

Three Realms 1041

Chapter 1041: Emperor Peerless

Of course, Jiang Chen wasn't a person who took advantage of a situation for personal gain. But he looked like one to Temple of Cleansing Fire though. First, he was an unfamiliar face. A stranger naturally evoked a sense of untrustworthiness. Second, he looked like a very young man. He just didn't look like someone who could win all the way to become an arena lord. Considering his age, he would have to be a descendant of a great emperor faction at minimum to compete for the seat of arena lord. It was almost impossible for an average young genius to become one.

If he used his influence, then he might have a shot at fighting for the seat of assistant arena lord. Therefore, to the people of Temple of Cleansing Fire, Jiang Chen hadn't come here to compete seriously. He was here to achieve a personal goal.

Jiang Chen didn't bother to explain himself. The truth spoke louder than words. He slapped a hundred million spirit stones worth of deposit on the table. Right now, money was more persuasive than anything he could say. Even if he wasn't here to compete seriously, he still had the money to do whatever he wanted. Plus, he was a man who could pay a hundred million spirit stones to participate in a competition. Would someone as rich as him really care about losing ten million saint spirit stones even if he did lose? He obviously wouldn't.

It wasn't like there were no youngsters in Pillfire City who could produce a hundred million at all. There had to be a small group of people like this somewhere. However, these people might not have acted as brazenly as he did.

The administrator gave Jiang Chen a complicated look. Although he still didn't trust Jiang Chen, the latter could pay the deposit. He had no reason to bar him from the competition. Left with no choice, the administrator could only process Jiang Chen's registration per standard regulation. He over the receipt and participation token. He also gave Jiang Chen a reminder.

"Please show up six days later to participate in the arena lord selection. Remember, you won't be admitted if you miss the deadline. We will also claim 10% of your deposit as if you've lost the competition." Although the administrator didn't trust Jiang Chen, he didn't allow his feelings to interfere with his job. He did his job and had given his advice. No one could say that he didn't act professionally.

Jiang Chen himself knew that the administrator didn't trust him. He didn't mind it and made to leave with a smile after putting away the receipt and participation token. He didn't take more than a few steps before a ridiculing sneer rang behind his back.

"People sure are crazy these days, to think that a kid still wet behind his ears would partake in the Bounty Arena. Is it just me, or has the world changed recently?"

"Hehe, he's young. Maybe he doesn't know what he's about to face."

"Ai, can you two stop talking for a bit? He has the money, and he can do whatever he wants with it." There was no doubt that young Jiang Chen's registration made a lot of people unhappy. After all, most registrants were elderly. The rest were all middle-aged men or women. At the very least, they didn't look young.

On the other hand, Jiang Chen looked around his twenties at most. There was no doubt that his presence in the Bounty Arena's registration area was a glaring beacon to others. Of course, there were some powerful experts who had sent their disciples or servants to register on their behalf. That was why many thought that this young man was simply registering on behalf of his master or his family. There was no need to attack someone like this.

Of course, these reactions went in one ear and out the other for Jiang Chen. The world would never run out of sarcastic people, so there was no point in remembering their words. Otherwise, the living would die from sheer anger. Maybe I should dress older the next time I participate in an event like this? He thought wryly. Just as he was about to walk out of Temple of Cleansing Fire, he suddenly heard a commotion outside.

Someone cried out. "Oh heavens, am I seeing right? Is... is that Emperor Peerless?"

"Who's Emperor Peerless?"

"Oh heavens, just how ignorant are you? How can you not know about Emperor Peerless?!"

"Tsk ts. Emperor Peerless is the famous king of wandering cultivators of the northern region. He is also one of the few wandering cultivators who's a great emperor without a faction of his own."

"Emperor Peerless, he... he can't be planning to participate in the Bounty Arena, is he?"

"He's probably just passing by. Emperor Peerless is a venerable senior who made his name more than two thousand years ago. There's no way he would find a Bounty Arena worth participating in, would he?"

"Nonsense! Great emperors do show up in the Bounty Arenas sometimes, okay?"

"But doesn't that happen very rarely? Only a few great emperors have participated in this Bounty Arena for the past couple thousand years."

"In any case, I feel that Emperor Peerless may be here to participate in the Bounty Arena."

"If he really is here to participate in the Bounty Arena, then this place will become very lively. A person's reputation precedes the person themselves. I am certain that countless people will participate in the Bounty Arena just because Emperor Peerless is present."

For a time, all kinds of opinions were exchanged.

The discussion reached Jiang Chen the moment he stepped through the door. He couldn't help but look at the direction everyone was looking at. He barely caught the glimpse of a white-haired, desolate-looking back before it vanished from his sight.

A great emperor? It wasn't like he had never seen one of those before. In fact, he had interacted with quite a few of them. Still, this Bounty Arena would become very interesting if a great emperor really did decide to participate in the arena lord selection. That being said, the logical side of him was nagging up a storm.

This was just a competition that was held once every ten years. There shouldn't be any reason for a great emperor to participate at all, right? Forget it, I shouldn't be concerned about someone else's

participation. I am here to fight for my own reasons. Jiang Chen shook his head and let out an inward quiet sigh. Still, he hoped from the bottom of his heart that a great emperor would compete. It would no doubt raise the quality of this Bounty Arena by quite a bit. A great emperor was sure to attract a lot of participants. That meant that numerous high value bounty would appear as well. That would be an opportunity to make some money and build his reputation.

He couldn't stop wondering about Emperor Peerless during his way back to his accommodation. "Yanyu, have you heard of someone called Emperor Peerless?"

Lin Yanyu was a bit startled. "I also heard of him today, master. If I'm not mistaken, he's participating in the arena lord competition. I even heard that he was invited by Temple of Cleansing Fire as the highlight of the Bounty Arena. He was directly granted a slot in the arena lord competition, so he didn't need to participate in the selection. Moreover, I heard that he will be an important judge during the arena lord selection."

Jiang Chen was caught off guard. He hadn't heard as many rumors as Yanyu did. In fact, most of the rumors he heard was small talk and conjectures when he went to register. Lin Yanyu's information was actually more complete than his. He asked ponderingly, "So, is Emperor Peerless really participating in the Bounty Arena?"

"Mm, that's most likely the case. Moreover, he will be participating in the exams to select the rest of the arena lords as an important judge of this competition."

"As I thought, a great emperor enjoys many advantages. I know that an arena lord is qualified to choose assistants, but he has the right to choose even fellow arena lords. He has great power in this competition." Jiang Chen sighed. He didn't feel that it was unfair through. Emperor Peerless cultivating to the level of great emperor despite being a wandering cultivator was proof that he was an extraordinary person. It was only natural that a person like this had the right to skip the elimination round and be directly granted an arena lord slot.

In fact, a great emperor didn't have to lower himself to participate in a small competition that happened once every ten years like this one. Emperor Peerless had willingly stepped down from his proverbial throne to participate in the Bounty Arena.

"Master, I've heard that Emperor Peerless owes the Temple of Cleansing Fire a favor. Perhaps he's here today to repay the favor." Lin Yanyu wasn't quite sure of the accuracy of this, so his tone sounded just as uncertain.

"How much do you know about this Emperor Peerless, Yanyu? I heard that he hadn't built a great emperor faction of his own?" Jiang Chen was very curious. Normally, even a wandering great emperor would seek to build their own faction. No great emperor would want to stay anonymous forever. The stronger they were, the more they hoped that their talents would be inherited and continued. Therefore, the choice of building their own faction, recruiting their own disciples and passing on their legacy wasn't even a choice for most great emperors. Generally speaking, there were very, very few great emperors who chose not to build their own faction.

Of course, this outcome wasn't exactly uncommon in a place as big as Divine Abyss Continent. Some were born with a passive personality, and some never got the right opportunity to do so. There were

also some people who had their own children and didn't need to build a faction and recruit disciples to pass down their martial dao legacy. It could be any one of these reasons or more.

"Master, Emperor Peerless is pretty famous in the northern region of the human domain. In fact, a lot of big sects are quite wary of him. I heard that the reason he didn't build a faction is because he lost to another great emperor during an emotional bet. The loser of the bet swore to never build a or sect."

"Is that so?" Jiang Chen was shocked.

The construction of a great emperor faction was a matter of great importance. There was an enormous chasm of difference between a great emperor with a faction and a great emperor without one. A faction meant a multitude of supporters. Naturally, they wielded great power as a result. Indirectly, they also possessed many resources because they had plenty of supporters and many territories. The gap between a great emperor with a faction and without was quite huge.

"Master, Emperor Peerless may not have a faction of his own, but there aren't many people who dares provoke him. After all, he has nothing to lose. I heard that not even the great emperors of first rank sects dare provoke Emperor Peerless without good reason." Lin Yanyu sighed. "There is no doubt that Emperor Peerless is a winner in life considering the heights he achieved despite being a wandering cultivator. However, there seems to be another version of the reason he chose not to build a faction."

"What is it?" Jiang Chen's interest was suddenly piqued. A great emperor who was also a wandering cultivator was a lot more attractive to him than those within his own faction. Jiang Chen subconsciously labeled someone like Emperor Peerless as target for recruitment.

Chapter 1042: Enhancing the Level of the Bounty Arena

Lin Yanyu's information web ran incredibly deep. Jiang Chen couldn't help but be a little curious when he heard that there was another variation to the rumors.

"The other version is something that many dare not share in public. Apparently, Emperor Peerless bet against another famous great emperor because of a girl. They were both in love with the same girl, but the girl loved Emperor Peerless. This troubled the famous great emperor greatly. He had a better background and was a tinge stronger than Emperor Peerless, but yet, he was unable to earn the girl's fancy. Thus, he challenged Emperor to a battle. The winner of the battle would earn the right to be wed to the girl. Unfortunately, the girl's love for Emperor Peerless was simply too deep, and refused to accept anyone but him, regardless of the outcome of the battle. She even publicly announced that she would only love Emperor Peerless, and Emperor Peerless alone. This angered the other famous great emperor greatly. They proceeded with their battle, but the betting terms had changed. The loser was to never set up his own great emperor faction."

Jiang Chen responded with a long silence after Lin Yanyu was finished. It was a beautiful tale of undying love and conflict between two unparalleled geniuses. That love had triumphed over desire for power was also deeply romantic. There was no way to verify the rumors, but Emperor Peerless was definitely worthy of his admiration and respect if it was true.

Not every man could forsake their dreams of conquering the world for the sake of love, especially after breaking through to great emperor realm where one could summon storms and winds at the motion of a hand. Having one's own faction was incredibly important at this realm.

Regardless of the truth, the Bounty Arena would gain an enormous amount of legitimacy if this legendary great emperor joined the event. He was more than happy to see this come true.

