

Three Realms 1131

Chapter 1131: A Guest Pill King

The Han brothers were dumbfounded by the sudden revelation. They'd never have dreamed that Sir Shao Yuan was actually Veluriyam's Pill King Zhen! Wry smiles and glances were exchanged with each other. Han Qianzhan was a very carefree person. He was disappointed by the sudden turn of events, but quickly accepted the reality of things.

"Oh well. I must say that I'm extremely jealous of Emperor Peafowl for finding such an excellent heir. Veluriyam Capital's fortunes are still as strong as ever!" Han Qianzhan exclaimed with envy.

Han Qiansui nodded in agreement. "Pill King Zhen, this means that you've defeated Pill King Ji Lang twice in a row! It'll be most entertaining if news of this gets out! His undefeated legend will be thoroughly ripped into shreds!"

Jiang Chen smiled and made no comment.

"Pill King Zhen, why does a famous and well-celebrated person like you conceal your true identity? It's a good opportunity to make an even better name for yourself!" Han Qianzhan couldn't help but ask.

"Everybody knows that Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City are rivals. If the city finds out that I'm the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, I'm afraid they'll won't let me set foot out of their city ever again." Jiang Chen answered in a self-deprecating manner.

Odd expressions flashed across the brothers' faces. Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Surely you don't think I'd traveled all the way to Pillfire City just to take them down a notch?"

"Isn't that the case?" Han Qianzhan answered ruefully.

Emperor Peafowl laughed. "It truly isn't! I can attest to that!"

The group immediately burst into hearty laughter.

"It's a pity that the Skysword Sect has missed the opportunity to recruit you, Pill King Zhen." Han Qianzhan breathed out a long sigh.

"Regrettably, my little brother can't join the Skysword Sect, but that doesn't mean we can't partner with each other. Isn't there such a thing as a guest pill king? Surely a sect as grand and distinguished as yours can afford to have him as a guest pill king?" Emperor Peerless said while smiling.

The Han brothers exchanged glances that were brimming with excitement. Emperor Peerless had made a good point! They'd failed to recruit him, but they could just offer him a spot as a guest pill king! The entire Upper Eight Regions placed his abilities on par with pill emperors at the moment, so one could only imagine how frightening the young pill emperor would become in the future.

They had a feeling that Pillfire City's overwhelming dominance in the Upper Eight Region's pill dao might soon be challenged. And in fact, change was already happening, Pillfire City was merely unaware of it. After Pill King Zhen took over the Upper Eight Region's pill dao by the storm, who could possibly stop him then? Pillfire City? Impossible! Even their most vaunted Pill King Ji Lang had lost to Pill King Zhen twice. Was Emperor Pillzenith supposed to go up against him?

Emperor Pillzenith had a very strong foundation in pill dao, but in terms of raw talent, he likely was on par with Pill King Ji Lang. What Emperor Pillzenith was famous for was equal strength in both martial dao and pill dao, but he likely wasn't a match for Pill King Zhen in terms of raw pill dao.

The Reformation Pill, Longevity Pill...

These impossibly complicated pills were child's play to Pill King Zhen. His frightening foundation in pill dao wasn't something that Pillfire City could possibly hope to measure up to.

The Han Brothers couldn't help but wonder where had Pill King Zhen obtained his pill dao heritage. Shao Yuan had first appeared with rumors of Myriad Abyss Island swirling around him. Not many believed that gossip back then. But if he wasn't from the legendary island, where in the human domain could he have possibly obtained such a powerful pill dao heritage?

Regardless of his origin, a future pill dao master like him was definitely worth associating with.

Through Han Qianzhan's incredible foresight and reasoning, he foresaw that Jiang Chen was going to turn everything upside down in the pill dao world. He sucked in a deep breath and looked at Jiang Chen passionately. "Pill King Zhen, no, maybe we should address you as Pill Emperor Zhen instead? What do you think of Brother Mo's suggestion. Pill Emperor Zhen?"

Jiang Chen threw a meaningful glance at the Han brothers and pondered deeply. "If I disagree, I'd be letting both of you down. However, I have a condition as well."

"Please, do speak your mind."

Jiang Chen nodded and spoke slowly. "I need a favor from Sect head Qianzhan. One day, when I need the sect head to return the favor, he would need to do so unconditionally."

A favor? Under normal circumstances, Han Qianzhan wouldn't even consider accepting such a vague condition. But this time, he immediately accepted the condition after a moment's consideration. "Fair enough, it's a deal!"

"Sect Head Qianzhan, aren't you curious what I might ask from you?"

"Haha! Your reputation precedes you! No one has ever accused you of any immoral or unscrupulous atrocities. Because of that, I'm inclined to trust you."

Jiang Chen nodded. "Sect Head Qianzhan, rest assured. I won't use this favor to do anything unethical. However, there are some matters in which I might need an eminent figure like you to show up to bolster my side. Of course, we might offend some people, but I'll make it up you."

"Haha! As long as we're not doing anything atrocious, why should we fear offending a few people? As cultivators, when do we not give offense! We're bound to offend someone when we go about our business in this world!" Han Qianzhan burst into laughter.

"It's so happily settled then." Han Qiansui nodded. "Pill Emperor Zhen, please feel free to ask for any remuneration for your troubles."

Jiang Chen smiled. "Let's talk specifics then. I won't ask for remuneration when I'm not offering my services. I'm sure that your sect won't require my help for common issues. If you have pill dao questions

that you cannot solve, I'll ask for as little remuneration as possible, unless it has to do with a business transaction."

Han Qianzhan clapped. "Deal! Your straightforwardness is truly a breath of fresh air!"

"Actually, the Ancient Reformation Pill is a rather good business opportunity!" Han Qiansui suddenly remarked. "There are many in need of a body reforming pill."

The Reformation Pill was indeed a business opportunity, but Jiang Chen smiled with disagreement. "The Reformation Pill is indeed an exceptionally rare pill, but its manufacturing cost is too high, refining process too long, and skill requirement too arduous. The market returns will not be high because not many will actually be able to afford it."

Han Qiansui seemed to agree after thinking about it more. The Reformation Pill was genuinely a good product, but it wasn't suitable for mass production due to the various reasons mentioned. The common pill king wouldn't be able to manufacture it, let alone the majority of pill masters.

With the partnership discussion concluded, the Han brothers and Jiang Chen's group had swiftly grown closer to each other. They now had many common topics to talk about.

Jiang Chen and the rest ended up staying at the Skysword Sect for a total of five more days instead of three. The Han brothers earnestly tried keeping them for more, but they couldn't delay their journey any longer. In forming a partnership with the Skysword Sect, Jiang Chen had gained a very important ally in the human domain.

"Pill Emperor Zhen, we wish to send a group of pill kings to Sacred Peafowl Mountain to study pill dao under you. We will offer 100 million saint spirit stones as remuneration per month. What do you think?"

It was a business proposal that the Han brothers had come up with after many nights of discussion. They wanted to send a group of pill kings to learn from Jiang Chen no matter what. Even if the pill kings wouldn't learn much, gaining some insight and experience would be more than enough.

Jiang Chen smiled. "You're more than welcome to do so. However, I have very limited time, so I'll only conduct three to five lectures a month."

"Haha! As long as your lectures comprise of condensed knowledge, we'll be fine even if you only hold it once a month! We ask for quality, not quantity!"

When they concluded their discussions, Jiang Chen and the rest finally departed from the Skysword Sect. The young man had gained a lot from this visit. He'd become friends with a great sect and obtained three Reformation Pills.

The Great Yu Upper Region was extremely vast and it took them two days to clear the area.

Jiang Feng noticed that Liu Zhen had sunk in a very odd mood ever since they left the Great Yu Upper Region.

"Brother, you've been in a peculiar mood for the past two days. Have you encountered some problems in your cultivation?" Jiang Feng was concerned.

