrothal gifts, and to void the marriage contract.

With a wave of his hand, Jing Man’s servants immediately brought up six large trunks.

“The betrothal gifts are here, not a single one of them is missing. Take an inventory Jiang Tong. If there’s nothing else, I’m going back to my tribe.” Jing Man ignored the young duke Jiang Chen through this entire matter.

Jiang Tong’s face flushed vaguely red. Jing Man’s arrogant attitude had obviously deeply wounded the placid middle aged man.

The hand in his sleeve curled tightly and formed a fist. His voice trembled a bit as it rasped out, “Chief Jing, you can break the betrothal, but you cannot do

so in such an obscure manner! Tell me, why? In what manner has my Jiang family wronged your Redbud Tribe?”

Jing Man smiled faintly, “Whether or not the Jiang family has wronged my Redbud tribe is not the point. First, you, Jiang Tong, are not the Duke of Jiang Han. Your son will never become the Duke of Jiang Han. Secondly, I’ve already said the child is unwilling. Cai’er, they’re unwilling to cancel the marriage contract. Why don’t you say a few words?”

A thirteen or fourteen year old young girl was behind Jing Man. She wore the jewelry of her tribe, and wore her hair in a bun, with three peacock feathers stuck in her bun.

The young girl’s features were brightly colored and beautiful, with a natural gentle and lovely air. She also possessed a sense of shrewdness that did not conform with her age.

“Jiang Yu, Cai’er believes that you would not seriously agree to a ridiculous marriage that the older generation agreed to when they were all drunk?”

Jing Cai’er brows moved faintly as a natural sense of gentleness and loveliness permeated her crisp voice.

Jiang Yu was younger than Jiang Chen by a year, but he wasn’t muddled when it came to important matters. Although a bit bashful, he responded, “I can pretend it wasn’t true. But, the manner in which you’re approaching this matter completely brushes off the face of my Jiang family. Have you ever thought of where my Jiang family’s face would be, if you do this in such a manner?”

“Face?” Jing Cai’er laughed lightly. “Face is earned and not given to you. Jiang Yu, since you’ve brought it up, I ask you only one question. My training now is at seven meridians true qi, and has a chance to breakthrough to eight meridians true qi in a year. How many meridians of true qi are you now?”

This was the point! Seven meridians true qi was indeed a very extraordinary level of existence for a disciple born from a tribe.

After all, even amongst the heirs in the Hidden Dragon Trials, not that many possessed such training.



Not to mention Jing Cai'er was younger than Jiang Chen and his peers by one or two years.

"You're only five meridians true qi. Do you know what a difference of two meridians true qi means between peers?"

In addition, just as my father said, your father isn't the Duke of Jiang Han, and you'll never be the Duke of Jiang Han."

Jiang Yu's mouth was agape and tongue tied. He said haltingly, "Although I won't be the Duke of Jiang Han in the future, the Duke of Jiang Han is still my brother."

He regretted his words as soon as he said them. Why? Why did he explain such things to this snobbish girl?

"Heh heh, your brother?" Jing Cai'er flicked a glance at Jiang Chen with a few traces of scorn. "Jiang Yu, don't be naive! Do you think with your cousin's paltry bit of ability that he's usually displayed, that he can hold onto this dukedom in front of opponents that are like wolves and tigers?"

Jiang Chen laughed. This Jing family had revealed their dagger after unrolling the map of their plans, and had voiced the true reality.

In terms of potential, Jiang Yu was far below Jing Cai'er.

In terms of status and position, the Jiang family could very well lose their dukedom. Jiang Yu wasn't a direct descendent of the Jiang family, what future would he have then?

In such a way, the meaning for the Jing family reneging on the marriage contract was clear as daylight.

A tea cup was suddenly flung viciously to the floor!

Someone finally couldn't bear it anymore on the Jiang family side, and had lost their temper!

Except, the person losing his temper was neither Jiang Chen nor Jiang Tong and his son, but the personal steward behind Jiang Chen, Jiang Zheng!

He had seen so many various aspects of society in the capital, and even the influential powers in the capital were obedient, submissive, and obsequious to

the young duke. But now that they'd returned to their own land in the Jiang Han territory, they were faced with such ridiculousness?

This was the Jiang family's territory to begin with. The Jiang family kept their word, and everyone was reverent and deferential in front of the Jiang family.

This Jing family was too unbridled!

Thus, Jiang Zheng was infuriated!

"Jing Man, you father and daughter are putting on show, but have you figured out some things yet? This is the Jiang Han manor and this is the territory of the Duke of Jiang Han!" Jiang Zheng was filled with righteous indignation.

Jing Man laughed coldly. "Your master hasn't spoken, what is a dog of a servant like you making a fuss for?"

"I'm a servant alright! But, you seemed to have forgotten that you're also a servant in the Jiang Han manor. We're all servants of the Jiang family in the entire Jiang Han territory!

You do not pay your respects when you see the young duke - do you even understand the difference between master and servant?