There were six more days until the selection. Jiang Chen didn't remain idle during this period of time. He went out to explore the city and followed the hustle and bustle. Within a few days, he'd visited every single place with activity. His understanding of the city had improved by leaps and bounds. At first, he only had a rough understanding of the city, mostly came from collected data. By immersing himself in the city, he'd gained a much deeper understanding.

Pillfire City wasn't on par with Veluriyam Capital and had a dominating advantage in terms of pill dao because of a fluke. The city's foundation in pill dao was indeed much higher than Veluriyam Capital. More importantly, the city's influence in the pill world was simply uncanny.

Jiang Chen spent his time wandering the streets and noticed many powerful experts and pill dao geniuses from various regions. They had come to the city on a pilgrimage to further their knowledge. Veluriyam Capital hosted visitors from all corners of the world, but they were absolutely still no match for amount of locals. This meant that Pillfire City had an extremely big influence to its surrounding regions. There was no fault with the claim that they were the core of the northern Upper Eight Regions. One could certainly say that they were the brightest and most eye catching jewel in the north.

Jiang Chen could never refute this. The Bounty Arena alone held great influence. The coming event was merely at a scale that was held once every decade, and yet its lure was incredible. Powerful experts from all walks of life flooded into the city from the surrounding regions. There was so much activity that it seemed as though the event was only held at every turn of the century.

The bustle was nothing compared to the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering, but the gathering was something held every sixty years and was the most sought after event in the capital. The Bounty Arena however, was just a common event, sometimes even held every season.

Jiang Chen was deeply impressed by what he'd seen during the past few days. Veluriyam Capital excels in certain areas, but its influence is simply no match for Pillfire City. No wonder people often compare the jewel of the north with the jewel of the south and say that Pillfire City is more splendid. At the end of the day, influence is still incredibly important, particularly to attract talent and formidable experts.

He was incredibly motivated after noticing the discrepancy. Since he'd realized Veluriyam Capital's flaw, he would have to work on resolving it. As the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, it was his responsibility to shoulder this responsibility. He wasn't someone content with mediocrity. Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Veluriyam Capital wasn't going to remain the same on his watch. He would strive for change now that he was in power.

As long as I remain the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and ruler of Veluriyam Capital, I will make sure that the Capital exceeds Pillfire City and become the most stunning jewel in the Upper Eight Regions. Even though the two were currently equals, Jiang Chen understood that the latter was already beginning to move ahead of the former. The difference in heritage was one reason why, but Emperor Peafowl's dedication to the demon race issue was also another deciding factor.

Veluriyam Capital would likely be ahead in the race if the emperor wasn't distracted by the demon race issue and focused his efforts on catching up to Pillfire City. It was still one of the most powerful

existences in the Upper Eight Regions that no first ranked sect would ever dare offend. But for the past few millenniums, Veluriyam Capital had been in a state of stagnation. This meant that the Capital was content with their position in the Upper Eight Regions, and there was no outward attempt to expand.

In the meantime, Pillfire City had been focusing their efforts in their expansion. They weren't just expanding their land, but also their influence. Pillfire City had not been as influential as Veluriyam Capital in the past. However, they'd gained much ground after a few millenniums worth of effort. Their influence was no longer limited to just their surrounding region. Even the mid regions had begun to rely on them more and more. They were unknowingly drawn in by Pillfire City, though the influence was imperceptible.

Pillfire City is a lot more powerful than I thought. It seems life in Veluriyam City has been too peaceful for its own good. The great emperors of Veluriyam Capital weren't frogs in a well, but Jiang Chen had probably surpassed them in knowledge about the state of affairs in the Upper Eight Regions after his short excursion around the city. Maybe the emperors believed that the traditions and heritage of Veluriyam Capital was already enough to solidify their position in the human domain, or maybe they believed that Pillfire City was simply too far away to influence their territory.

Regardless of the reason, Jiang Chen believed that the citizens of Veluriyam Capital were too optimistic. Emperor Peafowl likely hadn't considered this issue either. Pillfire City's influence was definitely going to spread to the borders of Veluriyam Capital one day. They would be surrounded by the enemy on all sides by the time they realized this fact.

It's time for Veluriyam Capital to rise up. Let me make the first step by retrieving Mu Gaoqi from them! Jiang Chen wasn't going to allow anyone to trample on him. Due to greed, Pillfire City would never allow themselves to coexist with Veluriyam Capital, even if they were miles apart from each other. They wanted to become the single largest faction and the singular brightest jewel in the Upper Eight Regions. Nobody else was allowed to compete for their glory. They were destined to become the one and only of the human domain.

Lin Yanyu didn't remain idle either. He brought in new information every single day.

"Master! I've just received news that other than Emperor Peerless, two or three more eminent figures will be joining the selection test. Because of these great figures, the coming Bounty Arena has become a once in five hundred years event!"

"Oh? Who are those eminent figures?" Jiang Chen was curious.

"I've heard that a very accomplished pill king will also be joining. He's one of the top thirty-six pill kings in the city's millennium pill king hall of fame at half step pill emperor realm."

"A quasi pill emperor?"

"Yes. A peerless talisman master and formation master will also be joining. Come to think of it, it's quite a frightening list."

Jiang Chen didn't waver even the slightest when he heard Lin Yanyu's news. "If that's the case, the legitimacy of the coming Bounty Arena will increase by many folds. It's a good thing." He chuckled. He felt no fear for any of those so-called eminent figures. He'd have no problems competing with them in

the coming arena lord selection. If it were a martial dao exchange, there would be some discrepancy between strengths due to age differences. But since it was a bounty mission, there would be nothing holding him back.

Lin Yanyu was excited by how confident his master was. "Master, the more legitimate the event, the more famous you'll be when you become an arena lord. It'll surely be of great help when you attend the Star Harvesters' auction."

He had the utmost faith in Jiang Chen. The thought that his master would fail to become an arena lord never even crossed his mind. Six days went by in a blink of an eye. On the day of the selection, Jiang Chen brought his receipt and participant medallion to the Temple of Cleansing Fire.

Chapter 1043: The Three Greats

The Temple of Cleansing Fire began to take the Bounty Arena more and more seriously as time went on. It was evident from the kind of people they sent as ushers: they were of a much higher caliber than the last time the Arena was hosted. After verifying Jiang Chen's participation medallion to be without error, the ushers politely let him inside.

Moreover, there was an administrator-level guide ready for him. If there was any suspicion in the man's mind with regard to Jiang Chen's youth, he did not show it. Instead, the covert young lord was treated with a warm smile every step of the way, his attendant maintaining a perfect professionalism. Even if Jiang Chen wanted to find fault, there was very little he could complain about.

It's unsurprising that the Temple of Cleansing Fire is one of the most powerful factions here in Pillfire City. They're not like the rest, that's for sure. Invisibly, Jiang Chen's opinion of the faction rose a fair bit. In the selection area, he noted that the number of participants wasn't as high as he'd imagined.

He had originally thought that anywhere between eight hundred to a thousand participants would come. But in actuality, a cursory scan revealed that only one to two hundred were present. It only took another moment for him to come to terms with that fact. People with insufficient confidence in becoming arena lord wouldn't just throw money away like this. After all, a tenth of the security would be deducted as the sign-up fee upon failure.

Though the sum was affordable enough for most, there was no reason to enter without a reasonable chance of success. There were still other posts available. The main arena aside, they could still compete for being an assistant. Although that was decided by the arena lord, there was no need for the assistants to offer up a security or go through a selection. In some respects, vying for the position of assistant was more attractive than arena lord. Of course, the arena lord received the lion's share of the bounties; but the assistants didn't have to risk any of their own money, either.

The sight of Jiang Chen making his way into the waiting area came as a shock to those already present. The youthfulness of the new fellow competitor was obviously surprising. He had no desire to draw attention to himself. He sat down at an unassuming place. Once seated, he scanned his surroundings to discover that yes, he really was the youngest among everyone here.

His eyes drew back from a distant gaze when he suddenly noticed that someone close to him was sizing him up. Turning his head, Jiang Chen found a half-smiling face right in his own. It belonged to a shifty-looking man on his left. Jiang Chen couldn't help but crack a smile at the sight of him. How quaint.

There's someone else here just like me. It was plain as day that the other man had disguised his appearance.

Jiang Chen's keen eyes were enough to immediately recognize that the other person's appearance was a clear façade. Beneath his outward appearance was a youth, roughly the same age. In other words, Jiang Chen wasn't the only youngster here. This discovery piqued some of his interest in the other person.

The 'man' seemed to be as keen as he. Detecting the hidden meaning in Jiang Chen's smile, he immediately perceived that his own jig was up. Chuckling, he struck up a conversation. "You're certainly very blunt and forthright, pal. I put some thought into it, then turned myself into a little old man. You, on the other hand, have disguised yourself as someone of the same age. Aren't you worried that the other old coots around here will gossip about you?"

The fact that the young man had begun talking to Jiang Chen on his own initiative was remarkable. He was even making faces in the process.

Jiang Chen wasn't against talking to such an amusing guy. "There's no rule that the Bounty Arena won't accept young men as candidates, no?" He smiled faintly.

The other man cackled. "I guess not, but you might not be picked by those wealthy bounty-setters even if you do become one, just because you're too young."

That worry wasn't entirely baseless. However, Jiang Chen saw little reason to be concerned. In the end, he thought, it always came down to a comparison of raw strength. The Bounty Arena took place over the better part of a month, not a few hours. One's ability had plenty of opportunity to stand the test of time.

Seeing Jiang Chen's impassivity and composure made the other man's eyes twist and turn in their sockets rapidly with extreme curiosity. Suddenly, the man grinned. "Right, let's introduce ourselves. I'm Lin Zhirong. What should I call you, friend? Which Pillfire City house or family do you belong to?"

"Shao Yuan." Jiang Chen said only two simple words.

"Your name is Shao Yuan?" The man who called himself Lin Zhirong asked.

Jiang Chen nodded. He hadn't just made the name up wholesale. Because his father in his previous life had been the Taiyuan Divine Emperor, most called him by the name of 'Crown Prince Shaoyuan'. 'Shao Yuan' was an obvious homophonous split of that. It also made a perfectly appropriate alias. That was how Jiang Chen had been able to say those two words in a fit of inspiration.

"Shao Yuan. A good name." Lin Zhirong slapped his thigh, a hint of flattery embedded in the gesture. "Judging by your composure, you must be the heir of some emperor's faction here in Pillfire, hmm?"

Jiang Chen couldn't bother mustering a response. He shook his head casually, presenting the same unreadable smile and stayed completely silent.

Lin Zhirong seemed to be a particularly chatty person. He kept talking despite Jiang Chen's lack of a response. "Brother Shao Yuan, we're both youngsters here, so we should be on the same team. Let's fend off those old codgers together, shall we? You really should be careful. I bet they'll collude together and put you down."