Liu Zhen sighed softly and shook his head. "Brother, this is the Horizontal Mountain Mid Region. My ancestral home is located in one of the bigger countries here..."

Jiang Feng and Liu Zhen knew each other's backgrounds, and the former immediately realized that Liu Zhen was recalling matters of home.

"Little brother, I thought you no longer have family in your ancestral home?" He quietly asked.

"My parents and siblings are gone, but I once had a wife..." Liu Zhen's grimace could just barely pass for a smile.

"Didn't you say that she's gone too?" Jiang Feng was curious.

"No." Liu Zhen's face began to twitch. "Brother, I've lied to you about this. She... she scorned my low status back in the day and ran off with somebody else."

Jiang Feng frowned. "How could she?!"

Liu Zhen suddenly hugged Jiang Feng and bawled his eyes out. "Brother! I want to go home and take a look. Don't worry, I don't intend nor do I want revenge. I just want some closure and to find the answer to a question."

Jiang Feng patted Liu Zhen on the shoulder. "Give me a moment. I'll tell Chen'er."

Jiang Chen glanced at Emperor Peerless after hearing Jiang Feng's words.

"It's right along the way. If Liu Zhen needs to go home, we should accompany him. It's the least we can do." The emperor shrugged.

Since the emperor had already given consent, Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't say no. Liu Zhen's eyes were bloodshot. Jiang Chen knew that the man had recalled some painful memories. Since Liu Zhen had contributed greatly in the search for Jiang Feng, Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't sit by idly and just watch.

"Liu Zhen, lead the way. We'll help you if you want to take revenge for the grievances you've suffered." This was one of Jiang Chen's principles.

"It has been so many years. I've long forgotten about things. However, there's something I must confirm or I'll die with everlasting regret," Liu Zhen hastily responded.

Chapter 1132: Liu Zhens Grievances

Liu Zhen's ancestral home was located in the Horizontal Mountain Mid Region's Vermilion Tang Empire. He hailed from one of the empire's middling families. After disaster struck, his parents passed away one after another. As their only child, Liu Zhen was left with a tidy inheritance.

His ensuing days within the empire's capital, the Scarlet Tang City, was relatively comfortable because of this. An ample estate and a childhood girlfriend made for a cozy life.

Alas, such days were not to last. A young man from a family ten times better than his, with wealth a hundred times his, suddenly appeared in Liu Zhen's life one day. His woman walked away without hesitation, despite her pregnancy at the time. She took all he had with her and pawned off everything he owned. Not a single copper had been left for him.

Liu Zhen was essentially left destitute overnight. His home, his fields, and all his businesses became others' property over the span of twenty-four hours. Driven to the edge of madness, Liu Zhen sought out the woman in a frenzy. But after finding the right place with quite some difficulty, he was beat senseless and tossed aside. If not for the sheer number of onlookers, he probably would've been outright killed.

The suffering he experienced pushed Liu Zhen away from this place into voluntary exile. He began to travel the world, becoming a wandering cultivator who lived on a knife's edge. His martial dao gift was rather average. In the Vermilion Tang Empire, people like him could be found in droves. Without any earthly possessions, he lacked the cultivation resources to proceed at a reasonable pace.

It had been many years since then, but his level within the origin realm almost hadn't risen at all. When he'd first made Jiang Feng's acquaintance, Liu Zhen had been considerably stronger than his sworn brother. But now, he was left behind in the dust. Jiang Feng was sixth level origin realm, bordering on seventh. Liu Zhen was still back on the third level.

For his part, Liu Zhen wasn't particularly jealous of Jiang Feng. He envied a bit that his sworn brother had a good son, sure. But more than that, he was mostly thankful that he'd been able to make the other man's acquaintance. It was quickly becoming evident that his son could be the catalyst of a change in Liu's life.

Liu Zhen had thought that his pain was in the process of being slowly washed away. But the closer he got to his homeland, the more searing his psychological scar became. Time hadn't healed his pain at all. It had only buried it deep within his heart. The proximity of home caused his memories to burst forth like a flood, utterly smashing his dam of feigned strength.

He realized that he could let go of everything else except this bit of agonizing history. He had to find out the truth no matter what. Not the truth about why she'd left him, but whether the child inside of her had been his or the other man's?

The Vermilion Tang Empire occupied similar status in the Horizontal Mountain Mid Region as the Great Scarlet Empire did within the Great Scarlet Mid Region. They were both the administrative cores of their region. In this city, Liu Zhen's family qualified as a middling one at most. He had very little to do with power. When pitched against a family or faction ten or a hundred times greater, his experiences were understandable.

It was a cruel, cruel world.

Since his departure from Scarlet Tang City, Liu Zhen had not set foot in his hometown for almost thirty years. Any dream that the city appeared in inevitably turned into a bad one. For an entire empire, thirty years passed in the blink of an eye. But for Liu Zhen, they signified countless sleepless nights filled with waking nightmares.

"Hold your head high, Liu Zhen. Remember, you're not the same man as you were before. Your sworn brother is the father of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord!" Emperor Peerless commanded. He was exceptionally keen whenever it came to emotional matters. Helping Gu Xintang and Ah Li out, for example. Hearing about Liu Zhen's past bereavement was no different. The emperor was incensed while Madame Yun looked incredulous. Jiang Chen's reaction was obviously similar.

Scarlet Tang City was a passably bustling place. In the eyes of Jiang Chen and company, though, its busyness could not compare to many other places that their well-traveled feet had trodden in.

Liu Zhen looked increasingly conflicted after they entered the city, hence Emperor Peerless's incessant reminders for him to buck up. Deep down, he had some reservations about returning here. There was lingering resentment and fearfulness, albeit both well-hidden, about the son of a rich and powerful family stealing his woman. Even when he was newly armed with a prominent backer, he could not shake off the timidity in his bones. He was only able to adjust himself mentally after several admonishments from the emperor.

After about an hour, Liu Zhen and the rest came to a house's doorsteps. "This is my ancestral home," he commented sadly. "Someone else owns it now. My ancestors would shudder to see the sight of it, I'm sure."

He had been cluelessly deceived by that woman, all those years ago and rendered destitute overnight through surrogate sale of his possessions. This was already a depressing outcome. That he'd received no sympathy at the time was salt on the wound. Many had said that it was his blindness that was responsible for his fate. They gossiped that he'd picked the wrong kind of girl.

Others had chalked it up to failures of character. After all, what kind of useless man could lose everything his ancestors had like that? There was taunting and mockery, and all sorts of hearsay and slander. Very few people commiserated with him, or if they did, they didn't dare show it.

The man responsible for ruining Liu Zhen was a noble scion of one of the Scarlet Tang City's best families and a real local despot. Who would spare any meaningless compassion for someone as penniless as Liu Zhen? Standing in front of his home of yesteryear, Liu Zhen began to weep.

"Is that all you're good for?" Emperor Peerless muttered discontentedly. "I regret coming with you now. If you used to live here, just buy it for five or ten times its former price. Hello. You're worth a billion saint spirit stones now."

Liu Zhen blinked. That's right! He was now fabulously rich, at least comparatively speaking. The dandy who'd taken his girl away certainly didn't have this much money, and possibly not even his family did.

The Vermilion Tang Empire had its fair share of wealthy families, but it was only an empire within a middle region. The young noble back then was prominent in Scarlet Tang City, but not when the entire empire was put into perspective.

Put another way, more than a billion saint spirit stones was the equivalent of more than ten billion origin spirit stones. It was a princely sum, and not even the likes of a fourth rank sect could come up with it in a hurry. In the Vermilion Tang Empire, the only factions that could were second and third rank sects, a few of the leading families, and the imperial bloodline. Not many others who could easily take out so much money came to mind.