You tear up the marriage contract - do you even understand the concept of the honor of nobility?

Your daughter does not respect the young duke - do you even comprehend the notion of due regard for precedence?

You disrespect your master, tear up the marriage contract, and speak irreverently. Who gave you this courage? Where did you get this nerve from?"

Jiang Zheng's tongue was like a spear, and his lips like daggers, as he fired off a string of questions, getting out of hand as he started.

Jing Man's mouth was agape and he was tongue tied, at a loss for what to say during this moment.

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cercis\\_chinensis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cercis_chinensis) Redbud is Zi Jing in Chinese.↵

Chapter 68: Increasing Your Knowledge

In terms of bearing and strategy, it was inconvenient for Jiang Chen to speak up. Jiang Zheng on the other hand, said everything on his mind in one go.

Jiang Tong and his son nodded repeatedly as he spoke, agreeing fully.

As for Jiang Chen, he smiled faintly and stood up, walking up to Jiang Yu. "Xiaoyu, your brother only asks you one question, do you have any feelings for this woman?"

Jiang Yu's handsome face blushed, "Brother, I've only seen her once or twice a year since we were young. I've never had any deep conversations with her, and don't have any sort of feelings for her. And, I don't really like pushy and bossy women, they're not virtuous."

"Alright!"

Jiang Chen smiled, "A thousand taels of gold won't purchase love. Since you don't like her, then I'll make the decision for you today. This marriage contract is pronounced dissolved starting from this moment henceforth."

"Chen'er." Jiang Tong stood up.

Jiang Chen waved his hands. "Third uncle, I'm the young duke. When my father isn't here, I make the decisions in the Jiang Han household."

Jiang Tong's throat moved vaguely, as he wished to say something, but he finally heaved a sigh of dejection and sat down again. His arm trembled slightly, the depths of his anger apparent.

But, what else could he do apart from this?

Jing Man laughed heartily and stood up proudly, his tone carrying notes of scorn, "Young duke, haha. They say that a tiger father doesn't beget a dog son. The young duke has increased my knowledge today."

The connotation behind this wasn't a compliment for Jiang Chen, but rather jeering at Jiang Chen for having cold feet. If Jiang Feng were the one here, how could he have given way here?

Jiang Chen smiled lightly and did not avoid looking at Jing Man in the slightest. "I increased your knowledge so easily? Looks like Chief Jing truly lacks knowledge and experience."

“Oh? How do you say?” Jing Man’s face darkened.

“The marriage contract is dissolved alright, but this matter isn’t over yet.” Jiang Chen’s face darkened as his tone abruptly grew frosty. “You are of a tribe, yet tear up a marriage contract and challenge the authority of the duke’s manor. This is one crime. As a subordinate, you didn’t greet the young duke when you saw him. This is another crime. Raging and roaring at the duke’s manor, with no respect for your superiors. This is a third crime.

Combined punishment for three offenses! Take them!”

The four brothers from the Sheng battalion immediately leapt upon Jing Man like wolves and tigers as soon as Jiang Chen had finished speaking!

Jiang Tong started and then quickly woke up to reality. He also immediately gave an order, “Jiang family premier guard, seal off the manor. Do not let a single person who has come today leave!”

Jing Man had also been overconfident, or it might be better said that he had acted recklessly with no scruples at all. Although he had brought a pack of personal guards with him this time, in terms of absolute strength, there was still a large gap between his guards and the premier guard of the duke’s manor.

He had dared come because Jiang Tong had always been weak and feeble, and would never move to arms. It was even more impossible that he would dare draw swords against him, a big tribe chieftain.

However, he had never reckoned that Jiang Chen, this devil incarnate, would return to the manor at this time. He hadn’t thought even more so that this Jiang Chen would take action when he had been smiling merrily and staying calm and collected!

The worst thing was that the Sheng battalion four brothers were all experts from the capital. Sheng One and Sheng Two were even of nine meridians true qi.

They were even able to contend against Jing Man evenly in a one on one battle.

The four of them combined their efforts to force Jing Man into an extremely passive situation.

Jiang Chen's new follower, Guo Jin, was also the epitome of agility and bravery. His blade thoroughly preoccupied Jing Cai'er. Although he was only six meridians true qi, he was actually able to beat Jing Cai'er to the point at which she didn't know what to do with her hands and feet when he went all out.

Jiang Tong also entered the fray afterwards.

Jiang Tong was also of nine meridians true qi. There were no doubts about the conclusion of the battle once he joined the battle.

Jing Man and all his followers were taken within the span of an hour.

"Jiang Chen, even your old man doesn't have the guts to do anything to me! You dare plot against me! The Redbud Tribe will feud with you until the end of time now that you've done this to me!"

Jing Man was truly angry. He had run amuck through the Jiang Han territory all his life. Apart from giving way in front of Jiang Feng, he had never been the one to suffer losses.

He had been restrained by others today and even tied up. This was an extreme disgrace to him.