Jiang Chen nodded lightly, but remained quiet.

At this time, the sound of footsteps echoed out from the interior. Several of the Temple's senior executives briskly walked in, a bearded, middle-aged man with a cold expression in their midst.

Lin Zhirong's eyes lit up. "Emperor Peerless! It really is him. Are the rumors true?"

Jiang Chen easily recognized the bearded man's identity as well. When he'd walked outside the Temple of Cleansing Fire's doors after signing up, he had seen the emperor's silhouette. Thus, he was able to deduce the emperor's identity from figure alone.

The others were wearing extremely similar uniforms. Their identity as the Temple's executives wasn't worth guessing.

The sight of Emperor Peerless lifted Lin Zhirong's spirits. His eyes glittered with eagerness, and he looked ready to pounce on his star at any time. It almost made Jiang Chen feel that the other young had come solely to chase after his hero. Lin Zhirong was unfazed by Jiang Chen's stunned expression. He gave an embarrassed smile, though he didn't seem particularly ashamed. "Brother Shao Yuan, Emperor Peerless is my idol."

"I see." Jiang Chen knew that worship of any idol was hard to understand for those who did not. He had his own stalwart set of followers in Veluriyam Capital. They were filled with admiration and respect for him, a group of faithful believers. He understood what this type of people could be like. Each person had their own idol in their hearts. Like the him in his previous life, for example. He had been filled with admiration for his father the Celestial Emperor, and he'd thought that he had the greatest father in the whole world. This kind of admiration was unreduced even with the passage of time.

"I find Emperor Peerless's courage absolutely amazing, and His Majesty's attitude even more. Alas, I do not have the same bravery as he in front of a loved girl." As he said this, his eyes were dark and his tone sad. He hit himself forcefully upon the head. It was a gesture of significant self-blame.

Jiang Chen was fairly resistant to Lin Zhirong's sudden gestures. Still, the other young man's saddened expression affected him somewhat. The humorously unfettered youth was also surprisingly sentimental. He could tell from the crystal-clear look in Lin Zhirong's eyes.

Jiang Chen didn't have All-Seeing Eyes, but he had his own way of scoping people out. Lin Zhirong was a little lightheaded personality-wise, but the look in his eyes tipped Jiang Chen off. Lin was a deeply emotional man. Jiang Chen didn't know what he'd been through, but one thing was for sure. Lin Zhirong had not been as resolute as Emperor Peerless. He had surely made a compromise of some kind instead of taking a courageous step forward. That was the source of his regret and self-blame. However, Jiang Chen had no interest in asking about a man's private affairs.

At this time, a man dressed in the robes of an assistant temple master waved both hands to silence his audience below.

"I'm pleased to announce that this Bounty Arena has been elevated to a tricentennial status. Because of this, we're planning to add three new arena lord seats. We've pre-selected their occupants already: Emperor Peerless; rank thirty-six in the Hall of Thousand Legends, Pill King Blue Phoenix; and formation master Wang Xuetong.

“Why have these three masters come for the seats? It showcases how the level of this Bounty Arena is far above what was first expected. The rest of you will compete for the remaining nine.”

Everyone cheered at these words. It was good news for the candidates as well. The presence of the three senior experts lent the Bounty Arena an aura of increased legitimacy. Though they occupied three arena lord spots, these had been added specifically for them. The original number of available positions was unchanged. It was public opinion and expectation that the seniors would have taken three out of the nine available seats, and rightly so. The fact that all nine remained increased the candidates' chances. It wasn't much, but anything helped.

Chapter 1044: Jiang Chens Ambition

Jiang Chen wasn't particularly moved by this news because the number of seats didn't really matter to him. His objective hadn't changed since the start. Even if there was only one arena lord seat left, he would do everything in his power to take it. Since there were nine seats available, he felt even more confident.

From the crowd's reactions, the assistant temple master knew that this announcement was as popular as expected. He immediately continued his encouragement. “I hope that you will show your true skills and do everything in your power to win this competition. I guarantee you that the scale of this term's Bounty Arena won't disappoint you all. Of course, the nine arena lords who will be joining us in this Bounty Arena later will be very powerful, because they must first obtain our judges' unanimous approval.”

So it seemed that Emperor Peerless, Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong would also be the judges of the arena lord tryouts. The contestants couldn't help but feel a little nervous. Some people were even worried that the judges had already picked out their arena lords. Would they put down talented and competitive candidates during the tryouts because they felt threatened?

The assistant temple master smiled as if he'd read their thoughts. “Don't worry, the three judges are honorable seniors. They were invited to attend the Bounty Arena because they are formally acknowledged to be people of outstanding moral qualities. I have no doubt that they can represent the objectivity of Temple of Cleansing Fire. Therefore, you don't need to worry about this at all.”

Lin Zhirong nodded repeatedly while jabbering in an excited tone, “There's no way someone as amazing as Emperor Peerless would ever commit foul play! Hmph, it is their luck to be able to stand on the same arena as Emperor Peerless, and they dare worry about him oppressing them through scrupulous means? How foolish!

“What do you think, Brother Shao Yuan?” Lin Zhirong suddenly looked at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen smiled calmly. “We can expect honor from our seniors. Therefore, we shouldn't judge them with our shallow rules.”

“Hahaha, you are absolutely right. It is true that I don't know anything about Pill King Blue Phoenix or formation master Wang Xuetong, but I am certain that Emperor Peerless would never lower himself to such pathetic actions.” By ‘pathetic actions’, he meant the act of suppressing strong opponents or opponents with potential on purpose.

To be honest, Jiang Chen himself didn't think that they would go so far. The Temple of Cleansing Fire wasn't a bunch of idiots. If something like this did happen, it would never escape their attention. Moreover, the Temple had their own selection criteria. The only reason they were giving the trio such special privileges was because of the trio's high status. Therefore, the trio would only be complicating their own lives if they did something unfair, and that was assuming that their pride would even allow such a thing to happen at all. On this, Jiang Chen didn't doubt their integrity in the slightest.

"Alright, I will now announce the selection rules.

"First, the nine arenas are split into three zones. There is a martial dao zone, a pill dao zone and a general zone. I don't think I need to explain what martial dao and pill dao zones are, do I? The general zone covers a variety of subjects such as medicine and divination, runes and formations, mechanisms and special arts, beast taming and so on. Each zone has three seats to be won. Therefore, you all must choose the zone you wish to participate first before the competition can officially begin."

To be honest, Jiang Chen could beat any one of these zones. In fact, he was tempted to participate in two zones at once. He wasn't sure if the rules would allow this though. While he was hesitating, a raspy voice suddenly cut through the air. "Temple Master Gao, this old man is somewhat knowledgeable in both martial and pill dao. May I ask if I can challenge both arenas?"

Apparently Jiang Chen wasn't the only one with that thought. Not only did the old man voice Jiang Chen's thoughts, a lot of people echoed his sentiment as well. There was a surprisingly large amount of people who wanted to try.

The assistant temple master smiled slightly. "Theoretically, a participant may challenge all three zones at once. However, are you sure you have the energy to challenge all of them? And are you sure that you can perform outstandingly in every zone? If you bite off more than you can chew, you may fail to overcome even a single zone and lose everything."

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. There were many who understood this proverb, but the one thing the martial dao world didn't lack was ambitious and hungry people.

"Assistant Temple Master Gao, if the rules allow it, then my choice is of no one's concern. If I so happen to fail to every zone I participate in, then I will simply be reaping what I've sown." The owner of the raspy voice was extremely stubborn.

Assistant Temple Master Gao smiled calmly. "It is allowed. However, if you failed to triumph in any zones, your deposit will be deducted by the same amount of zones you participated in. For example, if you participated in three zones and failed all of them, you will lose thirty million saint spirit stones in total."

"I understand. As long as I'm allowed to participate in multiple zones at once, I don't care about losing a bit of money." It seemed that the owner of the raspy voice wasn't going to change his mind no matter what.

The owner of the raspy voice had perfectly voiced Jiang Chen's own thoughts. That being said, he was aware that his martial dao strength was limited by his age. If he were to participate in the martial dao zone, he would definitely stand out like a stork amongst chickens.

I cannot just pass by the pill dao zone and general zone though. Still, my success will definitely cause a commotion. Regardless, he had already made up his mind. He was certain of his victory in both zones. It wasn't blind confidence at all. The memories of his past life were more than capable of sustaining his ambition. A commotion was exactly what he wanted. If he failed to stir up a commotion, then he could not possibly garner enough reputation to suppress his competitors at Star Harvesters' auction later.

Alright. All those who wish to participate in the martial dao zone arena lord tryouts, please come over here," Assistant Temple Master Gao said.

Half of the participants moved over to the place he pointed to immediately. It appeared that martial dao was also the most popular even in Pillfire City. Although Pillfire City was famed for being the strongest in pill dao, it was still a world of martial dao.

"All those who wish to participate in the pill dao zone, please come over here." Another group of people got up to their feet. There were now only twenty to thirty people left in their seats.

Nearly two hundred people had signed up, but in the end only roughly thirty were participating in the general zone. There was no doubt that martial dao and pill dao were much, much popular than others.

Lin Zhirong didn't move from his seat, but he exclaimed in surprise when he saw Jiang Chen move. "Brother Shao Yan, are you participating in the pill dao tryouts? We are in Pillfire City, you know. The competition will be fierce. You may as well join the general zone tryouts and try your luck."

"I will participate in the general zone too." Jiang Chen smiled. He followed the pill dao group of participants down the right corridor.

For a moment, Lin Zhirong didn't understand what he meant. "What did he mean when he say he's going to participate in the general zone?" Then the realization struck him like a bolt of lightning. He slapped his thigh and exclaimed. "Is he planning to challenge both zones He... Is he trying to defy all expectations?"

Lin Zhirong was utterly shocked. At first, he'd thought that this young man had merely come to spectate and gain some experience, just like he was. He never thought that the other was actually here to participate! Lin Zhirong himself was a man of great background and consummate skill. However, he dared not say that he could absolutely win a spot as arena lord.

After all, no mediocre cultivators dared participate in a tryout like this. Even if there was, their numbers were few. It was a one in twenty chance to succeed given the number of participants to seats. It was plainly impossible for a cultivator without talent or skill to come out victorious at all.

Lin Zhirong muttered to himself, "They all say that I'm wastrel, but this boy is an even bigger wastrel than I am. That's twenty million saint spirit stones he just flushed down the drain!"

He still thought that Shao Yuan was treating this as a party. To a wastrel, spending twenty million saint spirit stones for a valuable life experience was nothing big. Also, freedom of choice was one of the benefits of being rich.

More than seventy people were participating in pill dao. It would be difficult to select just three arena lords from them all. All participants had found their respective spots inside the pill battle room by now.