"Old Brother Mo is right, Liu Zhen," Jiang Chen encouraged. "You are a rich man, and you need to use your wealth like a club. Is a problem that you can solve with money really a problem at all? What's there to cry about?"

The emperor and his young friend's advice filled Liu Zhen with renewed confidence. Jiang Feng declined to offer his own, instead knocking on the door straight away. The door creaked open. Two house guards came out, glancing sidelong at him. "Who're you looking for?"

"Summon the master of your house," Jiang Feng said coolly.

"Who are you?" The guards of big families tended to be quite haughty. They were unwilling to listen to Jiang Chen's brusque request.

Chuckling, Jiang Chen stepped up to the pair of stone lions at the door. "Did these belong to your family?" He asked Liu Zhen.

The wandering cultivator shook his head. "Not mine. Probably put here by the person who bought the house."

"Okay then." Jiang Chen laughed.

He gave one of the statues a light pat. Despite its unique materials, the stone lion crumbled to dust instantly like a pile of sand.

"Summon the master of the house," he continued, equally coolly.

The house guard's face immediately paled. He fled desperately back inside. Not long after, a series of loud footsteps were heard from within. A group of fierce-looking guards swarmed out under the leadership of their master. The master of the house was a sky origin realm cultivator from the looks of it.

"Who's brave enough to trespass on private property in broad daylight, hmm? You know you're in Scarlet Tang City, yes?" The man had a well-developed throat.

Smirking, Jiang Chen stepped forward once more. "You're the master of the house?"

"So what if I am? I'd like to know who you are. Were you the one that broke the stone lion beside my door?"

"How much did you buy this house for?" Jiang Chen said, his voice impassive as ever.

"What's it to you? I'd really like to know where you come from, breaking my stone lion like that, aren't you scared..." The man cut off mid-sentence. Jiang Chen had casually smashed the other lion to smithereens as well when he was speaking.

"Last chance. How much did you buy this house for?" Jiang Chen's voice was colder now.

The homeowner paled just as his guard had. Crushing an entire lion with a single pat... what incredible strength!

He knew better than anyone that the stone lions hadn't been made of just any kind of stone. Sculpted with special materials, they had been designed to bring him good fortune. Even a sage realm cultivator would have a hard time if they wanted to break that stone with their bare hands. Rendering it unto dust directly... was probably beyond even sky sage realm. Why... when and why had a fiend like this come to Scarlet Tang City without warning?

Seeing the temperature of Jiang Chen's expression fall lower and lower, the homeowner shivered in concern. "It c-cost m-me... six million saint spirit stones. My l-life savings."

Grinning, Jiang Chen snapped his fingers at Liu Zhen.

Noticing, the wandering cultivator walked up himself, handing the homeowner twenty million saint spirit stones. "I'm giving you this much to get out of here. Now. Scram."

"What?" The homeowner was stunned. He narrowed his eyes at Liu Zhen in apparent recognition.

"You... you're the last person who lived here, right? What was your name again? Liu... Liu Zhen, is that you? You dare come back, boy?!"

He regretted his words as soon as they were out of his mouth. 'Boy'? 'Dare come back'? Wasn't he paying attention? With the backers he's got now, of course Liu Zhen dared come back. What remarkable backers they were to be able to shatter a stone lion with a single pat!

Chapter 1133: Money Makes the World Go Round

"Take the money, put down the deed, pack your stuff, and get out of my sight!" Liu Zhen narrowed his eyes murderously. He was slowly growing more comfortable with this new role. He was rich and protected by a powerful patron. There was no reason for him to feel afraid whatsoever.

The owner of this house was trembling with fear and dread. "Please wait for a moment, please wait for a moment. I will pack my stuff and scam with my family right away!" He hurriedly bowed and scraped before Liu Zhen.

The owner of this house was smart. He understood] that Liu Zhen had returned for revenge. The wandering cultivator himself might not be all that scary, but the backup he'd brought was. Their mere presence alone was a telltale sign that they were absolutely beyond his ability to provoke. If he refused to relent despite the twenty million on the table, there was a high chance that this advantageous transaction would quickly devolve into a robbery. After all, he hadn't exactly bought Liu Zhen's house fair and square back then.

Smart people usually worked very quickly and efficiently. In less than an hour, the now former owner of this house had packed all his belongings, called a dozen or so carriages to cart away the furniture he'd bought after moving into the house, and readied to leave with his family.

Liu Zhen tossed the bag of twenty million saint spirit stones straight at the owner and declared like someone with too much money on his hands. "You may count them."

"There's no need, there's no need." The former owner of the house was just about to stuff the bag into his shirt when an old memory suddenly struck his mind. He hastily counted out five million saint spirit stones and returned the money respectfully.

"Brother Liu Zhen, I threw away some of the original furniture inside your house. Please accept this five million saint spirit stones as repayment. It's all my fault, please forgive me."

Liu Zhen naturally hadn't expected that the former owner of the house to keep his stuff after he moved in. He snorted. "Do I look like I care about this small sum of money?"

The former owner of the house trembled as his scalp tingled with fear. Make no mistake, Liu Zhen had become so rich that five million was nothing to him now. The man stood there paralyzed because it didn't feel right to withdraw the money or return it to Liu Zhen.

"What's wrong? Are you planning to stay for lunch?" Liu Zhen snorted coldly.

The implied meaning behind Liu Zhen's words gave the former owner of the house direction, and the latter quickly smiled apologetically. "I'll be leaving right away, right away. Please excuse us, Brother Liu Zhen."

Twenty million saint spirit stones was three times the original purchase price he'd doled out. He'd lived there for free for thirty years, so it was a worthy bargain no matter how he looked at it. With twenty million in hand, he could easily buy a better house in Scarlet Tang City.

The road was filled with large and small carts and luggage, and the amount of activity and noise of moving house was quite obvious. The surrounding neighbors came out for a look because of this.

"Hey, Zhang Dalang! Why are there so many carriages in front of your house so early in the morning? Are you moving?" [1]

"I thought you said yesterday that you were going to celebrate your first grandson's one month birthday in a few days? Why have you suddenly decided to move?"

"Come on, Zhang Dalang, talk to us. Why are you being so silent? We've been neighbors for so many years, but now you're leaving without even telling us? Are you afraid that we'll borrow money from you or something?" These people were long time inhabitants and neighbors Liu Zhen was familiar with most of them.

Zhang Dalang, now the former owner of Liu Zhen's house, wore an awkward look on his face. "I'm leaving, I'm leaving. It seems that the Zhangs don't have the fortune to live here for long."

"What on earth are you talking about? If you don't have the fortune to, then what about Liu Zhen?"

"Zhang Dalang, I think you're overthinking this. Liu Zhen failed to keep his fortunes because he was good-for-nothing, but you're not him. I say you should stay!" These people were all using Liu Zhen for their comparison.

However, there were a few in the crowd who had sharp eyes. They immediately clapped a hand over the speakers' mouths and jabbed their fingers at Liu Zhen. Those badmouthing Liu Zhen saw the man himself sneering from the entrance of the house and flicking disdainful looks out of the corner of his eyes.

That's right, he was dismissing them with side glances! His gaze was frivolously ridiculing and mocking. He seemed to be gazing down upon fools from a lofty position.

"Liu Zhen?"

"Am I seeing right? Is it really Liu Zhen? Why have you come back? Are you the one who chased out Zhang Dalang?"

“That can’t be right. How can you possibly scare Zhang Dalang away with that meager cultivation of yours?”

Zhang Dalang’s expression changed greatly when he heard this. “Everyone, you have no idea what you’re talking about. Brother Liu Zhen has paid me a large sum of money to buy back his ancestral home and your assumptions are completely outlandish. You guys shouldn’t judge a person by their old reputation! Brother Liu Zhen now is a rich man.”

