

## Three Realms 1011

### Chapter 1011: Jiang Chen Exits the Pagoda

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

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

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

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

Only emperor realm cultivators at the end of their lifespans, who also had no hope of rising up naturally, would do such a thing. It was because of this that the Veluriyam Pagoda's empyrean decree and relic had remained unscathed all this time. Some were ambitious enough to lust after those treasures regardless, of course, but anyone who wanted only to pounce on them were unable to enter the Pagoda in the first place.

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

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

The restrictions of the Veluriyam Pagoda were omni-directional and indiscriminate. Aside from the gathering held every sixty years, the Pagoda did not allow visitors within. Anyone who tried was

mercilessly struck down. It was different for Jiang Chen now, of course. Because he'd entered the Six Palaces of Heritage and received a spacetime sigil, he was considered half a master. He could enter any time he wanted as long as he had it.

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

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

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

Less... is... more.

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

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

The human race could survive on any plane. They weren't the strongest, or even particularly strong at all, but they thrived everywhere because of this inclusivity. No matter the environment and the creatures living there, humans were able to incorporate the advantages of the native creatures and adapt to the harsh conditions. No matter how much they had to alter themselves, their descendants managed to live on. This was the human race's biggest advantage. Recognizing that Master P'eng had noticed the true dragon bloodline within his body, Jiang Chen made no attempt to explain.

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

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

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

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

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

“Hmm? Has someone different come out?”

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

“Oh, so it is him.”

“Why is he coming out now? Did he fail in getting the Veluriyam Pagoda’s ultimate heritage as well?”

“Look, look, he’s coming over now.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

None of the other geniuses on the Ranking of Young Lords had come remotely close. By now, a smiling Emperor Vastsea had sidled over as well. “Good nephew Zhen, congratulations on defeating all nine of the Veluriyam Obelisks. What kind of heritage did you obtain in the Pagoda?”

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

Emperor Peafowl waved a hand. "Each man's fortunes are his own. There is no need to ask."

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

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

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

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

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

#### Chapter 1012: The First Drop of Kunpeng Bloodline, Gifted

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

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

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

While conquering all the Veluriyam Obelisks was a great boost to young lord Zhen's reputation, reputation was ultimately a transient thing. The real reward was the training and improvement one

obtained during the process of conquering all nine Veluriyam Obelisks. Such benefits weren't visible for everyone to see, so naturally the people didn't feel too strongly about it. Now that Jiang Chen had finally come out of the Veluriyam Pagoda, it meant that this gathering was truly over.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jiang Chen was very surprised to hear this. Was Emperor Peafowl really this enlightened? If he hadn't heard the truth from Honored Master P'eng's own mouth, he might have believed that those two items were the ultimate inheritance of the Veluriyam Pagoda himself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emperor Peafowl laughed loudly. "Wonderful. The kungpeng bloodline, is it? This bloodline is similar to the peafowl bloodline, and the two divine beasts were even related by blood in the ancient times. Although I am a descendant of the peafowl bloodline, after so many years the strength of my bloodline has become largely inferior. The kungpeng bloodline you obtained from the Veluriyam Pagoda is sure to be an ancient bloodline, so not only will I be able to ascend to empyrean realm easily, this bloodline will even expand my potential and improve my bloodline's strength massively! I may even be able to cultivate to greater heights in the future. There's no doubt that I've benefited from associating with you this time, little Zhen."

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

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

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

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

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Your Majesty, I received many kinds of rewards in the Veluriyam Pagoda. If I had focused all my efforts on achieving a breakthrough, then I would have reached the emperor realm already. However, there are certain things that I've taken into consideration, and I ultimately thought that now is not the best time to achieve a breakthrough."

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

"Your Majesty, does Sacred Peafowl Mountain have any earth attribute treasures? Thanks to the Pentecolor Divine Swords you've gifted me, I am now only lacking in the earth attribute. If I can gather

some earth attribute treasures and fully master all five attributes before I attempt my ascension to emperor realm, the results will be much better.”

#### Chapter 1013: Refining The Pinecrane Pill

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

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

Jiang Chen was stunned. “So soon?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Young lord!”