"Third uncle, convene all the members of the family clan together. I want to call for a clan meeting!"

Jiang Chen flicked a glance at Jing Man. "Put these people secretly behind bars. Sheng One, make them take these pills so that they're not too noisy."

Jiang Tong called together the family clan members in the name of the duke. No one dared to slight him then.

They hadn't gone to meet Jiang Chen because Jiang Chen was a good-for-nothing. He was a useless person with not much to his name in their eyes, this is why they had dared act so wildly.

Although Jiang Tong had a weak and passive personality, he was the person that Jiang Feng had personally entrusted to be acting duke. None of the Jiang family clan members dared be disobedient when he employed the power of the duke.

After all, Jiang Tong's level of training made him first after Jiang Feng, not to mention his identity!

All of the members of the Jiang family clan numbered between one to two hundred people at the end of the day.

However, the main hall of the duke's manor was spacious enough. It was still quite expansive even when one to two hundred people stood within it.

Jiang Tong and his son stood to the right of Jiang Chen, and Jiang Chen's followers stood to his left.

"Greetings to the young duke!"

"Why did no one notify us that the young duke had come back?"

"Indeed. I happened to be away two days ago, and didn't receive the news. It was my fault in failing to meet the guest."

These clan members were all quite shrewd. They hadn't gone to greet Jiang Chen, because they wished to covertly play a petty trick in trivial matters. However, no one dared act atrociously when they actually saw Jiang Chen in person.

Jiang Chen swept his gaze over those assembled and nodded slightly.

"Jiang Zheng, you speak."

Ever since following Jiang Chen, Jiang Zheng's entire presence and composure had thoroughly changed after the matter at the Hall of Healing. He now paid utter servile obeisance to Jiang Chen.

"Everyone, I'd first like to report one matter. Jing Man and his daughter from the Redbud tribe were causing an uproar in the duke's manor just now. They had no respect for their superiors, and disrespected the young duke. They've already been captured by the young duke and are being held secretly!"

He delivered a heavyweight of a news as soon as he opened his mouth.

"What? Jing Man's been captured and locked behind bars?"

"This... We just saw Jing Man behaving atrociously at the manor doors."

“Jing Man, captured?”

The Jiang family clan members were all shocked and baffled when they heard this news. They thought it was incredible. Jing Man had been captured? The most important thing was, they heard overtones of another implication.

Jing Man had caused an uproar at the duke’s manor and had no respect for his superiors. He disrespected the young duke. These crimes all made the fine hairs on their bodies stand up when they heard of them.

One had to know, that as members of the Jiang family clan, none of them had gone to greet the young duke. This could also be counted as huge disrespect to the young duke.

When their thoughts traveled down this trail, these people all started becoming a bit nervous, no matter what their status or position.

If Jiang Chen wished to make a big issue of this, they would all likely be hard pressed to escape this calamity.

Jiang Zheng smiled faintly. “As members of the Jiang family clan, we are all of the same origin. Blood is thicker than water, and when the Jiang family runs into a problem, we are either united as one or are cautious in order to save our own skin. The young duke would like to make use of this opportunity to witness your character!”

Jiang Zheng’s words also gave them a way out.

The clever ones immediately realized the error of their ways. A clan elder more than fifty years old smiled, “My Jiang family has always been united as one under the leadership of this duke. This Jing Man has often come to the manor to behave wildly. Capturing him is the right thing to do, we endorse this wholeheartedly!

“Right, Jing Man, the chief of a tribe dared to affront the authority of the duke’s manor, he should be captured!”

“The young duke is wise and brilliant!”

“He is the duke’s son alright, we support the young duke!”

They were all quick on the uptake. Upon seeing that Jiang Chen had removed even a thorn such as Jing Man, they knew that it would be as easy as blowing away a speck of dust if he wanted to deal with family members.

Judging from Jiang Chen's current state, if this devil incarnate grew confused and charged them with crimes as well, then things would be grave indeed.

Hence, they all hastened to declare their support. Firstly for self insurance, and secondly as members of the Jiang family clan, they truly had no reason to defend Jing Man.

The Jiang family members also severely despised Jing Man's arrogant attitude. Jiang Tong had no methods to deal with Jing Man, and so they'd naturally been unable to say anything.

Now that Jing Man had been captured by Jiang Chen, they firstly felt great satisfaction as they'd vented a breath of ill feelings; they also felt confused as well. How had Jiang Chen gained such daring and resolution in the two, three years that he'd been away?

Except, seeing his personal guards behind him who looked around with the fierce gaze of fiends, the hearts of these clan members pounded like drums and they didn't dare say much.

Jiang Chen had no desire to strut around in front of his clan members, and said with a diffident tone, "Third uncle, pass on an order from the duke's manor, and convene all the tribes within the territory. Tell them to come to River Wave City to attend a tribal convention. I have an important matter to announce. Failure to come within three days will be viewed as treason!"