“This selection is quite simple, everyone. There is a scroll in front of you. It contains various questions about pill dao. These are questions that we have spent more tens of thousands of years to refine. There are a total of thirty questions inside the scroll that are split into ten difficulty grades. Your task is to answer every question inside this scroll. Every question gives a certain amount of points. When you are finished, your total points will be summed up and calculated. The top three participants of this selection will become the three arena lords of the pill dao zone.

“If you happen to score the same amount of points as another opponent, then whoever comes forward first will become the victor.”

This general rule was applied to all pill dao exams in the entire Divine Abyss Continent. If two participants scored the same amount of points, then completion time would be used to determine the victor.

“Remember, you must write down your number on the scroll. When everyone is done with their task, we will seal away the number on the scroll. This way, the judges will not be able to see your number during the review process. Therefore, you don’t have to worry about foul play.

“One more thing. The questions presented before you have all been bounty missions in the past. Therefore, they are a test of your pill dao foundation as well as reflects your ability to accomplish these missions perfectly. Hehe, I believe that some of you want to overcome multiple zones at once. Let’s see if you can still maintain that naive dream after you read the questions inside.”

Chapter 1045: A Jiang Chen Looked Down By All

A barrier isolated all the seats. Their communication was cut off from the outside world to prevent cheating. The anxious ones immediately opened their scrolls, and cold sweat started pouring down foreheads when they scanned the questions. The questions ranged from level one to ten, each level significantly harder than the one before. It seemed to be an easy flight of stairs at the beginning, but the difficulty ramped up by several multitudes with each taken step. The ninth and tenth level was so difficult that it was like ascending the heavens.

It was an unknown whether they’d finish just these questions on time, much less than try for another zone. And where would they even find the energy and strength to do such a thing?

The contestants were secretly groaning with agony, except for Jiang Chen. He’d never faced any obstacles in pill dao, whether in the Regal Pill Palace, Veluriyam Capital, or Pillfire City. The contents of the selection were of little problem to him. He didn’t even bother with the lower level questions and immediately set his sights upon the tenth level questions. These questions were meant for ninth level pill kings or a half-step pill emperors. There were two questions that even went beyond that difficulty. Even a legendary pill emperor would have a hard time answering these questions. However, they were no trouble for Jiang Chen at all.

Jiang Chen answered them at a leisurely pace as he was given three full days to finish the test, more than enough time. All questions answered within this period of time were acknowledged, but the final ranking still depended on the score. He read through the question slowly. Each question was separated into ten levels, with three questions for each level. The questions ranged from easy to difficult, to convoluted, and baffling. There was a clear discrepancy between each level.

Jiang Chen went through the questions like a hot knife through butter. His brush moved as quickly as the wind. It only took him four hours to finish the first six levels. These questions were of no difficulty for high level pill kings. Everyone answered the questions at roughly the same pace as these questions were no obstacle when one reached seventh level pill king. The difficulty increased exponentially starting from here on out.

Nevertheless, these were only elementary questions in Jiang Chen's previous life. They were so basic that it was one of the first things children learned. He finished those in the blink of an eye. The bar was raised again for the eighth level questions, but to Jiang Chen, it only seemed that they'd gone to a five-year-old level. He finished them at one go and made quick work of the ninth level questions as well.

It was at this point that he realized that his speed was too quick. Most of the others were still stuck with seventh level questions. There were only two that had just begun answering the eighth level questions. A day hadn't even passed at this point. He couldn't glance around to see the precise questions the others were on.

Since I'm trying to raise a big commotion, there is no need for me to hide my true abilities right now. I might as well pull out all stops and go for flashy showiness since I'm taking part in the selection. This is no time to be overly cautious. Jiang Chen realized that he was on the path of no return. Why bother hiding his true abilities when he was going to have to reveal them sooner or later in the Bounty Arena? If anything, now was the best time to show off!

No longer hesitant, he immediately tackled the remaining tenth level questions. They were a lot more convoluted than the questions before. They still weren't difficult, but it took some time to get the answers down in writing. He was done answering the next morning and double checked twice to ensure everything was correct. He wrote down his participant number and imprinted his medallion onto the seal. Nobody could secretly substitute his scroll with another now that his personal marks were on it.

The judges expressed their surprise when Jiang Chen handed in his scroll. Those from the Temple of Cleansing Fire and Pill King Blue Phoenix looked at him strangely. It almost as though they were looking at an unforeseen monster.

"You're... handing in your scroll?" Pill King Blue Phoenix asked after staring blankly at Jiang Chen for a second.

Jiang Chen nodded innocently. "Mm."

"You're handing it in early?" The pill king was still in slight disbelief.

"Yes. I wish to try out for the general category as well. Hopefully there is still enough time." Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered to have an idle chat with the pill king.

Rendered speechless, Pill King Blue Phoenix exchanged glances with the Temple of Cleansing Fire judges and noticed the same exact expressions on their face. They were all thinking the same thing. Young folks nowadays are too reckless. Is it really worth it to flaunt your wealth in such a manner? Since you're already participating in the selection, the least you can do is fully utilize the three given days to finish up the questions on the scroll. It would benefit you greatly if you ponder upon the questions seriously. What's with handing it in early?

They obviously thought that he was a frivolous dandy that was merely fooling around. Even then, he was still being much too insincere. Jiang Chen couldn't care less about their thoughts. Everything was fine as long as nobody stole his scroll.

"Honored judges, may I take my leave now?" Jiang Chen wanted to confirm.

Pill King Blue Phoenix was utterly speechless. He waved his hands as though waving off a fly. "You may leave," he answered coldly.

He was a very strict and austere person. He viewed Jiang Chen's actions as an insult to pill dao. How could he possibly show the young man a friendly face after such a bad first impression?

The judges of the Temple of Cleansing Fire acted a little more appropriately and nodded in response. "You may leave. It's not an issue if you hand in the scroll early. If two are found to have equal score, the final ranking will be based on who finished first"

They were obviously just following protocol. The words they used were quite sincere, but Jiang Chen could tell that they didn't think much of him. It didn't matter. He would've reacted the same if he was in their shoes. He smiled at them and nodded before striding towards the exit.

Pill King Blue Phoenix flew into rage when Jiang Chen finally left. "Young people nowadays are ridiculous! I wonder what family he's from! How can he treat such a prestigious event as a game?"

The Temple of Cleansing Fire judges understood that the pill king was a very proper person. He had a very traditional mindset and was very devout to pill dao. It was only natural that he would have high expectations for the younger generation. He was angry because he believed that the person who handed in the scroll early wasn't taking the test seriously.

"Please calm down, Pill King Blue Phoenix. There's always one or two frivolous ones among the younger generation."

"That's true. However, the young lad seemed very polite and respectful. I don't think he's one of those rascals. Maybe he really did finish the questions?" Someone suggested quietly. Truth be told, nine out of ten youths in Pillfire City were incredibly arrogant and full of themselves. Someone as respectful as Jiang Chen was a rare sight in this city. He didn't fit the frivolous dandy stereotype at all. Another shot down the thought as quickly as it'd arisen.

"That's impossible. Even if he started before everyone else, there's no way he could finish it in such a short time. Finishing the questions in three days is already a respectable feat. Finishing it in one day? Impossible!"

Pill King Blue Phoenix smiled coldly without saying a word. He'd rather save his breath than answer that question. He was certain that the questions couldn't be finished in one day, unless the young lad had cheated and knew the answers beforehand. But without the Temple's help, there was no way he could know the answers beforehand. It was why he remained certain that the boy was desecrating pill dao.

Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered with what Pill King Blue Phoenix thought of him. He left the pill dao area and immediately sped towards the general zone selection.

The three zones had started at exactly the same time. This meant that a little over one day had already gone by for the general zone. There was only one and a half day remaining for the selection. He had one less day than the other contestants.

“What? You want to cross zones and join the general zone selection as well?” The judges were flabbergasted when they heard Jiang Chen’s request.

The formation master, Wang Xuotong could resist asking. “Young man, which zone did you participate in before this? Did you give up and handed in the scroll early?”

Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to cry or laugh. Why did everyone immediately assume that he’d given up? Was everyone blind to true talent? He couldn’t be bothered to explain. The judges couldn’t stop him as it was allowed in the rules.

“Master Wang, this is my participant medallion, please take a look.” He didn’t want to waste his breath. Every minute and every second was worth fighting for as he was already behind by one day.

Chapter 1046: The Only Cross-Zone Challenger

Though Wang Xuotong marveled at this sight, he and the other judges didn’t hold Jiang Chen up. The young man was permitted inside. The formation master offered further praise after Jiang Chen entered. “Just now, a lot of people were clamoring about challenging several zones in succession. I thought that they were naïve and reckless. I didn’t imagine that someone would actually do it!”

“Haha, perhaps it’s a scion of some noble house who’s having some fun. It’s only been a little more than a day. Neither martial dao nor pill dao are easy subjects to master.”

“Yes. I’m not sure anyone can complete both sets of questions with even three days. My guess is that he’s given up already because he finds it too difficult. He might be trying his luck elsewhere.” The judges’ opinions of Jiang Chen were surprisingly uniform.

One of them led Jiang Chen to his seat. The youth was given a set of questions on a scroll very quickly. The scroll was very similar to that of the pill dao scroll. There were thirty questions in all, sorted by the same kind of ranking system. Because the set of questions was cross-disciplinary in nature, their required answers were much more esoteric. However, this was no problem for him.

In his previous life, he’d managed the Tianlang Library. His scholarship was unrivaled. No subject was foreign to him. Though his expertise in them wasn’t nearly the same as his expertise in pill dao, it was still incomparable knowledge on the Divine Abyss Continent.

Though the questions contained much variety and tested minute details, this suited Jiang Chen’s tastes perfectly. Any of the candidates here might have a staggering amount of expertise in a single discipline: some were experts at refining talismans, some were lords at setting formations, and still more were adepts at math and machinery, medicine and astrology, beast-taming, weapon-smithing... the list went on.

One had to have at least a passing knowledge of many or all of these to do anything cross-disciplinary. It was commonly said that truly difficult things should be left up to professionals. However, Jiang Chen was different from the common man. He had professional talent in every field, capable of doing anything on

a whim by himself. Despite this, he wasn't as adroit with other disciplines the same way he was with pill dao.

Some questions warranted extended consideration to answer. Still, a day or so of time was more than enough for him to show his prowess. At the tail end of the third day, he finally completed the entire set of questions. Penning his identification number as a concluding act, he impressed it with the seal on his participant token. This marked the end of the general zone selection.

Jiang Chen rolled up his scroll with confidence. He didn't make a show of submitting it early this time. His time was about up anyway, so there was no point doing so. He firmly believed that while the rest of the candidates might be lords of certain disciplines, they did not nearly have the same breadth as he. Therefore, the test was essentially in the bag. As for the discipline of pill dao, Jiang Chen did not believe it possible for him to lose to anyone there.