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Huang'er made sure that they were well treated. She was generous towards the slaves and would occasionally reward them with top grade pills from Taiyuan Tower. Her generosity had made her very popular with the slaves. They would even gossip amongst themselves about the future madame of the residence, praising her for being a generous, virtuous, and compassionate partner. She didn't belittle them just because they were slaves.

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

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

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

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

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

.....

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Refining the Pinecrane Pill now was of equal difficulty to refining the Longevity Pill back then. However, because it was a sky rank pill, the refining process required a lot more technique and finesse. The Goldencrown Cloudcrane heart and the Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine were incredibly rare ingredients. Gathering both of them had been extremely difficult. It was part of the reason why the Pinecrane Pill was so rarely seen. The first reason was because the formula no longer existed, while the second was because the materials were very difficult to prepare.

#### Chapter 1014: A Great Success

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

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

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

He hadn't had the time to refine pills during the couple of years within the Veluriyam Pagoda, but that didn't mean that he'd grown rusty. As soon as he took out his cauldron, Jiang Chen felt the whirr of familiarity moving through his mind. He meditated for a few hours, mentally running over the steps for refining the Pinecrane Pill carefully before beginning the refining process proper.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taking out a pill bottle, Jiang Chen stashed eight of the pills carefully inside. The last one he placed separately in a different bottle. He put away the cauldron and adjusted his emotions before exiting the pill room. Ji Zhongtang was seated cross-legged at the other end of the hallway. From a distance, he

looked rather like a gatekeeper. His eyes stared alertly in every direction, intent on keeping trespassers from disturbing the pill room's peace and quiet within.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His excitement was palpable in the shaking of his voice.

"Absolutely. I think I've said this before, but you are a naturally fortunate person, Clan Lord. The heavens themselves are on your side." Stepping forward with a smile, Jiang Chen tossed the pill bottle directly at the Coiling Dragon clan lord.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“This pill must occupy a much loftier position than the Longevity Pill, then.” The Coiling Dragon clan lord sensed another commercial opportunity.

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

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

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

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

Ji Zhongtang was moved by the declaration.

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

As if waking out of a dream, Ji Zhongtang came forward and knelt. “Young lord, I am a simple-minded man that doesn’t know many things. I do know one thing, though: you’re our clan’s greatest benefactor, and I shall assist you to the best of my abilities for all my life. May Sacred Peafowl Mountain prosper!”

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

Chapter 1015: Wake Up Call

Jiang Chen wasn’t actually planning on buying people’s hearts, but if one Pinecrane Pill could buy the unswerving loyalty and support of the Coiling Dragon Clan, then it would be worth it. He was now the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sweat trickled down Shen Trifire's forehead. "You're right to lecture me, senior brother!"

"You're still calling me senior brother, so this means that you haven't forgotten that we are both sect members of Regal Pill Palace. If it wasn't for this bond, I wouldn't have risked life and death to come all the way to Veluriyam Capital from the Myriad Domain in the first place, much less rescue all of you from the Myriad Puppets Pavilion. The reason I saved you all is to preserve the last spark of Regal Pill Palace. However, I neither see much fighting will in any one of you, nor do I see the determination and courage necessary to rebuild our sect at first notice. Is the glamorous world of Veluriyam Capital enough to make you lose yourselves, your origin, and the bloody debt on your backs?"

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

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

Today, they all felt guilty after this lecture. Some felt regretful, others timid, and some others guilty. Frankly speaking, their fates were currently completely under Jiang Chen's control. If Jiang Chen were to tell them to leave right now, they would have no choice but to obey. Without their senior brother's protection, they were nothing but piles of shit after leaving Taiyuan Tower. It was true that all of them had some level of skill, but their skill was at best average in the Upper Eight Regions. Maybe they could



barely protect themselves, but to excel amongst others, enjoy a high status, and be respected wherever they went like they were now was nothing more than foolish talk.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If Taiyuan Tower wished to recruit new blood, they could recruit a bunch of superior talent. Take Lin Yanyu as an example; he was just as young as the Regal Pill Palace disciples. If he were to enter Taiyuan Tower, even the likes of Shen Trifire would have to stand aside like a lackey. Lin Yanyu was the

champion of the Pill Pagoda battles after all. Everyone was drenched in sweat after they heard Jiang Chen's words.

