

Three Realms 1001

Chapter 1001: Momentum That Leaves One Speechless

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

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

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

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

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

Similar joy had erupted over on the Coiling Dragon Clan's side as well. However, they were rejoicing because of young master Ji San. He had also broken Emperor Peafowl's old record when he successfully grasped the seventh Veluriyam Obelisk. To the Coiling Dragon Clan, his success brought about an unprecedented level of glory. No one, not even the most outstanding clan lord in clan history had ever

been able to obtain such an illustrious achievement. Young master Liuxiang might be the only person in the entire Coiling Dragon Clan who was unhappy with the news. As Ji San's rival, he had no choice but to sorrowfully admit that he had been surpassed by Ji Ole Third. In fact, Ji Ole Third was so far ahead right now that he almost couldn't see the other's back. Surprisingly, Ji Zhongtang was doing very well despite the news. Ji San's impossible performance had only fanned his passion for martial dao and inspired a greater drive in him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Anyways, I think that he’s acted a bit too hastily this time.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

But he was worried that Jiang Chen’s youthfulness would cause him to grow so careless that he might miss out on the inheritances hidden in the deeper levels of the Veluriyam Pagoda. This was something

he least wanted to see. The four great monarchs looked dumbstruck. It was obvious that they were bowled over by the news too.

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

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

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

Chapter 1002: The Mysterious Chain Seal

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

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

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

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

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

The Pelagic Dragon Obelisk was simply too mysterious. It felt like he'd fallen into a world within the obelisk after linking his consciousness to it. There was an odd sense of realism to this particular world.

Eerie winds of hell, baleful killing intent, and wailing sounds of spirits immediately flooded his five senses. He withstood this hellish torment for seven to eight days until the scene before his eyes suddenly changed into another. The scene of hell was swept away into nothingness. The horrors from only a moment before were nothing but a nightmare. However, the next scene dumbfounded him.

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

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

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

Jiang Chen felt a lump in his throat when he heard this voice. His eyes welled up with tears. Father! He would never forget this voice, even after ten reincarnations. This was the very man who had given him a long and fulfilling first life. He was a great man, but an even greater father. He had sacrificed everything to refine the Sun Moon Pill so that he could extend his son's life for millions of years.

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

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

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

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

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

Bam! The force swept through the emperor, instantly crushing him into smithereens. No! Jiang Chen's mind almost fell apart when he saw the realistic and incredibly ruthless scene. There was constant

ringing in his ears, and all he could see was pitch black. It felt like a million arrows had pierced through his head.

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

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

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

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

Whatever happened before was merely illusion, but the destructive force formed by his negative emotions and inner demons had been anything but fake. His mind had genuinely been under siege. His conscious would have instantly collapsed if his inner demons had penetrated it. He would have become a slave to his inner demons and a walking corpse, never to regain consciousness. The chain seal within his conscious had been triggered during that extremely precarious moment. Like the boundless Milky Way, the chain seal devoured all of the negative energy. It protected Jiang Chen's mind from danger.

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1003: The Final Hurdle

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Pelagic Dragon Obelisk underwent many other changes after that, presenting fresh trials each time. However, Jiang Chen's consciousness seemed to have been spontaneously transformed into something much mightier. A layer of protective power had awakened in the chain seal, fortifying his mind several

times over. No matter how fierce the obelisk's trials came at him, how manifold its alterations were, Jiang Chen was as immovable as a mountain. His dao heart was unshaken.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1004: Inheriting the Six Palaces

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

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

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

Hurriedly, Jiang Chen steeled his heart and kept his consciousness closed. He prepared himself as well as he could. Before long, the ninth obelisk's verdant light enveloped the heavens, the earth, and the void. It sucked in Jiang Chen entirely. It was as if there was a dimensional gate that had now been opened. In the next moment, Jiang Chen disappeared entirely from in front of the obelisk. The obelisk became silent once more. All of its former light and radiance had completely disappeared, as if they had never appeared in the first place.

"Has he broken through?"

"He... he really passed the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk?"

"Genius... a real genius... I didn't think that I'd be able to see someone break through the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk during my lifetime!"

"Young lord Zhen has nothing stopping him now!"

"The young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain has broken through the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk... Sacred Peafowl Mountain's fortunes are truly unwavering!"

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

Emperor Peafowl's mood brightened all of a sudden, his eyebrows unfurling. A lock had been removed from his heart, lightening up his burden many times over. Good... that kid didn't let me down, huh. The emperor's joy was entirely heartfelt. It was his unique eye for talent that had led him to Jiang Chen. Finally, he was able to see his labor come to fruition. After conquering the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk, Jiang

Chen would inevitably enter into the innermost layers of the Veluriyam Pagoda. Perhaps he would have the opportunity to shed some light upon its archaic mysteries.