The various tribes naturally didn't dare give the cold shoulder once the duke's order was given.

They all traveled to River Wave City at the fastest speed possible.

That night, Jiang Chen summoned the seniors who possessed more prominent positions and reputations and treated them to a banquet within the manor.

If it hadn't been for the issue with Jing Man, these elders might not have all shown up for Jiang Chen's banquet. However, the former days were not the



ones of today, and they all felt that something was bizarre regarding this matter, after seeing the young duke Jiang Chen today.

With that said, the six elders all arrived promptly. These people were all highly experienced, and very shrewd. When they met each other at the doors of the manor, they all looked at each other and smiled, a bit awkward and a bit unable to fathom the current situation.

“Elder Xi, what does this Jiang Chen have up his sleeve?”

“Ai, I cannot see it clearly. I too cannot fathom it. Have you all discovered that Jiang Chen seems to have changed greatly in the three years that he’s been out of sight?” An elder with graying hair spoke. He was the elder with the longest record of service in the Jiang family clan, and everyone called him Elder Xi.

“Ai, I’ve heard that this Jiang Chen has been ridiculous beyond belief in the capital. Rumors say that he couldn’t even pass the foundational exams. If this kid is allowed to continue to fool around like this, how is my Jiang family to keep the dukedom?”

“It doesn’t seem like it, really doesn’t seem like it!” Elder Xi shook his head. “When I look at Jiang Chen, I don’t see someone who can’t pass the foundational exams.”

“Heh heh, what’s the use in saying so much. Let’s go inside and see what he has to say!” A relatively younger elder floated by and took the lead in walking into the manor.

The banquet was exceedingly sumptuous. Jiang Chen sat at the main seat, with Jiang Tong on his left.

Everyone took their seats according to the record of service. Jiang Zheng was proactive as he poured wine for them in that order.

“Gathered elders, I, Jiang Chen, would not like to mention previous matters. I will speak of only one matter today. I am competing for the duke of first rank in this time’s Hidden Dragon Trials, and I’ve come back to execute the second mission of the first rank this time. I need everyone’s help in this matter. If the elders are willing to help, please drink their cup of wine!”

Jiang Chen lifted his cup, the aura of one superior arising spontaneously.

What?

Duke of the first rank? Mission of the first rank?

This news stunned even Jiang Tong. His arm shook, so surprised that he almost spilled his wine.

### Chapter 69: Changes in Attitudes

These elders couldn't help but lean forward slightly, wishing to hear more clearly. Their reactions were all extraordinarily in unison, as they all thought they'd heard incorrectly.

One had to know that, a genius who was overflowing with talent such as Jiang Feng, his grasp over the Jiang Han territory so strong, had only won a position of duke of second rank.

Out of all 108 dukes in the kingdom, being ranked at 14 seemed to be the limit of the Jiang family.

These elders all had to admit that Jiang Feng's role couldn't be overlooked in the Jiang family's current day development. It wouldn't be hyperbole to say that he had achieved the greatest accomplishment for the Jiang family to date.

Their highest expectations for Jiang Chen during this time's Hidden Dragon Trials were merely to retain their current standing. Even if their ranking descended a few places, it would be nice if they didn't lose the title of duke of the second rank.

However, based on Jiang Chen's usual performance, they all knew that this was all pure folly. The bigger question was whether or not he'd be able to keep the Jiang family's dukedom, not to mention the position of duke of second rank.

After all, his usual reputation was simply too poor.

However, the affairs of the world are thus inconstant.

Just when they had deemed that Jiang Chen wouldn't do - when they had long since given up in their hearts - Jiang Chen suddenly announced that he was competing for duke of the first rank.

And, he had even returned this time to execute the second mission of the first rank.

What did this entail?

This meant that Jiang Chen had already completed a mission of the first rank!

A mission of the first rank corresponded to the position of duke of the first rank.

Being able to complete missions of the first rank, no matter if one could only complete one, how could the person in question be a mediocre person of the masses?

The Hidden Dragon Trials were no game, and the rules were harsh. Every single mission of the first rank was strictly partitioned - it was impossible for anyone to be opportunistic or gain an advantage by trickery.

To think that Jiang Chen had already completed a mission of the first rank!

There was no need for boasts, no need for theatrics. Jiang Chen merely raised his cup, spoke a few words, and gave transparently delineated particulars of all matters.

If this crowd of old geezers lacked even this bit of comprehension, then it wasn't a matter of them debating whether or not to support Jiang Chen, but rather Jiang Chen contemplating whether or not they were worthy of him!

"Duke of first rank, duke of first rank..." Jiang Tong turned over these words again and again in his mouth. Suddenly, a gleam of surprised light shot out from his unfocused gaze. "Chen'er, you mean that you've already completed the first mission?"

"Yes, and this second mission rather needs some connections. I will need to impose on the networks and face of the various seniors in the clan."

Jiang Chen was neither prideful nor impatient, and there was a complete lack of a desire to flaunt himself in his tone. There truly was nothing for him to make a display about in such a small matter.