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

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

#### Chapter 1016: Jiang Chens Plans

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

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

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

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

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

Maybe this is a sign that it's time to visit Pillfire City. Jiang Chen had always admired the pure, kind, and somewhat introverted pill dao genius. Mu Gaoqi even surpassed Lin Yanyu, a noble descendent from

Pillfire City, in terms of raw pill dao talent. He was one of the biggest talents in the Upper Eight Regions due to his innate wood constitution of high order. Mu Gaoqi is like a brother to me. How can I be at peace if I don't rescue him from his current predicament? Moreover, I need talent like him. I can't bear to see a genius of his caliber end up as a slave for others.

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

This worried him greatly. The greatest obstacle in his search was the fact that his parents hadn't left any leads. However, his father had left him a letter. The contents were already seared into his mind, but there simply wasn't enough information that he could use as a lead. All he knew was that they were now in the Upper Eight Regions.

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

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

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

Jiang Chen greatly approved of Jiang Feng as a father. He would never give up on the search for him even if he was searching for a needle in a haystack. Dead or alive, he was going to find his father! If father is no longer alive, then I must find mother. I will find the woman that he loved so much and tell her that father spent his whole life searching for her, even though he was unable to protect her before. If someone really forced her to leave, then I'll make that person pay!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lin Yanyu remembered. His master had asked him this question when they were in the outer regions of the desolate wildlands. The incident had caused a great commotion in Pillfire City. He was in the city at

that time and heard discussions about it. He nodded. "Yes indeed. Master, are you interested in the one with the innate wood constitution of high order?"

"Extremely." Jiang Chen replied with a faint smile on his face. "Lin Yanyu, are you brave enough to accompany me to Pillfire City and poach some people?"

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

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

#### Chapter 1017: Sending Lin Yanyu on An Errand

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

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

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

"Unless?" Jiang Chen asked smilingly.

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

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

There was nothing more delightful than kicking down an enemy's door and beating them on their home turf, but it was also the easiest way to incur someone's hatred. Had Jiang Chen been alone, it would have been a negligible consequence, but since he was there to rescue Mu Gaoqi, this method would only bring trouble to the both of them. Therefore, this method was out of the question.

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

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

"You can ask me anything."

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

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

"Tell me this first—what level is the faction that bought the cultivator with an innate wood constitution of high order?" Jiang Chen was more concerned about this detail.

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

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

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

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

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

Gang members, however, were brought up in a secular world and were well versed in the ways of the world and doing business. It might be possible to speak freely with a gang member. In fact, it might even be possible to buy a genius from a gang member if the buyer had enough money. But if someone tried to buy a genius from a sect with money, they would think that that person had gone insane.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jiang Chen might miss Mu Gaoqi a lot, but he couldn't treat other people's lives like nothing just because of Mu Gaoqi. Lin Yanyu was his disciple, and Mu Gaoqi was his junior brother. There was no such thing as preferential treatment here. To lose one to save another was a trade that Jiang Chen would never make.

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

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

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

After all, sky rank spirit herbs were just too precious. Even a great emperor couldn't always find them. Moreover, this storage bag didn't contain solely sky rank spirit herbs. There were plenty of earth rank spirit herbs, finished pills, and spirit stones in the bag too. Lin Yanyu had never seen so much wealth in his entire life. His family had already been destroyed when he was young, and he had made a living for himself the moment he could. This amount of wealth would have been a huge boon to House Lin, much less to Lin Yanyu alone.

#### Chapter 1018: A Gift From A Great Emperor

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

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

"So soon, Your Majesty?"

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emperor Peafowl nodded. "Matters related to your parents should demand immediate action. Feel free to use the resources that you have in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Don't forget that you are now the young lord and the owner of the Progeny Feather Medallion. The Peafowl Guards and the four monarchs will listen to your every command as long as it's within your possession."

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

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

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

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

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

They’ll definitely come in handy! Jiang Chen wasn’t the original owner of the kunpeng bloodline. He had given it to the emperor without any personal cost. However, these talismans were the result of the emperor’s blood, sweat, and tears. They weren’t just any common talismans. These had to be refined from the blood of an emperor.