Zhang Dalang raised a cupped fist salute to Liu Zhen. “Brother Liu Zhen, I’ll be leaving now. The fengshui here is quite good, and it has remained so through the thirty years I lived here. I am sure that it’ll only get better now that it has returned to your hands.”

The former owner hastily jumped into a carriage and ordered the group to leave.

This scene stunned the onlooking neighbors completely. They might have suspected that this was an elaborate ploy if they hadn’t witnessed it with their own eyes. Zhang Dalang was a sky origin realm cultivator. Maybe a sky origin cultivator wasn’t all that impressive in the Scarlet Tang City, but it meant he wielded great power in this neighborhood.

Liu Zhen was a poor and weak man. What could he possibly do? He got rich? He’s a rich man now? If he was that capable in the first place, he wouldn’t be robbed of his woman and swindled out of his property in the first place!

Liu Zhen folded his arms across his chest and sneered. “What’s wrong? Keep talking. I’m very interested to hear just how many complaints you lot have in store for me. Maybe some of you have even gotten a little more creative since then.”

His neighbors all looked a bit embarrassed. However, an elderly man who was slightly older than the rest of the neighbors spoke up. “Liu Zhen, I watched you grow up since you were young, so I have a word of advice. Stay away from Scarlet Tang City. You may not know this, but the Liu family has become even richer than it was before. The eldest son of the Liu family is the assistant minister of the Ministry of War now. Even if you did make some money for yourself, why have you returned here instead of enjoying a better life elsewhere?”

“Yeah, do you think you can raise your head high and make your ancestors proud just by buying back your ancestral home? Do you think you can take revenge against the Liu family now? You think too much of yourself, man.”

The Liu family was the family who stole Liu Zhen’s woman, but it was the youngest son who’d done that. Ever since the Liu family had successfully landed one of their own in court, their power had grown tremendously over time. Today, they were considered one of the first ranking factions in Scarlet Tang City. It wasn’t a foremost faction and it wasn’t one of the best, but it was still among the top sixty factions in Scarlet Tang City.

Liu Zhen’s old family couldn’t even be ranked among the top six thousand, much less top sixty. It was this gap that had sealed Liu Zhen’s fate back in the day.

Not all of the neighbors had spoken up maliciously. However, even the kindest sentiments they offered held tones of wanting to watch a good show. Naturally, Liu Zhen was aware that none of these people were fundamentally good. The only reason they spoke up was to lessen the embarrassment they felt.

“To think I remained in your minds even though I’d left for thirty years. The Liu family? The assistant minister of the Ministry of War? Is that really as impressive as you say?” The wandering cultivator smiled calmly.

The old man’s face changed greatly. “Liu Zhen, you better watch your mouth. The power wielded by the Liu family now is nothing the rest of us can compare to.”

“Compare?” Liu Zhen laughed loudly. “Why on earth would I compare myself to them? What right do they possibly have to compare themselves to me?”

There was a commotion after Liu Zhen had made his declaration. His neighbors were all shaking their heads repeatedly.

“Madness, Liu Zhen has gone madness!”

“Maybe he has. He got lucky and thought he could mount a counterattack against the Liu family now, only to discover that the gap between him and his enemies has only widened with time. The reality of things was simply too much for him to bear.”

“Well, he has no one but himself to blame. He could’ve kept earning his money outside of Scarlet Tang City and enjoy a better life. What on earth possessed him to return here and humiliate himself further?”

“Yeah, the Liu family is destined to be a hurdle he can never overcome.”

“Alright, time to go home, everyone. It doesn’t look like this guy is going to back down until he’s been smacked by reality. Or maybe it was his plan to go down in flames all along?” All kinds of comments were made in response to Liu Zhen’s remark. Some people kept their voices down so Liu Zhen couldn’t hear them, but some didn’t even pretend to be polite.

Liu Zhen simply laughed calmly before he took out a bag containing ten million saint spirit stones. “I’m holding ten million saint spirit stones in my hand right now, and I plan to use eight million to buy furniture. The remaining two million are labor fees. Those who are willing to work for me, please raise your hands.”

Ten million? For a time, the neighbors thought that their ears had fooled them. They all looked at Liu Zhen with doubtful eyes.

Jiang Chen smiled widely at Liu Zhen’s antics. The wandering cultivator was starting to act more and more like a wealthy upstart. When his neighbors finally realized that Liu Zhen wasn’t joking at their expenses, the commotion of the scene instantly turned up a notch.

“Hey, Liu Zhen, do you still remember Uncle Quan buying you candied fruit on White Crane Street?”

“Hey Zhen, do you still remember Auntie Tao? Back then you wouldn’t stop bullying our Little Cui, but I almost never scold you for it, did I? Speaking of furniture, my family runs in this trade...” A large group of people rushed towards Liu Zhen to volunteer their aid. And why wouldn’t they? It was ten million saint

spirit stones, with two million to be paid out in fees. Whoever got the job wouldn't need to worry about money for the rest of their lives.

In less than half a day's time, Liu Zhen's home was completely put in order. All the furniture he bought was in place. Money truly made the world go round.

Liu Zhen still felt like he was in a dream even after his ancestral home was put into order. He never imagined that he would be able to move back into his home and regain everything he lost in such a short time. It was all about money in the end.

With twenty million saint spirit stones, he was able to order the former owner of the house to leave immediately. With ten million saint spirit stones, he was able to make his neighbors bow and scrape before him even as he laughed in their faces. This was the power of money.

Of course, this was just the first step in Liu Zhen's plan. His next step involved the Liu family.

"What are you planning to do with the Liu family, Liu Zhen?" Jiang Chen asked. The young man hadn't forgotten how Liu Zhen had dealt with the Heavensfall Society back then. He must have a way of dealing with this. The reason he'd lost his composure at the entrance earlier was because his emotions had temporarily raged out of control. Now that he had calmed down, Liu Zhen should be regaining his smarts.

Chapter 1134: A Liu Family Thrown Into Chaos

Liu Zhen had learned a lot after wandering for many decades, and many thoughts occurred to him after calming down. If he went directly after the Liu family, it would make him seem petty and narrow minded. Moreover, this method of revenge was much too old-fashioned. Thus, he decided to take a different approach. This method required the help of both Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless.

Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't mind offering his assistance as he'd already decided to help Liu Zhen exact revenge. He was actually quite fond of Liu Zhen's plans after learning about them.

.....

Vermillion Tang Empire's Defense Minister Wu was feeling rather downcast lately. His lioness at home was in the worst of moods in recent days and he'd rather avoid going home. However, the lioness had finally gone to visit her own family today. Minister Wu was finally enjoying the peace and quiet. Suddenly, he felt a light breeze by his ear. A person had appeared out thin air!

"A-..." Minister Wu was struck in the acupoint for muteness before he could yell.

A young man was standing beside him with a faint smile on his face. "Minister Wu, no need to panic. I'm only here to give you an invitation."

"Invitation? Who are you?" Minister Wu immediately asked after he regained his voice.

"You don't need to know who I am. It's all written in the invitation. Tomorrow at noon, I expect you to appear at the Drunken Immortal Tavern's sky suite, or you shall receive an invitation to your own funeral the next time we meet." The young man flashed a sinister smile. "You should know that I'm perfectly capable of such things. There are more details written in the invitation. Take a close look."

When the young man was finished speaking, he disappeared into thin air with a flash of his figure. Minister Wu was absolutely flabbergasted and trembled with fear. This was the minister's manor! The security here was as tight as it could get! Somehow, that person had snuck past everyone without alarming anyone! W-who... exactly was this man?

He immediately opened the invitation to take a closer look. It was very eloquently written, cordially inviting him to the Drunken Immortal Tavern. The time and location were all clearly defined. The writing also implied that an unexpected misfortune might happen if he failed to attend the banquet. But if he did attend, the banquet host assured that he wouldn't be harmed. In fact, there might even be a surprise in store.