Jiang Zheng, on the other hand, couldn't help but speak up when he poured one. "A scholar who has been away for three days must be looked at with new

eyes. Our house's young duke is the man of the hour in the capital. Those from the palace are common visitors, and even spiritual medicine heavyweights such as the Hall of Healing need to curry favor with our young duke."

There were no outsiders here, so Jiang Zheng couldn't contain himself and had to say a few words. He truly couldn't hold it in anymore. He had been ignored and passed over by others ever since he had started following Jiang Cheng. Now that he'd finally found the chance to hold his head up high. Where else could he make a display if he didn't put on a show within the family?

Those from the palace were common visitors?

Even the Hall of Healing curried favor with the young duke?

How could this be? Those elders were all surprised beyond expression, not to mention Jiang Tong. They all inhaled sharply, extremely uneasy in their seats.

Jiang Chen however, smiled faintly. "There's no need to always speak of these small things, Jiang Zheng. Assembled elders, I have need of your efforts at the tribal convention tomorrow."

Elder Xi had the longest record of service, and the fastest reactions. He hastily smiled and said, "It seems our Jiang family has produced a genius such as the young duke, and us old geezers probably would've never known if Jiang Zheng hadn't said anything. Haha, the ancestors and forefathers of the Jiang family in the heavens above have bestowed upon us such a genius as the young duke. Our Jiang family is sure to attain our goals with further efforts. I'm going to use these old bones in my body to strive mightily for some results. I'm sure to attend the tribal convention tomorrow with these old bones!"

"Go! We'll naturally go! Our Jiang family has always been united as one in our control over the Jiang Han territory. Otherwise these tribes will really think that our Jiang family is one to ride roughshod over."

"Indeed, we can't allow a thorn such as Jing Man to appear within the tribes again!"

The elders all expressed their stances, and each one was more cooperative than the last. They were all experienced, and could naturally tell that the changes that had occurred in Jiang Chen weren't false.

Besides, Jiang Chen would never lie about the Hidden Dragon Trials.

Some elders couldn't help but think, "Could it be that this Jiang Chen has been a foppish dandy since young just as a disguise to deceive the outside world, and that his sights were set for the duke of first rank all along?"

Almost all the elders had the same thoughts as their gazes upon Jiang Chen changed. They no longer capitalized on their seniority, but instead held a few more traces of respect and modesty.

In this way, everyone made merry to their heart's content, and returned home with satisfaction from this banquet.

At the end of the day, the elders of the clan were delighted to see and hear of Jiang Chen's strength. A strong heir with mighty strength would support the family and even bring it to higher prosperity.

Elder Xi had partaken of a bit wine because he was happy, so he returned home slightly tipsy.

"Grandfather, I'm going to go shopping with Xiaoqian tomorrow. I won't be going to the tribal convention."

"Father, I'm going to purchase some spirit medicine tomorrow. I also don't want to go to the convention."

"Granddaddy, tomorrow I..."

Elder Xi slammed a heavy palm onto the table as his long mustache bristled from his anger.

He had originally been in fine fettle, but so many people had popped out of the woodwork to request time off as soon as he'd sat down. Every single one of them wished to shirk their duties, obviously not paying attention to tomorrow's convention at all.

How could he not be enraged at this!

"Who is it that's not going? I'll break the damned legs of whoever doesn't go!" Elder Xi was truly enraged, and poked his finger angrily at a middle aged man. "Jiang Xiong, you're my son. Just try saying again that you won't go! Purchase spirit medicine? Don't think this old man doesn't know that you have a

mistress in the Qinghua Alley, and that you rush there to fool around everyday!

And you, Jiang He! You're my direct grandson, do you have any prospects for a future ahead of you? Spending your days tied to that chit of a girl at such a young age, do you have any aspirations at all?

And you, Li You, you're my daughter's son. If you have no loyalty to the Jiang family at all, then what are you doing here?"

The elderly lord frothed at the mouth and glared with rage, pouring out such a torrent of abuse that the recipients didn't even know where to look.

"Father!" Elder Xi's son Jiang Xiong felt that he had lost quite a bit of face.

"Save your blather, all of you must go tomorrow. And, resolve all those inconsequential matters starting from tomorrow. As a disciple and son of the Jiang family, and as clan relatives, what use are you if you can't resolve the difficulties and anxieties of the family?"

Elder Xi spoke with an awe inspiring sense of self righteousness.

This actually caused those present to be at a complete loss. They were this undisciplined and scattered usually, and they'd never seen the elderly lord object.

What was wrong with him today? Why had his tone changed after a bout of drinking wine? Had he been brainwashed by that Jiang Chen?

Jiang Xiong asked timidly, "Father, it's not like you don't know that our Jiang family will be unable to retain the dukedom. Even if you say this much, you will be hard pressed to stop this trend. Didn't you say that you'd long since let it go?"