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

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

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

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

Jiang Chen was slightly embarrassed. “It was my duty. It’s nothing to write home about.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jiang Chen shook his head. “Definitely not. The ingredients for the pill are extremely difficult to gather. Two sky rank ingredients, the Goldencrown Cloudcrane heart and the Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine,

are the main ingredients of the pill. Moreover, the facilitating ingredients don't exactly come cheap either."

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

#### Chapter 1019: A Game of Seven Emperors

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

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

"Your Majesty, I still have more Pinecrane Pills here..."

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

When one broke through to empyrean realm, their lifespan was drastically extended once more. Eternal life was a stretch, but cultivators at this level tended to survive for a great many more years. In the memories of his previous life, the number of empyrean realm cultivators who had died due to old age was essentially zero. The vast majority perished during their harrowing journeys of self-improvement, or as a result of battles and feuds. Unpredictable circumstances were also a factor of death. As for the ones that had become decrepit and eventually passed away, they accounted for barely a fifth.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jiang Chen smiled without commenting. His own opinion had always been the same. Though martial dao was the foremost amongst all the daos of the heavenly planes, one could comprehend the truths of existence through any of them when properly applied. Pill dao had its place in the world. Besides, pills that could reverse the sands of time were not altogether too remarkable. It was only a thousand years or so of additional life, after all.

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

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

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

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

“Your assistance is hardly tiny nor insignificant. There is no need for excessive humility. Your pill has changed the fortunes of a great clan, and perhaps with it, the entire Capital. With the extra thousand years in his grasp, the Coiling Dragon clan lord has virtually no possibility of failure. Maybe it will prove to be a good investment for you personally, as well.” The emperor smiled serenely. “If the Coiling Dragon Clan becomes the eighth imperial faction of Veluriyam Capital, its clan lord will surely support you without reservation.”

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

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

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

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

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

“Are things really that bad?” Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

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

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

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

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

The wise emperor had every reason to be concerned. He was clearly unwilling to pass his throne and his control over Veluriyam Capital to Emperor Shura. Otherwise, there would have been no reason for him to make Jiang Chen young lord. Without the surety of his succession, a man with Emperor Shura’s ambitions was unlikely to sit still. There was the tangible possibility that the ensuing conflict would stir the city up into chaos. Emperor Peafowl was confident that Emperor Shura would not act up as long as he was around.

The problem was that Emperor Peafowl would have to leave, one day. The moment he did, Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Emperor Shura’s faction would have cause to cross blades. Anyone sane enough could see that regardless of who won, it would be a pyrrhic victory for them. The biggest loser in either

case was Veluriyam Capital. If the time for it coincided with the demonic invasion, Veluriyam Capital was doomed for absolute anarchy.

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

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

#### Chapter 1020: A Sudden Enlightenment

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Emperor Mountaincrush is the fifth great emperor. He has a straightforward personality and is likely the most simple-minded amongst the seven great emperors. He’ll be the easiest person to pull to your

side. However, it's also relatively easy for Emperor Shura to do the same. Therefore, your personal skills will be the deciding factor on which side he will pick.

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

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

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

"Another headstrong person, eh?" Jiang Chen's curiosity was piqued.

"Mm. With that said, he's still a lot more open-minded than Emperor Shura and has a firm view on what is right and wrong. He'll show fealty to you if you are able to show him strength that is far beyond his reach. He's confident in his own abilities, but he's no conceited fool. He knows when to step back."

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

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

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

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

"Show him in!" The emperor immediately ordered.

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

The emperor waved his hands to send the messengers away. "You may leave." The emperor glanced at the clan lord and smiled when everyone else had left. "It seems I must congratulate you, Clan Lord."



There was nothing I could do to save you from your predicament, but as it turns out, fate eventually granted you a new lease in life. It seems you haven't just regained your vitality; you've also made some progress in martial dao!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. He did have some opinions, but it might be a little too shocking for them. He had no choice but to use flowery speech and speak in vague terms. “Your Majesty, Clan Lord, my understanding is simply too shallow to offer you anything of substance. However, my mysterious master had once told me something related to this matter. He said that everyone walks their own path of dao. Dao is within oneself as is within one’s heart. The clan lord is extremely powerful, has a stable foundation, and possesses an ancient bloodline. There’s definitely a path of dao meant for him and only him.”

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

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