Many other ministers and officials also received the same invitation. The contents and method in which they'd received the invitation were similar. The banquet host was apparently called Liu Zhen. Liu Zhen had been an insignificant character in Scarlet Tang City. None of the court officials had even heard of him. Their minds were blank when they tried to recall who he was. However, none of them dared disregard the invitation because of the way they'd received it. The messenger was simply too frightening.

.....

On this day, the Drunken Immortal Tavern was bustling with activity. Many eminent court figures had appeared in the sky suite on this fateful afternoon. There was around forty august personages in total. These court officials felt a little awkward when they saw each other, but all of them had the same question in mind. Who on earth was Liu Zhen?

They quickly found out who he was when the banquet started. Of course, Liu Zhen himself wasn't too scary. The scary ones were the people beside him. Even though he was the host, he was quite polite and cordial. Other than introducing himself, he didn't do anything that was out of line. Liu Zhen offered the guests a few toasts after the banquet started. After that, he gave every single one of them a gift.

The court officials were already used to a life of being showered with lavish gifts. They grew a lot more relaxed when the banquet neared its end. By the end of it, everyone was in a jolly mood. They finally realized that Liu Zhen had made it big outside. He'd returned to his home with great fanfare and made a huge commotion because he wanted to build relationships with them.

They weren't terribly pleased with the way they were invited, but they were willing to hear Liu Zhen out. It was only right to show him some face after eating his food and accepting his gifts. The banquet dispersed under a festive mood.

More banquets were held over the next few days. A similar group of people were invited, but the invitation methods were completely different every time. Because of that, Liu Zhen's name began to spread by word of mouth at court. Being invited to these banquets slowly became a normal occurrence. Gradually, it even became a milestone of success. Those who weren't invited to Liu Zhen's banquets were considered to be lesser individuals.

At first, the Liu family wasn't too concerned about the matter. But after a few days, the firstborn of the Liu family still hadn't received any invitations. They could no longer keep their calm. The banquet invitations spanned throughout the nation and almost every single eminent figure had received one.

The firstborn of the Liu clan, Liu Dalang, was second-in-command in the Defense Ministry. Minister Wu had already attended the banquet multiple times, yet the Liu family still had no idea who Liu Zhen was. And so, Liu Dalang was in a rotten mood when he returned home. He expressed his dissatisfaction during the house dinner.

“Son, why are you in such a bad mood recently? Are you facing some difficulties at court?” His father couldn’t help but ask.

The firstborn sighed. “Father, a strange thing has happened in Scarlet Tang City lately. Apparently, someone has achieved a lot of success outside and returned to our city with great pomp and circumstance. Lately, he’s been inviting court officials to lavish banquets. Almost every single eminent court figure has been invited. In fact, Minister Wu has already attended the banquet four times! I heard that host was also extremely generous and showers the guests with food and gifts. It’s become a trend of some sort lately.”

“What’s wrong? That bastard didn’t invite you? You are a defense vice minister!”

“Aii... I’ve been brooding over it as well. Ministers lower ranked than me and even ministers from less prominent departments have been invited. I’m the only one who wasn’t invited yet. It was very awkward for me when everyone was talking about the banquet.”

“Maybe he forgot about you?”

“Impossible. A smart person like him definitely has a list of court officials. He can check who has been invited and who hasn’t with just a glance. I have a feeling that he’s left me out on purpose.”

His father was displeased. “How unbecoming of him! Even ministers lower ranked than you have been invited! This is clearly a slap in your face!”

“Isn’t that?” The firstborn was extremely depressed.

“Brother, isn’t he a little too arrogant? Should I have some brothers to teach him a lesson?” The Liu clan’s youngest son yelled out of exasperation.

“Who on earth is he? What’s his name?” His father was very unhappy as well.

“His name is Liu Zhen if I’m not mistaken. Xiao Feng, don’t be brash. He seems to be quite capable. I’m not sure how, but he’s recruited a few henchmen that’s frighteningly powerful. The bodyguards of first rank officials have admitted that they’re far no match for his henchmen.”

“Ah? That strong? Also, the Scarlet Tang City has never had a great clan that goes by any other character for Liu. There’s just us. Did you make a mistake?”

“No. Their invitation card clearly stated that his name is Liu Zhen.”

The youngest son was completely taken aback. “Brother, what did you just say? Liu Zhen?”

“Mm.”

“Liu Zhen?!” The youngest son jumped up from his seat. “Brother, are you sure you have that right? You’re certain that his name is Liu Zhen?”

“Yes. I’m extremely frustrated over this matter, so of course I’d pay double the attention to this matter. His name is Liu Zhen. Apparently, he was a commoner that used to live in a place called the Chunk Alley.”

“Ah?!” Color immediately drained from the youngest son’s face. “How can it be? How can he possibly achieve so much with his capabilities? How is this possible? How?!”

His brother was taken aback. “Xiao Feng, what are you saying? Do you know him?”

The youngest son wanted to deny it, but his father and eldest brother were both staring at him sternly. He found it impossible to lie.

“I... I seem to know him a little. That man used to be just another poor commoner!”

No one could know a man better than the man's father. The clan father's face darkened when he saw how his son was behaving. “Feng’er, judging by your reaction, did you perhaps offend him in the past?”

Liu Feng stuttered. “Y-yes... j-just a little bit.”

“Only a little bit?” His father didn't believe him.

“Well, maybe just a tiny bit more than that. Aii... it’s a matter from a long time ago. Back then I...” Liu Feng was stuttering nonstop and his face was as white as a ghost. His eyes kept darting around and was afraid of making eye contact with his elder brother.

The first son slammed the table, clearly enraged. “Xiao Feng, you bastard! I finally know why I wasn't invited! It's all because of you! You'd better tell me the truth! What happened between you two?”

“I...” Xiao Feng continued to stutter.

“Bastard! Nothing good from the way you’re acting!” His father was agitated. He understood his youngest son all too well. The little good-for-nothing was always been up to all kinds of mischief. No amount of atrocities was beneath him. If that good-for-nothing hadn't been his son, he wouldn't have cared even if the boy died.

“Hurry up and tell us!” The firstborn slammed the table with his fist, launching the dishes into the air. The bowls and plates shattered when they hit the ground.

“Brother, don't hit me! I-I'll tell you! Back then... I felt that his woman was incredibly alluring, s-so... I fooled around with her a little. I never imagined that she'd be like firewood. A small spark was all it took to set her on fire. Aii... that woman is Xiao Qing. You know her as well. She's now my sixth concubine. I've gotten tired of her already. Liu Zhen can have her back if he misses her so much! Not a big deal!”

His brother exploded in anger and gave Liu Feng a swift slap across the face.

Chapter 1135: A Proudly Strutting Liu Zhen

Liu Dalang wanted to explode from anger. How could there be someone so stupid?! This wasn't just any old grudge! His younger brother had stolen someone's wife! And here he was, talking about it so casually! Did he think that it was something like having taken a piece of candy? That he could just return

it, and everything would be fine? The killing of another's parents and the taking of another's love engendered history's deepest grudges.

It was obvious to him that the victim was here for vengeance. His actions so far had been only appetizers, a small taste of what was to come. A pre-emptive ringing of their funeral bells, so to speak. The worst was yet to arrive!

And Liu Feng, that despicable brute... he thought that it wasn't a big idea, even now? 'I'll just give her back if I have to'. Was that even feasible?!

Hatred at being left destitute wasn't something that one would give up so easily, at least in Liu Dafang's opinion. He certainly wouldn't, if he were in the victim's shoes. In that instant, he wanted very badly to cut his useless brother down on the spot.

The Liu family's old man had a habit of spoiling his youngest son. He rushed to intercept his oldest son's murderous expression. "My child, calm down! The sky hasn't fallen in yet."