"Bullshit! When did I ever say those words?" Elder Xi denied vehemently. "All of you remember this well. Not only will our Jiang family retain our dukedom, but we may even take another step forward and ascend in the ranks, to that of a dukedom of the first rank!"

Elder's Xi's tone was also vaguely agitated when he spoke of this.

Duke of the first rank was completely apart from those of the other ranks.

A duke of the first rank had the power to enfeoff others. The sons of the family could then be granted land and flourish!

The wealth and prosperity then, would be absolutely different from the current situation.

“Eh? Father, have you grown confused from the wine?” Jiang Xiong couldn’t hold his laughter in.

Elder Xi flung a huge slap across his face and rapidly stood up. “You bumbling idiot who hasn’t learned your lesson! I’m reminding for you for the last time that you must go to the convention tomorrow. And, you must display full courtesy and utmost deference. I won’t be able to save you if you offend the young duke!

And all of you, where’s your sense of propriety? Looking down on the young duke? Thinking he’s good-for-nothing? Bullshit! That’s him being a wolf in sheep’s skin, concealing his strength, and numbing the opponent! The young duke is attempting the rank of first this time, and he’s already completed the first mission. He’s already killed the once infamous rapist, the Lotus Harvester!”

“What?” Jiang Xiong was flabbergasted, his hand covering his face without a trace of temper.

He had killed the rapist, the Lotus Harvester?!

Although the Tianhu territory was quite far from here, information flowed between various territories. There were quite a few rumors in the Jiang Han territory regarding the infamous name of the Lotus Harvester.

It was said that this Lotus Harvester possessed training between eight and nine meridians, and that he was adept in using sinister poison. His qinggong was excellent, and his being wily. He was an extraordinarily difficult person to handle.

The young duke had killed this rapist?

And had taken not even a month from receiving his mission to do so?

“All of you crawl back to your places and think carefully! If you no longer wish to be here, then get out of this family as early as possible. If you still want to

be here, then look sharp and serve the young duke well!" Elder Xi huffily threw down these words and left.

Similar scenes were repeating continuously in the various homes of the elders.

All of those negative, sluggish fellows who wanted to layabouts were thoroughly rebuked by the elders without exception. Some were even subjected to a beating, like Jiang Xiong.

The next morning, titanic changes had occurred in the entire atmosphere of the Jiang family. A family clan that had been like scattered sands was suddenly tied together with an invisible rope.

Those who usually slept in, and those who usually slipped out early to fool around, all unusually showed up in the core areas of the Jiang Han manor. All of them were alert and ready for action, dressed up finely.

Some of them with more clever minds hastened to step forward and greet Jiang Zheng with a smile when he walked out, "Jiang Zheng, has the young duke risen yet?"

"Risen? The young duke gets up at midnight every day to start training, and you ask if he's risen yet?"

"Oh oh, my mistake, my mistake! Apologies, my apologies!"

Jiang Chen walked out from inside at this moment and smiled, "Everyone's nearly here. The tribes should also be nearly here by now?"

1. A daughter's son isn't considered a direct grandson in Chinese culture, because the daughter has married into another family and her children bear another surname.↵

## Chapter 70: Vying with Each Other to Sign Up

There were ten major tribes within the entirety of the Jiang Han territory, and there were many more smaller tribes beneath each of the major tribes.

Each of these tribes was controlled by a family clan.

The Redbud Tribe, for instance, was controlled by the Jing family.



The Yinglan Tribe, for instance, was controlled by the tribe of Jiang Chen's mother, the Lan family.

Of course, each tribe would have many subordinate family clans apart from the core family clan. They would thus jointly form the ruling power.

Therefore, several hundred family clans had gathered in the main square of River Wave City today. Every single family clan was represented by at least twenty or thirty people - the gathering was truly great in strength and impetus.

Jiang Feng wasn't in the Jiang Han territory, so Jiang Tong was the acting duke. However, he naturally wouldn't steal his nephew's thunder today. Jiang Tong clearly knew that his nephew Jiang Chen was the star of today's show.

"Everyone, we have called you here today in the name of the duke because we have a joyous event of cosmic proportions to announce to everyone!"

A faint smile creased Jiang Tong's face as his gaze swept in a circle, sweeping past the face of every tribe's chief.

"Heh heh, the third lord has even mobilized the name of the duke to summon us here, this joyous event must be very important."

"Indeed, third lord, don't keep us guessing. Out with it, so everyone can share in the joy!"

Jiang Tong smiled, "Alright, then I won't keep you in suspense. Everyone knows that the duke and his son have gone to the capital to participate in the Hidden Dragon Trials. The young duke has suddenly returned this time for none other than to come back and recruit for his personal guard. Once this guard is formed, it will form the basis of core power of the Jiang Han dukedom in the future!"

The young duke was recruiting for his personal guard?

That seemed nice, but none of the tribal family clans were tempted. All of them lowered their eyes, not wishing to exchange gazes with Jiang Tong, deathly afraid of Jiang Tong taking a fancy to them.