Not that he was expecting to lose here either, of course. At least one of the three spots belonged to him for sure. It was a confidence born out of scholasticism. A confidence given to him by the memories from his previous life.

Time was up. Everyone had to submit their scrolls. Lin Zhirong stretched languidly, then felt his eyeballs bulge at the sight of something incredible. He rubbed his eyes with vehemence and tried to calm himself, then looked into the distance. Good heavens, he wasn't hallucinating!

"Brother Shao Yuan?" It was difficult to believe what his eyes were telling him. Lin Zhirong suspected for an instant that he was having vision problems. Reality told him, though, that it wasn't the case. The one he saw was Jiang Chen, plain as day.

Seeing Lin Zhirong's ghastly expression as the disguised youth lunged towards him, Jiang Chen returned a kind smile. "How did you do?"

Lin Zhirong was in no mood to reply. He glanced over his fellow youth like he was looking at a monster. In particular, he stared at Jiang Chen's neck; was there a second head growing from there?

"Brother Shao Yuan, so you really did come to the general zone after all! Don't tell me you gave up the test in the pill dao zone?" Lin Zhirong sighed. "You're a lot more good-for-nothing than I could ever be. I always thought I was the wasteful and frivolous one, but you've beat me, all right... haha, I definitely feel a sense of defeat here!"

"Who told you I was gave up on pill dao?" Jiang Chen was speechless.

"Er, hmm. If you didn't give up, how did you get here? I didn't even notice you come in." During the testing process, all the candidates were enclosed in a formation. They had no communication with the outside world. Thus, no one else had noted Jiang Chen's entry.

"Couldn't I have finished the pill dao test?" Veluriyam's young lord shot back. It was one thing for a couple of people to have that kind of reaction. The fact that absolutely everyone did, even his newfound friend, Jiang Chen found to be a little depressing.

Lin Zhirong stared at Jiang Chen the same way one would at an abomination. He tried to keep a straight, unsmiling face, punching at Jiang Chen's shoulder playfully. "Don't mess around, man. You're telling me

you finished the pill dao test? It's not the same thing as taking a nap or eating a meal, you know! How could it have been that simple?"

He didn't believe it. Jiang Chen was about the same age as him. A genius with this much life experience did not have enough of a foundation to accomplish something so absurd, no matter how talented he was. That went against common sense itself!

"Alright, look, Brother Shao Yuan. If you were crushed by the pill dao test, that's okay. It's all in the past! It's better to live in the present and be merry. Hey, why not let me treat you to a drink?"

The color on Jiang Chen's face was getting worse and worse. Lin Zhirong tried to console his new friend, his words and expression both as soothing as could be.

Jiang Chen had no words left. The world was a strange place. He had told anyone who asked the truth, and only the truth. Yet, no one had taken him seriously.

"All of the participating candidates, please refrain from leaving the Temple of Cleansing Fire. You may rest for a few moments outside, but do not go too far. In four hours, we will reveal the results, and the selected ones' identification numbers will be posted in the most prominent place here."

Ignoring Lin Zhirong's mutterings, Jiang Chen strode straight out of the Temple. He had been extremely busy for the entire three days past. He needed a break for sure. Outside the complex, he noticed that the adjacent square was filled with tens of thousands of people. People darted to and fro, and the atmosphere was tangibly aflame.

Clearly, everyone here knew that this was the day the nine arena lords would be announced for the Bounty Arena. They were waiting for the new lords to make their first public appearance and for a first look. Those who were interested in becoming assistants were especially keen in attending today.

Scanning the crowd, Jiang Chen found Lin Yanyu hidden within. Their eyes met for the briefest of moments, then simultaneously looked away. There was no greeting exchanged, and indeed no need for it. Seeing how relaxed his master was allowed Lin Yanyu to relax himself. It seems that master is doing very well. Obtaining an arena lord's spot should be no problem for him.

He was as excited as anyone else present. He had awaited here for three days solely for the moment of the big reveal.

Within the Temple of Cleansing Fire, all of the scrolls from the three areas had been gathered.

"Weren't a lot of people planning on doing multiple sets of questions? How come there's no sight of them, hmm?" one of the judges from the martial dao zone said.

"Now that you mention it, there was one person like that." Wang Xuetong replied with a wry smile. "We at the general zone received him, actually."

"Oh? Did he go there from the pill dao zone? There was no one from the martial dao zone that left early," the first judge said.

Pill King Blue Phoenix, of the pill dao zone, harrumphed coldly. "That flighty youngster only came for the attention. He made a lot of noise, but I doubt he has anything to show for it. How can you call that

challenging multiple subjects? In my opinion, he was challenging his own ability to make multiple messes of things.”

Everyone laughed at that. Pill King Blue Phoenix’s temperament was widely known, and he was not blamed for it.

Emperor Peerless, of the martial dao zone, was the only one to become serious at the pill king’s words. “Pill King Blue Phoenix, was there really someone who came out from the pill dao zone that wanted to challenge another subject? Who was it, may I ask?”

“You’ll hardly know a good-for-nothing like him, emperor. I hesitate to defile my lips by mentioning him.” The pill king was evidently incensed.

The emperor chuckled. “It is natural for young people to do ridiculous things in their youthful audacity. If all of them followed rules and sense all the time, there would be no fun left in the world. I took a look before, and only two youths signed up this time, is that right? Do you mean the young man that looks his age, or the one that doesn’t?”

Emperor Peerless had a keen eye characteristic of many masterful seniors. A single sweep was enough for him to roughly discern what each candidate was like. The emperor had known that both Jiang Chen and Lin Zhirong were youngsters as soon as he set eyes on them. Lin Zhirong’s disguise into a middle-aged lecher hadn’t escaped the emperor’s eyes.

Pill King Blue Phoenix shook his head in silence. The formation master, on the other hand, chuckled. “The kid that disguised himself as a middle-aged man has been in the general zone all this time. Our pill king is talking about the other youth.”

“Interesting, interesting.” Emperor Peerless inclined his head slightly, the corners of his mouth slightly curving. He made no further comments, instead waving his hand. “Let’s keep at it with the marking, everyone.”

The emperor’s appearance under these circumstances lent him a degree of legitimacy and face, even to the personnel of the Temple. Thus, no one thought it inappropriate for him to utter such a command. Accordingly, the rest of the judges began to mark the scrolls once more. A short while after, a bewildered shout was heard from the general zone.

Master Wang Xuetong was its source. All eyes focused on the formation master as if by prior agreement. They were curious about what could have evoked such a noise from him.

Wang Xuetong’s expression was as odd as could be. “How is this possible?! How?!” He cried out. It was as if he’d just seen the most improbable thing in the world.

“What’s not possible, Master Wang? What do you see?”

“Yes, is there a problem with the scroll? Or has a marvelous answer appeared?”

Wang Xuetong’s facial muscles shivered a little. He couldn’t resist slamming his palm against the desk. “A genius, a true genius... all thirty questions, flawlessly complete. This is the general zone test!”

There was an immediate uproar at his words.

Chapter 1047: Stunned

If it was the martial dao or the pill dao zone, then the possibility that someone might be able to answer all of the questions wasn't entirely out of the question. But the general zone? Formation master Wang Xuetong couldn't possibly be joking, could he? Everyone knew that the questions of the general zone comprised of all kinds of smaller studies and trades. The questions in there were so random that even the most learned person couldn't possibly master all of them. Therefore, anyone who could answer all twenty questions in the general zone was already an absolute all-rounder genius. But... wasn't that... impossible?

"Stop joking around, Master Wang."

"Yeah, you're not trying to tease us because we're too quiet, are you Master Wang?"

Wang Xuetong smiled wryly. "I wish, but... this is the truth. Emperor Peerless, come take a look and confirm as well?"

Emperor Peerless landed next to Wang Xuetong with a shift of his body and took the scroll. His eyes moved rapidly as he reviewed it. It took only a moment before some measure of seriousness entered his eyes. When he was finished, the seriousness had turned into admiration.

"It's true, it really is true!" Emperor Peerless had travelled across the world and gained much knowledge and experience in the process. He'd seen all sorts of geniuses in his time. However, this was the first time he encountered something so bizarre.

And then, something even stranger happened. A new exclamation resounded from the pill dao zone. It was even louder than Wang Xuetong's.

What now? Why were the judges at the pill dao zone flustered as well? Did someone score full marks there too?

"We have a perfect scroll too! Hahaha, this is brilliant! Pill King Blue Phoenix, come over here and take a look. This scroll is flawless!" The judge jumped out of his seat impatiently before passing the scroll to Pill King Blue Phoenix. It seemed like he'd discovered a new continent from the shock and joy on his face.

Pill King Blue Phoenix was a level-headed one, so he accepted the scroll calmly. However, it didn't take long before his eyebrows rose, he lost his cool and sprang up from his seat. "Genius, an absolute genius. Quick, find out who this person is! They are an absolute genius! The organization of these answers and the depth of knowledge this participant displays is so impressive that it is literally perfection incarnate!"

Those beside him couldn't help but shoot him a reminder. "We haven't finished reviewing the rest of the scrolls yet, so we can't unseal the numbers and check who he is."

But Pill King Blue Phoenix was already shaking with excitement. "Then what are we waiting for? Hurry up and review the rest of the scrolls. I have no doubt that this one stands at the top of the rankings. In fact, I dare say that the participant who answered this is a top rate genius and the indisputable leader of the pill dao zone. An arena lord seat for the pill dao zone is theirs already!"

Wang Xuetong echoed his sentiment as well. "You're right, a scroll like this deserves nothing but the top. I never thought that we'd accidentally discover such an amazing genius in this year's Bounty Arena!"

He couldn't help but look at Assistant Temple Master Gao of the Temple of Cleansing Fire. The assistant temple master smiled wryly. "You're not thinking that the Temple of Cleansing Fire is helping a participant to cheat, are you? If that's the case then allow me to say, there are absolutely no tricks going on in the selection. I swear this on the fortunes of the Temple of Cleansing Fire."

To be frank, the idea had crossed both Pill King Blue Phoenix and Wang Xuetong's minds. For that instant, they did wonder if the Temple had given out answer keys beforehand in order to promote a certain participant. How could such incredible answer scrolls be explained, otherwise? Anyone who could answer seventy to eighty percent of the questions correctly was amazing enough, but a perfect score? That didn't seem possible at all.

Even the two themselves dare not say that they could answer all of the questions perfectly.

But the supposedly impossible had happened regardless. Moreover, the Temple of Cleansing Fire had sworn on their sect's fortunes that they hadn't helped anyone unscrupulously. So not only were the owners of these two scrolls true geniuses, but more than one genius had appeared.