Liu Dalang was thoroughly upset. He sat back down on his chair angrily. "Father, you need to stop shielding this useless brute. Has he not troubled our family enough? And every time he does, I'm the one that has to clean up after him. But this time, he's practically drowned himself in the latrine! How am I supposed to deal with that? The sky hasn't fallen yet, but it's about to, alright?" The eldest Liu son was beyond exasperated.

"Impossible! Dalang, you are a government official that works for the imperial crown. He's just a commoner with no scholarly honors whatsoever. He has no roots here in Scarlet Tang City. So what if he butters up some other officials? Do you think a few meals will be enough to turn them against us? It's not so easy as that." The old man was more astute than one would expect.

The man he spoke to, however, had a different opinion. "Father, those officials won't turn against us, but they can definitely indulge in inaction. It's hard to refuse requests after receiving all those presents. Liu Zhen is both generous and of means. Many among the court are singing his praises. They emphasize his benevolence and candor and that he's someone to befriend"

"So what? That doesn't matter. Like I said, he won't lay a hand on the family of a government official. Is he reckless enough to employ personal justice within the Vermilion Tang Empire?"

"Father, you don't know the half of it. He has a bunch of cultivation experts with him, probably exactly for dealing with us, I fear. He won't do anything in the open, but experts are all lawless men in private. If he really moves against us, we can't resist at all. The strongest cultivator that we have is only sky sage realm. He, on the other hand, seems to have brought a few emperor realms with him!" Liu Dalang really was worried.

He'd seen much violence in his time and knew that vengeance wasn't something to be trifled with. Anyone who thought further would realize that no sane man would tolerate Liu Feng's actions. Who could bear the pain of having his woman taken away from him?

"If things are as you say, Dalang, then what should we do?" The Liu family's old man was finally showing a hint of concern.

“There’s no other way. We need to yield. This is as bad as being under another’s roof. Let me prepare valuable presents and go visit him first. I’ll give him a preliminary token of our apology.”

“Will he accept it?” The old man asked.

“Of course not. This is only to test the waters. Liu Feng has to face this mess himself. Apologizing with utmost humility is the only possible solution. If he’s lucky, the other guy won’t kill him. If he’s not...” Liu Dalang trailed off, but it was obvious what he meant.

“What’re you saying?” Liu Zhen jumped up angrily. “Brother, are you going to give up your own brother for someone to vent their anger on?”

Liu Dalang was upset in his own right. “Even if I did that right now, you pig, I don’t know if it’ll be enough to save our family. I’ll tell you straight that if sacrificing you keeps our family unscathed, I’ll do so gladly.”

He’d given up hope on Liu Feng quite a while ago. No matter how strong their brotherly bond, Liu Feng’s constant troublemaking had severed it many times over.

.....

There was a marked increase in the number of visitors Liu Zhen’s residence had been receiving of late. People from several of the nearby districts, some total strangers, began to act much more intimately all of a sudden. They seemed to think they had a life or death friendship with Liu Zhen. They came with annoying frequency, pretending to be polite and affectionate, but mostly came across as ingratiating instead.

One day, Liu Dalang came as well.

The Liu family had finally been unsettled enough to come on their own. This was what Liu Zhen wanted to see after all of his machinations. He’d done everything to strike fear and agitation into the family’s hearts. He wanted them to spend their days in anxiety and unease.

“Oh? Who is this?” Liu Zhen looked at the Liu Dalang, feigning exaggerated surprise and bewilderment. “Excuse my poor eyesight. May I ask who you are? Not one of my neighbors, are you?”

The eldest Liu felt great shame, but trudged forward anyway. “Brother Liu, I am Liu Yue, the assistant military minister at court.”

“The assistant military minister?” Liu Zhen blinked. “How quaint. I’ve invited many court officials to banquets recently, you know. I’m surprised I missed you. Did I? Or are you an imposter?”

Liu Dalang’s face stung with phantom pain. He didn’t know how to respond to a comment like that.

“Brother Liu, actually, the reason I came here today... is to express my sincere apology. That animal Liu Feng...” The eldest Liu gnashed his teeth, looking like he wanted to smack his younger brother to death.

“Hold on.” Liu Zhen waved a hand. “Who’s Liu Feng? I thought your name was Liu Yue. Can you represent him?”

Liu Dalang nodded. “I will apprehend him and bring him here straight away. You can do as you like with him, Brother Liu. Our family will not shed a single tear on his behalf!”

Liu Zhen's only reaction was a faint smile. It was obvious that he wasn't interested in Liu Dalang's empty words. He wanted more concrete action.

Liu Yue grit his teeth, then saluted with cupped fist. "Kindly wait a moment. I will return shortly."

As a man of resolve, Liu Yue had commanded his subordinates to watch over Liu Feng before his departure. He wanted to ensure his brother didn't run off. As he expected, Liu Feng pulled the stunt when he realized the danger he was in. The precaution was put to good use.

In about an hour's time, Liu Yue brought a restrained Liu Feng and Xiao Qian over to Liu Zhen's. Upon trying to go in, however, he was stopped cold.

"Hold on. I won't let these disgusting people dirty my home." Liu Zhen's tone was cold. He tossed the villainous couple a sidelong glance.

When enemies met in the street, it was normal for them to see red.

Liu Yue left Liu Feng and Xiao Qian kneeling in the street. Liu Zhen was free to let out his pent-up anger on them. It was a little shameful, but necessary for his family's survival. Liu Yue felt that he'd done enough for his brother, anyway.

He couldn't count the number of times that he had fixed his younger brother's emergencies, making innumerable enemies along the way. But no matter how much effort he put in, he could not change Liu Feng's nature. His younger brother never changed his behavior in the slightest. It slowly drove the elder Liu to despair.

This time, Liu Feng had brought down calamity upon their entire family. This wasn't an exaggeration. Liu Yue was not the same kind of brainless dullard as his younger brother. He knew full well that Liu Feng's victim had returned with full confidence about the success of their revenge. Why else would they have come back?

Liu Feng's entire body was tied up. "Liu Zhen, you can't blame me for this. Xiao Qian voluntarily came with me. I know you're not happy about it, but do you think it's my fault? Should I not accept a woman who comes to my doorstep?"

Liu Zhen? Xiao Qian had been somewhat confused before now. She'd had no idea why she'd been brought here. Her betrayal of Liu Zhen all those years ago had only been because of Liu Feng's family's wealth and superiority. She wanted more glory and grandeur than Liu Zhen could give her.

In Liu Feng's home, she was only his sixth concubine, but she still stood by her prior choice. However, this new revelation stunned her. Liu Zhen? How could it be him? Hadn't the house here been sold long ago? Why was Liu Zhen living inside it once more?

What was going on? Her eyes followed the direction that Liu Feng spoke in, to find Liu Zhen, looking coldly back at her. His expression was an indecipherable mix. There was contempt, scorn, and a sliver of pity.

"Xiao Qian, is this the man that you sold me out for?" Liu Zhen's voice was bland, but his heart was bitter.

Xiao Qian clearly didn't understand the situation still. "You have the face to come back, Liu Zhen?!" She yelled. "A man like you should just lie down and die!"

"Hahaha," Liu Zhen erupted in dismal laughter. "Well, sorry to say that I've let you down. I've not only come back, but I've made your man kneel before me and beg for mercy."

"So what?" Xiao Qian shouted back loudly. "Do you think I regret anything? I regret giving you a chance in the first place. I know what kind of guy you are. What kind of airs are you putting on, huh?"

"Watch how you're speaking to brother Liu, you tramp!" the eldest Liu scolded. "You're the reason for all this trouble!"

Being berated was bewildering for Xiao Qian. In her heart, the Liu family's eldest son was also their pillar. Why is he... why was he being so polite to someone as poor as Liu Zhen?

Has the world turned upside down?

Xiao Qian's mind was full of questions.