If any other young duke was recruiting for his personal guard, the powers under his rule would have vied for the chance to sign up. However, this young duke had always been a good-for-nothing. If any of their sons or disciples

associated with him, it was more than likely that they would end up facing disaster in the future.

Everyone was jittery in the Jiang Han territory now. Nine out of ten people all felt that Jiang Chen would be unable to retain his dukedom.

Therefore, how could they possibly be excited about the young duke recruiting for his personal guard? They couldn't avoid it like the plague fast enough!

Their reactions were within Jiang Tong's expectations.

"The requirements for these personal guards are also high. Not everyone can sign up. First, personal training must be at six meridians true qi. In addition, your age cannot be greater than twenty, and it would be preferable if the mind is both intelligent and smart..."

The people beneath the stage all snickered inwardly as Jiang Tong listed out a long list of requirements. You should be thanking the heavens and earth if anyone signs up when the young duke of your Jiang family is recruiting for his personal guard, and you've even got a list of requirements to boot?

There was naturally no response from anyone for a while. It was so silent that even a pin drop on the ground could be heard.

"These are the requirements, who would like to sign up?" Jiang Tong asked in a clear voice.

After Jiang Tong asked this question, whenever he swept his gaze in their direction, everyone ducked their heads or looked in another direction, afraid to meet his eyes and be called upon.

The atmosphere of the scene was beyond bizarre in the span of a moment.

Jiang Tong's clan members all had grave expressions. They wanted to laugh, but didn't dare to. They knew that Jiang Tong was doing this on purpose, wanting to test the influence of these tribes.

Jiang Tong circulated his gaze three times, and still no one responded.

Jiang Tong sighed and was about to say something when suddenly, an enigmatic voice rang out from outside the square. "Ah would like to sign up!"

Another voice also sounded, "Ah would also like to sign up!"

Two male youths who looked to be strong as a bear in the hips, and with a back as supple as a tiger's, walked out with large strides towards Jiang Chen. One of them wore a large axe on his back, and the other wore a brass rod.

“Young duke Jiang! Ah am Qiao Shan, this is mine brother Qiao Chuan. The Qiao Third Hallmaster of the Hall of Healing is mine uncle. He introduced us'ns to come here.”

Qiao Shan, Qiao Chuan. Those twin brothers had arrived!

Jiang Chen chuckled, “You have also arrived. This is Guo Jin, the direct grandson of royal tutor Guo Shun. His training is at six meridians true qi. You will be fellow comrades in the future, and should be close to each other.”

The nephews of the third hallmaster of the Hall of Healing, the direct grandson of royal tutor Guo Shun.

These identities immediately became sensitive information in the ears of those tribal chiefs.

“Hmm? Something's not right. The Hall of Healing has such a renowned reputation, and its hallmasters also have awe inspiring reputations. How would one let his nephews fool around with the son of a duke? The direct grandson of a royal tutor was an existence that could be connected all the way to the royal family, why would he be hanging around Jiang Chen?”

Some of the more sensitive tribal chiefs seem to have vaguely caught onto a few hints of something.

Guo Jin was a bit infuriated and walked out after he greeted the Qiao brothers. He swept his gaze over the crowd and said coldly, “My surname is Guo. I was born in the capital and grew up in the capital. I've seen quite a few royal and noble sons. I find it rather odd though, now that I've arrived in the Jiang Han territory. The followers of other princes and noble sons all fawn over and curry their master's favor. They're extremely deferential and subservient. But all of your attitudes are as if being too close with your master is a type of disgrace?”

Guo Jin smiled coldly. “However, according to my knowledge, those who can compete with our young duke in the Eastern Kingdom are as rare as the feathers of a phoenix and the horns of a unicorn. Even the heirs of the Duke

of Soaring Dragon have quite a bit of dread when it comes to our young duke. I wonder what sort of mighty existence is worthy of your servile obeisance?”

Guo Jin came from the capital, and his words naturally carried some weight.

“My grandfather was a tutor at the royal court. The king and princess have all once benefited from my grandfather’s tutelage. These four big brother from the Sheng battalion are the elites of the Tiandu army, and are the personal guards that the princess herself picked for the young duke. I’m rather curious, even the elites of the Tiandu army are willing to acknowledge their allegiance to the young duke. Can it be that in your eyes, the young duke is still unworthy for you to declare yourselves for him?”

Guo Jin’s voice rang out clearly, thundering through the gathering like resonant bell, causing the blood of these tribal clans to thrum loudly.

No one dared suspect that Guo Jin was speaking falsely at such a gathering.

Besides, the aura of the four brothers from the Sheng battalion were right there. They were a presence that the duke himself, Jiang Feng, may not have even been able to suppress!

But at this moment, these four people were obediently standing beside Jiang Chen, awaiting his orders without the slightest hint of non acceptance or rebellion.