Everyone had high hopes for the results of the martial dao zone because of these perfect scores. Sadly, no such results appeared. The unexpected 'stimulation' still prompted the judges to review the scrolls a lot faster than normal. Everyone wanted to finish quickly and reveal who the two heaven-defying geniuses were.

Two hours later, the judges had reviewed every scroll. The results had also been ranked and were ready to be announced. The top three participants of the martial dao zone shared almost the exact same results.

As expected, the perfect scroll was first place in the pill dao zone. Although the second and third place participant's scores were far behind the champion's, they were also far ahead of the fourth place participant. Just the same, the perfect scroll in the general zone was even further ahead of second and third place. The gap was so enormous that they were nearly incomparable. This difference was the greatest out of all the zones.

After the rankings were made, the seals on the participant numbers were broken. Everyone wanted to know who were the two geniuses, so they matched the number to the name immediately.

Stunned amazement descended once more. The numbers on the two scrolls were exactly the same! This meant that the two scrolls... came from the same person.

The group felt that they had seen a ghost. How could this be? Inspiration flashed across someone's mind. He cried out, "Only those who challenged both zones can have two scrolls!"

His words broke them out of their confusion.

"Yeah, that's the only explanation why the same number has appeared on two different scrolls!"

"Tsk ts, unbelievable, truly unbelievable. They both came from the same person? How... how is this possible?"

"Am I dreaming? Did this candidate seriously finish two exams in three days and take the first place in both zones? Are... are they trying to defy logic or something?"

“Just who is this person?” Everyone’s gaze suddenly turned a little odd. When they looked at Pill King Blue Phoenix once more, they noticed that a look of deep embarrassment had colored his expression.

Who was it?

It was the ‘good-for-nothing’ Pill King Blue Phoenix criticized heavily earlier. It was the fellow that the pill king couldn’t be bothered to speak of. But he was wrong. This was no fop out to cause trouble. This was a true genius who’d challenged two zones at once and taken first place. Pill King Blue Phoenix was completely stunned by this turn of events. He muttered, “Blind, I was blind, I was so blind. I can’t believe I had mistaken a genius like him as a dandy. I am so ashamed. These eyes of mine have truly gotten old!”

He was a little close minded and fiery tempered, but he wasn’t completely without his merits. One of them was that he always admitted his mistakes. He never tried to disguise his faults, and he always strove to fix them. When he learned of his mistake, he openly admitted his faults without trying to explain or defend himself at all.

Everyone was impressed by his bearing. They were worried that the pill king would be biased towards that young man in order to save face. That was why no one had expressed much surprise or wear their heart on their sleeves. The group cheered after he openly admitted his mistake. Pill King Blue Phoenix’s actions meant that they didn’t need to worry about his feelings, and that they were free to be happy about this unprecedented genius.

Wang Xuetong was a great formation master, but right now he had tossed all the airs of a master to the back of his mind. He paced in excited circles, “I can’t wait any longer. This is a genius you cannot miss. It seems that participating in this time’s Bounty Arena was a wise decision!”

Pill King Blue Phoenix nodded repeatedly. He had completely forgotten how terribly he treated that young man earlier.

Emperor Peerless was the only person who maintained his bearing of a great emperor. He chuckled. “It is unfortunate that this boy didn’t participate in the martial dao zone. Still, the fact that he took two arena lord seats by himself is proof of his amazing talents. I must say that Pillfire City’s foundation is truly enviable.”

Even Emperor Peerless had voiced his approval enviously. It delighted the Temple of Cleansing Fire even further. This was undoubtedly great news as the accidental discovery of such an amazing genius was a momentous achievement.

Assistant Temple Master Gao grinned from ear to ear. “I need to report this news to the temple master.”

He was just an assistant temple master, but also in charge of all matters, big and small, in the Temple. There was indeed a temple master, but he hadn’t dabbled in worldly affairs since several hundred years ago.

“Assistant Temple Master Gao, I think we should announce the rankings first.” Pill King Blue Phoenix suggested.

Wang Xuetong also nodded. “Yes, the winners of the selection are the crowd’s biggest concern right now. I don’t think we should make them wait.”

The assistant temple master turned to look at Emperor Peerless. The emperor also nodded. "Let's post the ranking first."

His words carried more weight than the other two experts. Thus reassured, the assistant temple master agreed. "In that case, let us announce the ranking first."

The assistant temple master led at the front of the group. The experts needed to be present as well. They needed to let the people know that the selection was completely fair, and that no tricks whatsoever were involved.

The entrance to the Temple of Cleansing Fire was quite jam packed. Crowds had nearly filled the public square in front of the entrance as well. A great mass of people filled any empty space from the temple courtyard to Skyfire Avenue. Feverish sentiment filled the air.

The assistant temple master appeared first, followed by the three experts. The hub bub outside the Temple instantly instantly subsided at this. The rankings in the assistant temple master's hands seemed to have a magical power of instantly silencing everyone. They all stared passionately at the precious pieces of paper.

Assistant Temple Master Gao met gazes with his own steady one before announcing, "The wait has been long. The listing of arena lords has been decided. We have three ranking lists here, each one representing a single zone. All participants will be able to check their rankings. There are a total of nine seats, and a total of eight had the fortune to be chosen as arena lords. There is a special mark at the topmost of the ranking. You'll know it when you see it."

He made a sweeping motion and the three lists flew into the air to plaster themselves on the walls of the Temple of Cleansing Fire.

Chapter 1048: I Come From Myriad Abyss Island

There were nine arena lord seats, yet only eight people were selected? Many immediately caught on that something was up. There was something else at play here. The quicker ones immediately realized that someone had earned two arena lord seats. It wasn't unprecedented for one person to earn two arena lord seats, but it was a once in a century occurrence. However, there was only numbers and not a single name on the ranking list. Other than the officials, nobody knew for sure who these numbers represented.

Assistant Temple Master Gao smiled. "Alright, those with their number on the list, please step forward and let everyone see you."

Many who joined the Bounty Arena tryouts were from incredible backgrounds. Those who'd triumphed stepped out from the crowd and walked on stage after hearing the announcement. Basking in the attention of a crowd of millions was a very enjoyable feeling. They didn't hesitate at all. However, Jiang Chen wasn't fully engrossed in the moment of glory. He was more concerned about the Bounty Arena. Many gazes set upon him when he stepped out.

Pill King Blue Phoenix's gaze was practically glued to him. Wang Xuetong also seemed incredibly moved. He stared at Jiang Chen as though he was staring at his first love.

Jiang Chen had gotten used to the limelight. After all, he was an incredibly prominent figure and idol in Veluriyam Capital. He stepped on the stage and greeted their complicated gazes with a faint smile. It was his way of showing courtesy.

Assistant Temple Master Gao could immediately tell that the young man before him was the genius who had earned two arena lord seats. He very much admired geniuses like like the young man.

"Congratulations, young man." He greeted Jiang Chen warmly.

The other arena lords were a little surprised by how cordial the assistant temple master was being. Some even felt quite bitter over the actions. They were all arena lords of equal stature. Why was the assistant temple master being friendly to only the young man? However, something even more surprising soon followed.

Emperor Peerless walked up to Jiang Chen without hiding his admiration. "Such a multi-talented genius that is neither servile nor overbearing. What a rare temperament. Very rare indeed!"

Who was Emperor Peerless? He'd seen more geniuses than there was stars in the sky. Some like to put on mysterious airs, others faked politeness, while yet others trembled in their boots. Those as collected as the young man before him could be counted on a single hand. Moreover, this young man wasn't faking anything. His aura emanated from his body naturally.

The other arena lords became even more depressed after Emperor Peerless approached the young man. Why was everyone putting so much attention to him? Was it because of his age?

No ordinary person could ever stand out among millions and obtain a seat as a arena lord. They had their own pride and dignity. They felt a little upset when Emperor Peerless and the assistant temple master sing the young man's praises. They were treated quite well, but nowhere close to as good as the young man.

What happened next shocked them even further. Pill King Blue Phoenix approached the young man and actually bowed to him!

"Young man, I apologize for my attitude from before. This old man must've been blind for failing to recognize such a great talent!" His expression was very sincere.

Jiang Chen had realized that the pill king harbored some misunderstandings, but he never thought that the latter would suddenly apologize in the open. "Pill King Blue Phoenix, you speak too strongly. This young junior didn't explain things clearly as I was rushing to the general zone. It is I that should apologize," he quickly responded.

The senior executives of the Temple of Cleansing Fire nodded approvingly at Jiang Chen. A young man of his temperament was truly a rare breed. The common youth would likely be over the moon right now if they'd gotten an arena lord seat by luck. They would never maintain their calm.

Jiang Chen however, didn't seem the least bit excited. Everything almost seemed like a matter of course. He didn't blindly accept the pill king's apology or mock him like most youths would in this situation. Instead, he had resolved the situation in a way that was most acceptable to the pill king. One couldn't help but praise the young man for his excellent conduct.

The assistant temple master noticed the odd expressions on the other arena lord's faces. He immediately laughed and introduced Jiang Chen. "I forgot to mention, this is a young man who stepped across two zones and earned himself two arena lord seats. By the way, how can we address you?"

"This junior is named Shao Yuan."

"Shao Yuan?" The assistant temple master furrowed his brows a little. "I'm sorry for any offense, but may I ask where you're from? I don't seem to remember that we have such an incredible youth in Pillfire City?"

Jiang Chen had prepared an appropriate response as he'd anticipated this scenario. He didn't speak in vague terms after the assistant temple master had raised his question. Instead, he responded with a faint smile. "This junior is not from Pillfire City. I'm from Myriad Abyss Island."

"What?" The assistant temple master was incredibly shaken by the response. A myriad of expressions flitted across his face. The senior executives of the temple were also taken by surprise. They stared at Jiang Chen, mouth wide agape, as though a monster was before them.

Emperor Peerless was also incredibly surprised. "Myriad Abyss Island?"

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Master Wang Xuotong wasn't immune to the shock either. They fixed their gaze on Jiang Chen to try and figure out what game the youth was trying to play.

"You're from Myriad Abyss Island?" The assistant temple master couldn't resist asking.

Jiang Chen nodded without giving any explanations. If he explained himself too much, it might seem like he was trying to cover up a lie. The factions in the Upper Eight Regions weren't familiar with Myriad Abyss Island anyway. It was just a myth to them. He was free to conjure any story he wished. With his background, he'd have no problem impersonating someone from the heavenly planes, let alone Myriad Abyss Island.

The assistant temple master was at a loss for words. He immediately turned towards Emperor Peerless to see what the all-knowing emperor thought of this situation. The emperor let out a big sigh. "The Myriad Abyss Island is from the story of legends. I heard that there's a place called Eternal Divine Kingdom where countless great emperor realm experts reside. Is the legend really true?"

The assistant temple master suddenly realized that this was no place to discuss such things. He immediately guided them inside with a gesture. "Let us talk inside."