The neighbors, meanwhile, began to gossip amongst themselves.

"Stupidity, your name is woman! Truly, they're all witless creatures. A strapping young lad like Liu Zhen... why did she toss him to the wayside like that all those years ago? Pushing herself into the arms of some noble's family didn't work out for her, did it? She gained a little but lost much."

"Isn't that right? How can Liu Feng compare to Liu Zhen?"

"Did you hear? These past four days, Liu Zhen has been holding feasts at the Drunken Immortals Garden. All his guests are prominent members of court. Even Liu Feng's brother, Liu Yue, wasn't important enough to go."

"Ah, young Liu Zhen has come into his fortune now. I knew long ago that he wasn't just some common man!"

The gossip summed up largely to meaningless flattery. On their lips, the once worthless Liu Zhen had become a model of success.

Chapter 1136: Returning to Veluriyam Capital

Xiao Qian finally figured out what was going on after listening to the comments floating around her. Had Liu Zhen actually gotten rich? Was he here to turn the tables on Liu Feng? Her heart skipped a beat when she looked at the battered Liu Feng, and then at the lofty-looking Liu Zhen. She finally understood everything.

She suddenly wailed. "Dearest Zhen, this really isn't my fault. It's this bastard who forced me to do this! You know he's a tyrannical bully, and I have no choice but to... darling Zhen, you haven't forgotten about me after so many years. You even came back for me. I... I've had enough of this! I want to come with you, dearest Zhen. Please, let me come with you. I can warm your bed. I can do anything. Please..."

The speed at which Xiao Qian suddenly changed her tune amused even Jiang Chen. This woman was extremely fickle. It was unbelievable how quickly her attitude had changed. Emperor Peerless and

Madame Yun were also frowning. They never imagined that Liu Zhen's woman would possess such a lousy character.

"Disgraceful!" Liu Zhen yelled angrily. "I'm not surprised at all to find that Liu Feng is a tyrannical bully, but I'm pretty sure he hasn't forced you to sell my properties and sleep with him behind my back!"

Xiao Qian shouted and cried. "It was all his fault! He forced me to do everything. Dearest Zhen, you should know that the one I truly love is you. You are my one true love in this world. He was the one who forced me to abort your child! Darling Zhen, you can't forgive this animal, you have to..."

"Enough!" Liu Zhen suddenly laughed bitterly. "Forced to abort? My child? Well said! The only thing I wanted to know today by coming here was to learn who was the father of that child, but I guess there's no need to verify it any longer since they're already gone." His eyes reddened as he said this.

A moment later, Liu Zhen's eyes suddenly locked back on Liu Yue coldly. "Assistant Minister Liu, I've noticed your sincerity. However, there needs to be a conclusion to this disgusting affair, don't you agree? Do as you wish. I await your show of sincerity."

Liu Yue stared at him blankly. What did he mean by that? Was Liu Zhen asking him to punish his own brother?

Liu Zhen didn't waste time waiting for Liu Yue to break out of his daze. He immediately walked up and kicked Liu Feng in the groin.

Liu Feng let out a bloodcurdling scream as a terrifying, crunching sound came from his groin. The man collapsed on the ground and writhed all over, screaming in horrible pain during the process. It was the utter destruction of Liu Feng's family jewels!

Xiao Qian turned pale with fright and screamed again and again. "Don't kill me, darling Zhen, don't kill me! We were once husband and wife, and we loved each other deeply back then..."

"Shut up, slut!" Liu Zhen sneered. "I have no intentions of letting my blade be stained with your blood. That being said, I should thank you for being the cheap slut you are. You made me realize just how unnecessary my years of misery truly were. I won't kill you. From hereon, you and I shall go our separate ways." He looked back at Liu Yue. "This matter is settled. I hope that the Liu family won't forget today's matter. Remember that the heavens are watching before you commit such acts in the future."

Although this ending was a bit humiliating, Liu Yue knew that it was the best kind of ending he could hope for. At the very least, Liu Zhen didn't sound like he was going to pursue this matter any longer. That was a relief to Liu Yue, especially because of the pressure he felt from the unfathomable experts standing behind Liu Zhen. He almost felt like he'd just escaped from hell.

The entire Scarlet Tang City was in an uproar because of Liu Zhen's return, but the man himself soon mysteriously disappeared once more. A guard had been hired to protect his ancestral home, however. So it seemed that Liu Zhen had left the city again.

For a time, Liu Zhen became a moderate legend in Scarlet Tang City. His terribly idle neighbors shaped Liu Zhen's image into a mystical avenger, and a classic example of an underdog who fought against his oppressors and won. Many versions of the story were spawned and passed on over time.

.....

Liu Zhen looked a lot happier and relaxed after rid of his heartache. The group now headed towards Veluriyam Capital, and this time they encountered no obstacles along the way.

They reached Veluriyam Capital without a hitch a dozen or so days later.

After they passed the borders, Emperor Peerless concealed his magnificent bearing and maintained a low profile. The first thing Jiang Chen did after returning to Veluriyam Capital was to confirm if Mu Gaoqi and the others had returned safely.

Thankfully, everything had more or less proceeded as planned. Mu Gaoqi's group had returned safely to Veluriyam Capital since a month ago, and the Geng brothers were still hanging around, and they very excited to see Emperor Peerless and Madame Yun again.

Jiang Chen arranged Emperor Peerless' group to stay in the building across the street of Taiyuan Tower. Taiyuan Lodge had been another faction's property, but it'd changed hands after Jiang Chen won it from a bet. It was more than enough to accommodate Emperor Peerless' group.

Since Mu Gaoqi was Jiang Chen's sworn brother, Lin Yanyu had already taken him to the young lord residence at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Lin Yanyu knew that his master valued Mu Gaoqi a great deal, so he treated the latter with equal respect. Meanwhile, Elder Yun Nie stayed behind in Taiyuan Tower.

Shen Trifire had been the appointed manager of Taiyuan Tower, but the position had now been transferred to Elder Yun Nie. Everyone in Regal Pill Palace was extremely happy to see the elder again, because he was the first sect elder they'd run into after so many years post sect destruction. Additionally, Hallmaster Yun Nie of the Herbal Hall was very high up the totem pole.

After everyone was arranged for properly, Jiang Chen finally headed towards the young lord residence at Sacred Peafowl Mountain with his father.

Everyone in the young lord residence, especially Huang'er, was overjoyed when they learned of Jiang Chen's return. She had nearly singlehandedly managed the entire young lord residence on her own in recent times. Although it wasn't a difficult task, her longing for Jiang Chen had only increased with the passage of time. Naturally, the couple spent some sweet moments catching up.

"Come, Huang'er, let me introduce you to my father."

Huang'er had actually seen Jiang Feng a couple of times back in the Eastern Kingdom. However, he hadn't left an impression on her because Huang'er had no feelings for Jiang Chen back then, much less the duke of Jiang Han province. The duo had never interacted with each other. But today, Jiang Feng was no longer the duke of Jiang Han province. He was now her beloved's father and her senior. It was only a matter of time she called him "father" as well.

"Huang'er greets you, uncle." Huang'er's urbaneness, outstanding temperament, exquisite countenance, perfect figure, great intelligence and kindness made her literally flawless in every way. Her bearing of a well-bred young lady was especially unmatched by any top rate disciple in the Upper Eight Regions.

Jiang Feng laughed loudly. "Good, good! Huang'er, a girl as beautiful as tall bamboo. What a great name, what a wondrous temperament. Chen'er, you have a good eye for woman."

Jiang Chen also laughed. "I believe it's more luck than a good eye, father. If the heavens haven't sent Huang'er to the Eastern Kingdom, there is no way our paths would have intersected."

"You're right, you're right!" Jiang Feng was very happy. His son had grown up and even had a partner of his own now. His gratification and pride only increased when he saw how excellent his son's partner was.