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

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

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

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

He showed no cowardice before the obelisk, and was actually almost like a fish in water. Jiang Chen had been someone who had practiced the art of producing images, but the same was true for Ji San. He had a draconic bloodline, after all. Compared to his sworn brother, he lacked only in experience and prowess. The eighth Veluriyam Obelisk's demand for him to cultivate its image wasn't particularly hard for the young master.

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

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

Ji San was perfectly content with his own position. He no longer cared much about perceived face. He would be eager enough to compete with any genius, but he was completely and utterly deferential

towards his sworn brother's ability. Without the true dragon blood Jiang Chen had given him, Ji San would have been stopped much earlier at the fifth Veluriyam Obelisk, or the sixth at most, perhaps. That he was now qualified to challenge the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk was something he hadn't even dreamed of.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"If you choose to depart, you'll have another chance to re-enter the Veluriyam Pagoda. If you choose to explore further and fail in your exploration of the first palace, you'll get another chance to return to the Pagoda at that time as well. Therefore, most clever people choose to explore."

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

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

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

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

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1005: Honored Master P'eng

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

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

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

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

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

“Oh? What do you mean?”

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

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

“Important points? I’ve been trapped here for more than a hundred thousand years, and at this point everything in this world is but floating clouds to me, including your so-called important points. I’ll make this short. First, I’d like to congratulate you. You are the third youngster in the past one hundred thousand years to make it to the Skykun Palace. You are also the youngest genius out of all of them. Tsk

tsk, you're not even over thirty years old, and yet you're able to step into the Six Palaces of Heritage. I wonder why I feel that you're slightly different from the previous two entrants?" The old man's interest seemed to have been piqued by Jiang Chen. His lazy voice had become a bit more energetic than before.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Freedom? Were you forced into your role, senior?" Jiang Chen asked in surprise.

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

"But why?" Jiang Chen grew even more puzzled.

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

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

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

“Senior, you said you were all forced into your roles? Who on earth was the person who did this to you?”

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

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

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

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

“Do you understand now, boy?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Well, of course not. I may hate that old bastard, but I made a bet and I am a man of my word, so I don't hate him that much. Also... haha. To be honest, if it wasn't for that old bastard, there's no telling if we would have survived the ancient demonic calamity. You win some and you lose some, I guess..."

Honored Master P'eng sounded a little sad here. He seemed to be recalling something from a very, very long time ago.

Chapter 1006: An Angry Old Man

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Of course." Jiang Chen replied blandly.

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

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

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

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

“Even a great emperor realm cultivator will only have a life expectancy of five to ten thousand years. Rarely do they live for more than ten thousand years. One can only be free from the baggage of time when one reaches the empyrean realm. Even then, one still couldn’t consider oneself immortal. The empyrean realm has its own trials and tribulations. It’s why they say an immortal has five paths to degradation. A few hundred thousand years is still an extremely long time to an empyrean realm cultivator.” Jiang Chen spoke with extreme detail, rendering Honored Master P’eng speechless. He’d originally thought that Jiang Chen was nothing but an ignorant child. Never in his mind did he think that the young lad would give him such a detailed response.

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

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

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

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

“The Upper Eight Regions, Mid Regions, and Lower Regions form the entire human domain. This junior has no information regarding the other great ancient races as they are no longer found within the human domain or the ancient texts. Oh, this junior has heard rumors about an island called the Myriad Abyss Island. It’s said that many powerful beings have gone into seclusion on that island after the great

ancient war. I believe they left because the qi in the human domain was exhausted after the great battle. It was no longer a suitable place for an empyrean expert.” Jiang Chen explained carefully.

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

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

Honored Master P'eng sighed. He calmed down a little after Jiang Chen consoled him. However, it didn’t take long before he raised his voice again. “Young lad! If the human realm is truly at the state which you’ve described, I can guarantee that the demon race’s revival will spell the end of the human race!”

Jiang Chen’s heart skipped a beat. “Is the situation really that dire?”

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

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

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

“Sigh... no wonder there have been so few geniuses that could enter the Six Palaces of Heritage. Even an old man like me is beginning to despair. Who knows? Maybe a demon spawn will be next to enter the six palaces.” Honored Master P'eng began to laugh at his own words. “Indeed, that is something that will never happen! The moment someone with a demon’s bloodline enters the pagoda, he will be struck down by the formations! By the way Jiang Chen, you mentioned that the strongest cultivator in the human domain is only at the emperor realm?

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

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

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Esteemed elder, you shouldn't make generalized assumptions. That elder is definitely no coward."

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1007: Kunpengs Meteoric Escape

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

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

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

long and broad view like Emperor Peafowl. This was also the biggest obstacle the human domain was currently facing right now. They refused to be convinced unless they were faced with grim reality.