Emperor Peerless nodded. This was definitely not a topic to be spoken about in the open. Fortunately, the crowd had made too much of a commotion to hear their conversation.

The assistant temple master immediately announced. "Everyone keep your calm. The eight arena lords have already been chosen. They will pick their assistants in two hours. Everyone, please remain patient."

Jiang Chen had disrupted the flow of the event with just a single sentence. The assistant temple master had no choice but to postpone the following events by two hours.

"Brother Shao, please enter."

Jiang Chen smiled and responded with a gesture. "After you, Assistant Temple Master Gao and seniors."

Emperor Peerless laughed admiringly at Jiang Chen's excellent manners. He approached him and patted him in the shoulder. "Let's go! We shall enter together!"

He wasn't hiding his admiration for Jiang Chen at all. The other arena lords were incredibly envious. Some of these arena lords hadn't even heard about Myriad Abyss Island before. However, they could deduce that it was an incredibly amazing place after hearing what Emperor Peerless had said. Was the Myriad Abyss Island real? Did that brat really come from that legendary place? Surely this was a scam!

Truth be told, everyone, including the Temple of Cleansing Fire, was rather doubtful of Jiang Chen's words. However, they would rather err on the side of believing it was real than the other way round. The senior executives, three seniors, and the eight arena lords convened within a secret chamber within the Temple of Cleansing Fire.

The assistant temple master looked towards the other seven arena lords and warned them with a sinister voice. "Dear honored guests, whatever you hear today shall forever remain within this room. You shall never leak anything to the outside world in any manner or form. Doing otherwise will make you an enemy of the Temple."

The seven arena lords immediately understood the weight of the situation after seeing how serious the assistant temple master was being. Someone immediately expressed their trustworthiness.

"I need you to swear upon your inner demons." the assistant temple master spoke firmly.

"This is no small matter. This old man shall be the first to show my sincerity. I swear upon my inner demons that I shan't tell anyone of this matter except to my dao partner." Emperor Peerless immediately swore his vow.

The emperor was incredibly devoted to this dao partner. It was only natural that he wouldn't hide any secrets from her. Pill King Blue Phoenix quickly followed. "I swear upon my inner demons that I shan't tell anyone of the matters spoken here today."

There was no way Wang Xuetong could back away now that the others had already made vows. He followed suit and swore to his inner demons.

The seven arena lords realized that it was no longer avoidable after seeing the three great seniors swear their vows. There wasn't much reason for them to be hesitant. After all, they weren't about to do something that went against their conscience. They were only asked to keep a secret. The people from the Temple of Cleansing Fire wasn't exempted from the vows either.

The assistant temple master turned towards Jiang Chen after everyone had sworn upon their inner demons. "Brother Shao Yuan, you've already seen everyone's sincerity. Now, there's only one question left. Are you really from Myriad Abyss Island? Is there really such a place in the Divine Abyss Continent?"

Jiang Chen was only using the Myriad Abyss Island's name as a deterrence. He never thought that they'd take it so seriously. However, he was actually certain that the Myriad Abyss Island was real. Huang'er was the living proof.

Chapter 1049: Attention from Emperor Peerless

The legend of Myriad Abyss Island was a weighty subject. The seriousness of those present made Jiang Chen appreciate its impact all the more.

Emperor Peerless stared at him with some difficulty. "Don't worry, young man. Tell us all that you know. If you've made everything up, please make it plain to us. I will intervene on your behalf so that nothing bad befalls you. But if you do speak the truth, then speak on."

The emperor spoke with a very genuine tone. Jiang Chen had no doubt of the old man's candid character. A single look into his eyes told Jiang Chen that.

"Emperor Peerless, Assistant Temple Master Gao. I'm sure men of your stature know whether Myriad Abyss Island exists or not. However, let my words be affirmation to your suspicions: it does indeed exist. It might as well not, though, for most of the world trying to get there."

There was no insincerity in Jiang Chen's words.

Emperor Peerless gazed at Jiang Chen for another long while before nodding. "As I thought," he sighed, "There is somewhere like Myriad Abyss Island within the Divine Abyss Continent. All is as it should be... indeed."

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Wang Xueting exchanged looks, anticipation unmistakable in their eyes.

"I didn't think that the legends were true. Friend Shao, stories say that those upon the island cannot leave it and enter the mortal realms, but you..."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "At the end of the day, stories are just that: stories. Not everything about them is accurate. Though the Myriad Abyss Island has such an unspoken law, hardly everyone strictly upholds it. In fact, many experts from the island have come to these worldly realms over the past years. Not just the human domain, either, but that of the other races as well. That the local factions didn't detect their presence is hardly any fault of theirs."

"Mythical beings tend to keep themselves well-hidden. That's unsurprising." Emperor Peerless let out another sigh. "The occasional inexplicable events that occur in the human domain... they must have been the hand of hidden masters. I hear that Sacred Peafowl Mountain has appointed a new young lord lately, one with unfathomable knowledge. He apparently received tutelage from an expert not of this world when he was young. Apparently the expert is stronger than even great emperor! Who else could this expert be, if not from Myriad Abyss Island?"

The mention of Veluriyam Capital turned the atmosphere slightly sour. It was common knowledge that the city was Pillfire City's number one enemy. No resident of the latter could bear the former any goodwill. However, Emperor Peerless wasn't someone from that category. He had no horse in the race. He'd only said what he did to make a point.

The particular turn of phrase, however, almost made Jiang Chen's heart jump out of his chest.

If not for the fact that the emperor's expression did not change one bit as he said it, Jiang Chen was almost suspicious enough to think that the old man had found him out. But it seemed that he'd been too worried.

“Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s young lord Zhen has a lot of wind in his sails over at Veluriyam,” Assistant Temple Master Gao said coolly. “However, as long as the matter of the city’s heritage isn’t settled, there’ll be plenty of internal strife for them to deal with sooner or later. So what if young lord Zhen had some mythical master teach him while he was young? I don’t think it’ll save him from being embroiled in all that trouble.”

The assistant temple master definitely had a grudge against the young lord in question. There was definitely no love lost there.

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Wang Xuetong did not air their thoughts on the subject. They maintained stoic and thoughtful expressions.

“I’m curious,” Emperor Peerless smiled faintly. “How strong are Myriad Abyss Island’s cultivators, really? Can just a few years of tutelage result in a genius that soars above all the Upper Eight Regions’ peers?”

All eyes fell on Jiang Chen. They wanted an answer from him. Thankfully, the young lord had some information prepared from Huang’er in advance. His reply was measured and unhurried. “The Myriad Abyss Island is very large. The Eternal Divine Kingdom has no borders. Yes, it is called an island, but it’s actually a continent several times larger than the human domain. Only empyrean cultivators can be counted among the truly strong there. Supposedly, the strongest surpass even that realm of cultivation.”

Empyrean? And a realm above that?

These words hammered against the assistant temple master’s breast like a hefty fist. He was only ninth level emperor realm, and not its peak, at that. There was little hope of him ever entering great emperor realm for the rest of his days, much less acquire his own empyrean decree by intuiting the truths of heaven and earth. Above empyrean realm? That was not something he needed ever to think about.

Emperor Peerless believed Jiang Chen’s words implicitly. “As a place of legend, Myriad Abyss Island is undoubtedly ten times superior to the mortal realms. How did it come to be, my young friend?”

“The Island has always existed. In ancient times, Divine Abyss Continent’s native cultivators fought with the demon race. In the aftermath of that struggle, some of those cultivators left that land. They passed through an endless sea before coming upon Myriad Abyss Island, their newfound haven. There, they settled down and propagated. Ever since long ago, the Island has neither seen the smoke of battle nor heard the drums of war. As such, Myriad Abyss Island is the product of long-standing peace.” Jiang Chen had come to these conclusions based on what he knew himself.

Had the Island really come about like this? He didn’t know, but his explanation made as much sense as any other. He did refrain from calling the ancient cultivators who’d first gone to the Island a bunch of pacifistic cowards, however. There was no reason someone who originated from there would disparage their ancestors.

To avoid an endless stream of questions, Jiang Chen decided to add something. “I’ve said all I can about Myriad Abyss Island, everyone. The rest must be left unsaid, I’m afraid.”

Those present were smart enough to understand. The young man before them was disinclined to take questions.

"I have but a single question, if I may," Emperor Peerless smiled. "Can cultivators from the human domain get to Myriad Abyss Island?"

"In theory. There is great danger and risk in crossing the endless sea. If you can obtain your very own empyrean decree, then there's no problem. Otherwise, the chance for a great emperor realm cultivator to forcibly cross without dimensional coordinates is less than ten percent."

Huang'er had told Jiang Chen all of this as well. Empyrean cultivators aside, Myriad Abyss Island clearly did not want outsiders to get in. They felt that the mortal realms had been polluted in the ancient battle against the demon race. Accordingly, the bloodlines of said realms were no longer pure. How could an island that touted themselves as a sacred land of divines allow impurities into their midst? Despite that... empyrean cultivators were another matter altogether.

Jiang Chen didn't care for Myriad Abyss Island's philosophy. From his point of view, Myriad Abyss Island had initially been populated by a bunch of deserters and wimps. Their descendants could be no better, nor could the place where they lived and gathered.

Assistant Temple Master Gao had a bellyful of questions of his own, but Jiang Chen's stern attitude made him think twice. He was unlikely to get answers to any of them even if he did press further. Suppressing his curiosity, he said, "Young master Shao, we at the Temple of Cleansing Fire are blessed with your presence. You are from Myriad Abyss Island, yet you've graced us with your participation in the Bounty Arena. I fully expect you to give us an extraordinary performance."

He said he was from Myriad Abyss Island, right? We'll see if his bite is as potent as his bark. Both of Jiang Chen's test scrolls had been superb, but a practical display better showed one's true mettle. To be honest, the assistant temple master distrusted the young man's origin claims still. That aside, there was every indication that he wasn't like any genius of the human domain. The human domain had numerous geniuses, but none of his caliber.

Emperor Peerless roared with laughter. "Hard to imagine that I'd get the opportunity to participate in the Bounty Arena with a Myriad Abyss Island genius! This has been absolutely worth my while."

Even without Jiang Chen saying he was from the Island, the emperor's attitude towards him had been one of carefree appreciation.

Praise did not cause Jiang Chen to lose himself. "I am simply a youngster like any other," he said humbly. "There is no need to give me undue praise, Senior Peerless."

"Haha, I don't think it's at all undue. No, no. How could any praise be so for a genius from Myriad Abyss Island? Come on, let's go pick some assistants."

The emperor's authority here was sovereign. Truthfully, Assistant Temple Master Gao lacked the face to request his presence. The reason he had decided to come for the Bounty Arena was twofold. One was to return a favor, but the other was yet unrevealed. There was no way that the assistant temple master could oppose the older man.