“Eh? Is this to say that us two brothers have made it here in time for a good show? Now this is hilarious. Even my uncle, at his level of existence, has committed himself irredeemably to the young duke. Do all of you think you’re more awesome than a hallmaster of the Hall of Healing?” Qiao Shan also spoke up.

“Heh heh...” Jiang Tong stepped out chuckling at this time. “Everyone, forgive me for not speaking clearly just now. The young duke is actually competing for the position of duke of first rank at this time’s Hidden Dragon Trials. He’s returned this time to execute the second mission and recruit eight personal guards.”

Duke of the first rank, mission of the first rank, and this was the second one!

The gathering was in an uproar when the news percolated through the crowd. Which of those present wasn't a wily old fox? How could they not understand such sensitive connotations?

"Damn it, damn it. I misjudged and missed the prime opportunity to express my loyalty."

"That damned Jiang Tong, why didn't he say this earlier? He's making us look bad on purpose!"

All the tribal chieftains were privately depressed. They didn't blame themselves for their attitude of keeping discreetly out of harm, but rather blamed Jiang Tong for not being clear with his words.

"Everyone, the young duke is recruiting for eight personal guards this time, and three of the slots have been filled. There are five left. If you fulfill the requirements, then hand in a signup form." Jiang Tong announced loudly.

In the span of that moment, all of the tribes started discussing amongst themselves

If it was a direct son of the tribal chieftain, they may not be willing to be a personal guard, even to a duke of the first rank.

Therefore, it was still a good thing if they could fight for a spot for their non direct descendents.

Around twenty applications were quickly handed in.

One had to say, a territory still had many young talents. There were quite a few youths under 20 years old with six meridians true qi.

This didn't even include the direct heirs of the tribal chieftains.

"Third uncle, help me go through the names on the list. Although potential is important, personality is even more so. My Jiang family doesn't need the allegiance of those cowards who would get cold feet at critical times."

Recruiting eight personal guards was still just a small interlude to Jiang Chen at the end of the day. His ambitions did not halt here.

Executing this mission was just going with the flow and the bigger picture. He merely didn't wish to lose to anyone on the Hidden Dragon Trials!

With the aid of the Jiang family clan elders, Jiang Tong quickly decided upon three names.

These three were ones that they all felt were more dependable. They were all powers that were absolutely on the Jiang family's side, whether in terms of birth or reputation. These three people were also not within the core center of power in their families. This would give them the impetus to make great efforts in forging ahead.

"Chen'er, the name has been erased from this application. There's something fishy about this." Jiang Tong frowned. "From the traces that were erased, this application should be the one for your cousin, Xue Tong, also the son of your mother's younger sister?"

Xue Tong?

Jiang Chen had very few memories of this person in his past self's memories. He seemed to faintly recall a vague, thin figure. In his impressions, this person was someone on the sidelines who his grandmother didn't love, and his father didn't care for.

"Has anyone signed up from my mother's side of the family?" Jiang Chen was curious.

"Yes, Lan Yizhou, the son of your oldest uncle. However, his training is only at five meridians true qi and hasn't met the requirements at all. He's messing around, and we aren't considering him."

"Then what about Xue Tong?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Xue Tong is of six meridians true qi, but seems to be quite dismissed in your mother's side of the family. It looks like someone has tampered with his application."

"What are their reputations?"

"Lan Yizhou is the second son of the chief of the Yinglan Tribe. His personality is a bit proud and ungovernable. As for Xue Tong, he's always been a character on the sidelines, and has been bullied by Lan Yizhou since young. He's the type that holds his tongue but has a lofty and unyielding character."

"Then it's Xue Tong." Jiang Chen settled on the seventh spot.

If he recruited a proud and ungovernable character like Lan Yizhou, it would only be providing an unstable factor for the team. Jiang Chen didn't wish to create such unnecessary trouble for himself.

It didn't matter if he was of five meridians true qi, Jiang Chen had ways for him to breakthrough.

But issues with personality, that was out of the question. A bad apple would ruin the bunch.

"I'm sorry I'm late, can we still sign up?" Just as Jiang Chen decided on the seventh spot, a weak and gentle voice sounded from the side. It seemed a bit familiar.

Jiang Chen tilted his head to the side, also slightly startled.

A young girl pushed through the crowd. She was wearing a downy yellow robe, had fair, translucent skin, and beautiful features. Because she had been traveling in a hurry, her face was red from exertion. She eep'ed when her gaze met Jiang Chen's as her charming face blushed even redder.

"You?"

Jiang Chen was astonished and baffled. This girl was the disciple of the Star Argus Palace North Sect in the Tianhu territory, Wen Ziqi!

She was also one of the young girls that Jiang Chen had rescued from the Lotus Harvester not long ago in the Tianhu territory. Jiang Chen involuntarily thought of the scene in the cave when he saw her.

Wen Ziqi was weak and lacked strength as her clothes accidentally dropped down, allowing Jiang Chen to gaze fully upon the two orbs in front of her chest...