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

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

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

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

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

"Good, you did good in this matter. Unfortunately, this measure can only prevent human cultivators from walking to their deaths. In the end, your formation isn't powerful enough to stop a true demon expert that has awakened from their slumber." Honored Master P'eng sighed. "I didn't know that you've inherited the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's legacy. Interesting, very interesting. You're definitely looking like a person of great destiny, so I'll give you a warning, boy. One of the protectors of the Six Palaces of Heritage is an Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect expert. It'll be your boon when you finally meet him."

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

"What do you mean by that? Don't tell me everyone in Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect is dead?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Of. Course. This is also a part of the test. If you lack even the martial talent to distinguish the proper cultivation method, if you couldn't even pass the test of the theory of martial arts, then what's the point of even letting you attempt the challenge?" Honored Master P'eng said impatiently.

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

Chapter 1008: Reactions From All Sides

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

year's time to prepare before the first challenge began. Therefore, the challenger was actually quite pressed for time.

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

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

"This isn't it."

"This isn't it either..."

"This doesn't match up."

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

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

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

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

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

"I guess the human race hasn't lost their ability to pass on their bloodline, even though they have largely faltered since the ancient war. There are still geniuses in every generation. This little guy seems to be a lot more talented and perceptive than the previous two geniuses who came in here." Honored Master P'eng had incredible insight, so it was only natural that he could distinguish who was superior and who was inferior. Plus, Jiang Chen had obviously outperformed the previous two geniuses.

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

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

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

However, this freedom wouldn't be obtained easily. First, someone must show up as the heir. Moreover, they needed to serve their new master for ten thousand years after they had regained their freedom. This was also a rule that couldn't be changed. Every single protector of the Six Palaces of Heritage was a proud fellow. If their new master's character and temperament disgusted them, they would probably not enjoy serving their new master. However, Honored Master P'eng found that this little fellow named Jiang Chen was very much to his taste in every aspect. That was why he was looking forward to his success.

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

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

overwhelm his peers, but it also overwhelmed even the seven great emperors' and the thousands of years of history of Veluriyam Capital.

Some were happy and others troubled.

At a secluded place in Veluriyam Capital, several holy kings of the Eternal Celestial Capital had gathered together. Saint Holy King Mu, Saint Holy King Ke, Holy King Bei, and Mie Chenzi, the challenger who'd forfeited against Jiang Chen, were all present. When they heard that young lord Zhen had successfully conquered all nine Veluriyam Obelisks, these Eternal Celestial Capital cultivators all wore grave expressions on their faces.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Holy King Bei also nodded. "I believe that this line of deduction is more logical too. If we were Emperor Peafowl, we wouldn't have left a genius successor at the secular world to waste his life, would we? That animal Jiang Chen was born in a tiny place called the Eastern Kingdom. He also wasted time in other tiny places like the Skylaurel Kingdom and Precious Tree Sect. No matter how you look at it, he just doesn't seem like a pawn that Emperor Peafowl was secretly raising."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1009: Accepting The Challenge

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

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

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

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

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

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

The only art without counter was speed. Speed was in itself an advantage. The faster one was, the more advantage one had. Speed was by nature, powerful. It amplified and enhanced the power of an attack. It wasn't a mere tool to use in escape. It was incredibly useful in real battle, where speed often gave overwhelming advantages. It didn't matter if one was on the offense or defense, the one with the fastest speed had the greatest chance of winning. After all, defending against a faster enemy was no easy task.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Congratulations, you've passed the first round. The next round is a test of relative speed."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chapter 1010: News That Stunned Jiang Chen

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

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

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

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

"This is only the first of many to come. The later trials will surely be harder rather than easier. If I rush headlong into things, the slightest amount of hubris will be enough to cloud over my heart. Any impurities therein just now would likely have ended in my elimination." Thinking back on it, he was both relieved and somewhat grateful.

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

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

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

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

Someone of his intuitive caliber was easily able to tail the meteor's shadow, plotting out all of its potential paths forward. Such fine control tested not only the keenness of perception, but also a thorough understanding of the technique's delicacies. Any inaccuracies in comprehension meant abject failure. Besides the aforementioned control, sufficient foresight was required as well. It was a trait that required certain foundations as well. Without sufficient practice with this technique, how could there be foresight? Jiang Chen's extensive experiences with martial techniques and superb martial talent both granted him insurmountable advantages. It wasn't easy, but it was actually comparatively easier than the second round. After a battery of struggles, Jiang Chen brought this round of testing to its conclusion as well.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“How miraculous!” Jiang Chen was surprised at the seal’s effects. He knew that some talismans were potent enough to accomplish similar things.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes, I am.” Jiang Chen nodded. Having been here many years, he was unsure about how the outside world had progressed while he’d been gone. The heaviest thing that hung upon his mind was the possible premature occurrence of the demonic invasion. The promise he had made to the Coiling Dragon

clan lord was another reason he had to leave. Breaking it would likely result in the creation of an inner demon.

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

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

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

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

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

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