The other arena lords were quite envious of the way their younger peer was being treated, but what could they do? Complain?

Jiang Chen had the necessary knowledge and skill. Moreover, he was from Myriad Abyss Island. Either of these two factors meant that the Temple had to give him more than sufficient respect. Not to mention how much Emperor Peerless was applauding the youth...

Occupying the position of a single arena master allowed one to select up to nine assistants. Because Jiang Chen had two, he could pick eighteen. This made him doubly attractive to everyone outside. The instant he left the premises, countless rushed up in an attempt to become his assistant through flattery. Alas, Emperor Peerless's protection of the young man was reason enough for them to reconsider. They lacked the courage to put their plans into action. The pressure of a great emperor cultivator was truly very intimidating.

"Young man, you cannot afford to be too casual with your choices for assistants. Some are skill-less charlatans who can only work to your detriment. Don't be afraid of angering people. If you need it, I'll be here to offer you an additional fear factor. Ignore anyone that you're not satisfied with, no matter what they say or do." Emperor Peerless was being excessively kind to Jiang Chen. He instructed and supported the young man in every capacity, the assistant-picking process included.

Jiang Chen was quite appreciative of the old emperor's patronage. With the emperor backing him up, the swindlers and phonies were loath to approach. It saved him a lot of trouble. The young lord of Veluriyam had very peculiar standards for picking his assistants. His first was that they had to be wandering cultivators. Those who were not were instantly out of the equation.

This rule eliminated most from his pool of consideration.

Emperor Peerless found that a little odd. Because he was a wandering cultivator as well, he wondered whether the young man was doing so out of deference to him? But the young man's actual behavior indicated no such thing.

Chapter 1050: The Bounty Arena Begins

Jiang Chen truly wasn't planning on currying favor with Emperor Peerless. However, he was very interested in the emperor, just like the latter was very interested in him. Jiang Chen didn't rush to recruit his assistants. He was a principled person, and he wished recruit his assistants to his banner as well. That was why he set a very high bar of entry.

His first requirement was that all who wished to become his assistant must be wandering cultivators. Wandering cultivators had no other ties, so they would be easier to recruit than ones supported by various sects and powers. Although most wandering cultivators preferred to be free and had unrestrained personalities, Jiang Chen still preferred to interact with them compared to the cultivators of big powers.

He wasn't worried if some cultivators might fake their abilities in attempt to get in. To begin with, those with true power and influence would never disguise themselves as a wandering cultivator just to be an assistant. They would think the act beneath them. This was just one example of how much more complicated Jiang Chen's assistant selection process was compared to the other arena lords.

Jiang Chen preferred to recruit only the best of the best, so he never lowered his bar even if it made the selection process difficult. He would rather send most away than accept anyone who didn't meet his

requirements. Although Emperor Peerless didn't understand why Jiang Chen was being so selective with his assistants, he didn't go back on his promise to protect the lad.

Lin Yanyu used the opportunity to meet up with Jiang Chen and join him as a wandering cultivator. Lin Zhirong hadn't made arena lord, but for some reason he just wouldn't stop pestering Jiang Chen to make him an assistant. In the end, Jiang Chen gave him a slot on the basis of their brief friendship.

Three days later, Jiang Chen had filled only twelve out of the eighteen slots that were allocated to him. He decided to gift the remaining six slots to Emperor Peerless as a favor since he wasn't going to use them anyway. "Senior Peerless, I don't plan to use the six remaining slots I have. If you have any suitable candidates in mind, please use them as you see fit."

Emperor Peerless was a little astonished. An assistant slot was in high demand. There were countless people who couldn't get one even if they wanted to. But this young man had just given him six of them! This generosity alone was worth Emperor Peerless' approval. He found it very hard to dislike a young man like him. However, the emperor wasn't a greedy person. He smiled at Jiang Chen. "In that case, I shall find two more candidates for you. As for the remaining four, why don't you check with Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong to see if they have anyone in mind?"

Emperor Peerless knew that Jiang Chen was doing him a favor, but he couldn't possibly accept all six slots from him. He thought that Jiang Chen should share some of them with Pill Master Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong. This way, he would be doing everyone a favor. Jiang Chen knew that Emperor Peerless was thinking on his behalf, so he immediately nodded. "Of course. You are much more attentive than I am, Senior Peerless."

Pill King Blue Phoenix was a top thirty six quasi-pill emperor within the Pillfire Hall of Fame. Naturally, his network was widespread. Jiang Chen knew that Pill King Blue Phoenix had no problems fulfilling those two slots, and he would be giving the pill king a favor too. The pill king was naturally delighted and admired Jiang Chen even more.

Formation Master Wang Xuetong was of the same opinion. When he heard that Jiang Chen wanted to gift him two assistant slots, he was very pleased and honored by the gift. If two assistant slots was enough for Jiang Chen to gain favor with Formation Master Wang Xuetong, whyever not?

With the aid of his three seniors, Jiang Chen finally filled the eighteen assistant slots. The Temple of Cleansing Fire was more or less done with their preparations as well when he was done. And so, the Bounty Arena began.

Nine main arenas were aligned around the enormous public square at the Temple of Cleansing Fire's entrance in order of seniority. Emperor Peerless was given the first main arena, followed by Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong. Jiang Chen was given the fourth main arena, second only to the three seniors, because he hailed from Myriad Abyss Island.

The arenas for martial dao, pill dao and the general zone were all different from each other. This made it very easy for those with bounty missions to locate their intended zones. The Bounty Arena lasted for a short fifteen days, therefore, it bustled with activity the moment it started. Not everyone could just walk up to an arena lord and offer their mission however. Every participant was required to draw lots first

and see if they obtained the right to post a bounty. If they didn't, they could only wait for the next chance.

The atmosphere livened up in no time. That Jiang Chen took two arena lord seats for himself made him a center of attention of the Bounty Arena. However, there were many people who didn't seek him out because he was too young. The three great seniors were most people's first choice.

The first choice of the martial dao zone was of course Emperor Peerless. The first choice of the pill dao zone was Pill King Blue Phoenix. Finally, the first choice of the general zone was Formation Master Wang Xuetong. This was only normal. After all, seniority and prestige was important in all domains of study, and these three experts were representatives of the highest authority in their respective domains.

Jiang Chen didn't envy them. He wasn't interested in small bounties. He found the small bounties that kept landing in his arenas to be utterly beneath his attention. So he allowed his assistants to resolve all of the missions. This was especially true when it came to pill dao. In this regard, Jiang Chen delegated practically all of his work to Lin Yanyu. As a result, Lin Yanyu became the busiest assistant in both arenas. As for Lin Zhirong, Jiang Chen secretly observed him for a moment and discovered that he was surprisingly talented. He had a wide assortment of knowledge and was able to provide some unique opinions no matter what kind of missions he was dealing with.

Most of the people who attended the Bounty Arena were focused on martial dao and pill dao. Although there were plenty of people who visited the general zone, the number of visitors were lesser compared to the other two. The busiest arena was Emperor Peerless' arena.

Although Jiang Chen's arena was slightly far away from the emperor's arena, he could still see that it was filled with people. It was clear that a great emperor held unparalleled attractiveness.

Even Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong's arenas weren't nearly as busy as Emperor Peerless'. Jiang Chen suspected that supplicants weren't here to post bounties, but to form ties with the emperor. However, Emperor Peerless was very patient. He didn't lose his temper because of this.

The emperor aside, Pill King Blue Phoenix was probably the second busiest person of the Bounty Arena. However, the pill king seemed intent on helping out Jiang Chen as he kept pushing people to Jiang Chen's side whenever he got a little too busy. He kept introducing people to Jiang Chen's main arena, telling them that Jiang Chen was a young man of extraordinary talent who impressed even him. Thanks to Pill King Blue Phoenix's recommendation, people tentatively visited Jiang Chen's arena in hopes of getting their bounties resolved. That was how Jiang Chen's arenas slowly grew in numbers.

"Arena Lord, I'm not very confident that I can solve this friend's problem. Can you check this?" Lin Yanyu led a supplicant in front of Jiang Chen.

Lin Yanyu knew that his master found the average bounties to be beneath his attention. That was he did his best to solve all these questions on his own. Even when he really couldn't answer them, he would turn the question to other pill dao assistants first. This time however, he couldn't find anyone who could solve this question confidently even though he had checked with every pill dao assistant. This was why he'd finally turned to his master.

Jiang Chen glanced at the bounty. The mission rank was high enough. It was a rank seven bounty with a reward of two million saint spirit stones. It was also the highest rank bounty he had received in both arenas thus far. The mission was about the cultivation of spirit herbs. After a moment of reading, he had a rough idea of how to resolve the mission.

"I can solve this bounty, but your reward isn't high enough." The cultivation of a spirit herb involved a great deal of technical knowledge. This was a rank seven bounty worth two million saint spirit stones, but Jiang Chen thought that it should be a rank eight bounty at least. He didn't think that it was worth solving at the price he was offered.

"Arena Lord Shao, I'm only here because Pill King Blue Phoenix says that you're a genius, you know. That's why I gave him face and came here to boost your business." The poster felt a little disgruntled when he heard that Jiang Chen wanted to up the price of his bounty. His tone and expression was very displeased too.

Jiang Chen smiled calmly. "Pill King Blue Phoenix sent you to me because he trusted me. If you don't believe that I'm a suitable candidate, you may go to other main arenas and try your luck there. Perhaps one of them is willing to accept a lower price."

Annoyed, the man retorted angrily, "Then there is nothing else to say. Even if the butcher is gone, that doesn't mean I can't find pork meat elsewhere."

Jiang Chen watched the angry man leave and didn't urge him to stay.

"Master, can you claim that bounty?" Lin Yanyu thought that it was a pity to let the man go just like this.

Jiang Chen nodded. "His mission isn't a simple one, but his reward doesn't match its difficulty. We are the arena lords of this arena, so we don't need to yield too much to these supplicants and lower our status as a result."

Such were his principles.

In his opinion, the bounty should've been a rank eight, worth five million saint spirit stones at minimum. Does that guy really think that he could get away with just two million saint spirit stones? Jiang Chen didn't feel that his skills came that cheaply. Moreover, he was sure that there were very few people who could resolve that mission. Even if there was, their price would not go lower than five million saint spirit stones.

Lin Yanyu had unwavering faith in his master. Although he thought that it was a great shame to miss out on two million saint spirit stones, he was sure his master had his own reasons for doing so. They didn't lack bounties anyway. There were plenty of people who were still queuing outside and waiting to get in. They didn't lack customers at all.

And how long had it been since the Bounty Arena began? In less than four hours, their two arenas had welcomed at least thirty supplicants. They had accumulated more than ten million saint spirit stones up to this point. At this rate, he was sure their income for the next half a month's time could only be described as handsome...