"I wonder how happy your mother will be if she sees Huang'er, Chen'er." Jiang Feng sighed.

Jiang Chen didn't conceal the matter of his mother from Huang'er. She looked very happy after he had briefly explained the ins and outs of this part of his journey. "Brother Chen, it is the heavens' will and destiny's power that have reunited uncle and auntie! Your filial piety must have touched the gods themselves!"

"Don't worry, Huang'er. One day, I will accompany you to Myriad Abyss Island and rescue your father and mother as well."

Huang'er agreed quietly as her heart became filled with limitless happiness. Ever since their relationship had been confirmed and they had become soulmates, her lonely heart had been slowly melted by Jiang Chen's existence and contentment. The suffering she'd endured in the past was all worth it in the end. If she hadn't gone through those hardships, she wouldn't have met her beloved in this sea of humanity!

After Jiang Chen had set everything up for his father and arranged a few slaves to serve him, Jiang Chen finally left with Huang'er to express their longing for each other. Huang'er was full of admiration and praise when she heard of Jiang Chen's experiences. She was deeply proud of him.

When she heard that Jiang Chen had become sworn brothers with Emperor Peerless, she felt joy for him from the bottom of her heart. She felt that her man was growing every day and that he was slowly becoming the true ruler of the human domain. Although that goal was still a ways away, it was looking like nothing could stop Jiang Chen in his rise.

"Oh right, Huang'er. How is Gaoqi doing right now? Does he show any signs of psychological trauma?" Jiang Chen still missed Mu Gaoqi.

"He has grown a lot and become a lot more mature after surviving this hardship. Mentality wise, I think he's doing wise. That said, he seems to be extremely thirsty for knowledge and strength. It's as if he wants to regain all the years he had lost during his captivity," Huang'er responded.

"That's good. Hard work can make up for the loss of time, not to mention that the mental fortitude he gained from this hardship may yet be a different form of wealth."

Jiang Chen's opinion of Mu Gaoqi had always been rather high. He had paid a high price to save Mu Gaoqi not only because Mu Gaoqi was his friend, but also because he valued his sect mate's talents greatly.

Jiang Chen was surrounded by many people with great talent in pill dao, such his disciples Pill King Bu, Pill King Lu Feng and Lin Yanyu. However, none of them were as talented as Mu Gaoqi.

“Has His Majesty returned while I was gone?” Jiang Chen asked concerningly.

“Unfortunately, no. The atmosphere in Veluriyam Capital has been a little strange as of late, and Emperor Peafowl hasn’t returned from his journey. Thankfully, things are relatively well within Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but for some reason, Veluriyam Capital’s atmosphere feels oppressive right now. I feel like something is rising from the shadows.”

Sometimes, women relied on intuition instead of logical inference. However, such intuition had been proven to be better than rationality on many occasions.

“Huang’er, what do you mean, exactly?” Jiang Chen rarely let Huang’er’s opinions slide by his ears. On the contrary, he always listened to her opinions seriously. If she felt confident enough to voice her doubts, it was very likely that her worries weren’t unfounded. There must be some sort of basis behind all this.

Chapter 1137: The Scent of Danger?

While they were conversing with each other, a messenger reported that Emperor Coiling Dragon had come for a visit. Emperor Coiling Dragon was of course, the Coiling Dragon clan lord. Back then, Jiang Chen had lent him a hand by gifting a Pinecrane Pill that extended his lifespan by a thousand years. As a result, Emperor Coiling Dragon had overcome the bottleneck in his cultivation and entered the great emperor realm in one go. He was now officially the eighth great emperor of Veluriyam Capital.

Jiang Chen had participated in Emperor Coiling Dragon’s crowning ceremony prior to leaving Veluriyam Capital. Today, the emperor’s visit not long after the young lord’s return must indicate some serious business to discuss. Jiang Chen didn’t dilly dally. He immediately set out to meet the great emperor.

Emperor Coiling Dragon had brought young master Ji San with him as well. His friend had grown noticeably stronger and ascended into emperor realm after this period of separation. This shocking improvement caused Emperor Coiling Dragon to regard young master Ji San even more highly than before. For the past few years, the young man’s cultivation had improved in an almost vertical fashion, and the powers of his bloodline had awakened continuously. It was to the point where even Emperor Coiling Dragon felt a little envious.

However, what the great emperor didn’t know was that dragon bloodline essence Jiang Chen had gifted young master Ji San was the main reason for this drastic improvement. Young master Ji San’s dragon blood was transformed thanks to the stimulation of this essence. As a result, many memories of inheritance had awakened in his mind. Most importantly, his bloodline was had been greatly improved. That was the main reason his strength had improved by leaps and bounds.

The current young master Ji San could absolutely stand toe-to-toe with the rest of the top rate young lords of Veluriyam Capital. At this rate, he might surpass them all completely in just three to five years, including Emperor Shura’s greatest disciple, Li Jiancheng.

“Long time no see, Emperor Coiling Dragon, Brother Ji. You both look much better than you were before.”

“Haha, brother, don’t think I haven’t heard about you! It seems that you’ve made a name for yourself again during your trip! Right now, everyone is gossiping that you disguised yourself as Sir Shao and made

a name for yourself in Pillfire City, Tilted Moon Region and even Great Yu Upper Region! You're famous everywhere," young master Ji San teased.

"Ah? Everyone knows all of this?" Jiang Chen was slightly caught off guard.

"Yeah, it did. Is there a problem?" Jiang Chen's reaction surprised young master Ji San in turn.

Jiang Chen wasn't sure how to react. He figured that the Han brothers of the Great Yu Sky Sword Sect must have spread the news to increase his fame. This meant that more and more people would learn about the name of Pill King Zhen in the Upper Eight Regions. The intention behind their actions was good, so Jiang Chen couldn't find fault. Most importantly, he had already returned to Veluriyam Capital. He no longer needed to worry about being attacked on the road.

"Alright, let us talk business, Ji Ole Third." Emperor Coiling Dragon tapped the table once with his finger. Young master Ji San chuckled before sitting down with proper posture.

"Your Majesty, what might you like to address today?" A bit of astonishment appeared in Jiang Chen's eyes.

"Young lord Zhen, both you and His Majesty, Emperor Peafowl have left Sacred Peafowl Mountain for almost a year. Sacred Peafowl Mountain is quite empty during this period, and the state of Veluriyam Capital is... turbulent beneath the surface. You may not know this, but Emperor Shura left Veluriyam Capital for a short trip around the time the two of you were gone, followed by Emperor Skysplitter. A few months ago, Emperor Petalpluck announced sealed doors seclusion and didn't look like he was coming out any time soon... Even the boisterous Emperor Mountaincrush seems to have become much quieter during this time. Emperor Void is the only one who kept in touch with me, and we are both worried about the same thing."

"What is that you're worried about?" Jiang Chen asked solemnly.

"We are worried for Emperor Peafowl's safety," Emperor Coiling Dragon declared gravely.

"What do you mean?" Jiang Chen frowned. He didn't think that anyone in Veluriyam Capital would dare attack Emperor Peafowl. He didn't think anyone could succeed either.

If Emperor Peafowl was so easy to deal with, he couldn't have ruled Veluriyam Capital so firmly for three thousand years. There were no petty schemes that could bridge the chasm of strength that represented Emperor Peafowl.

"Don't you think that Emperor Shura and Emperor Skysplitter's time of departure this time is a little queer? Emperor Peafowl has always enjoyed travelling alone, but we haven't heard anything from His Majesty since his departure. It may just be a coincidence, young lord Zhen, but... there's no one in Veluriyam Capital who isn't aware of Emperor Shura's ambition. Young lord Fan's death quieted his ambitions a little, maybe he thought that Emperor Peafowl would give up the throne to him, but after you were made the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, this precarious balance was disrupted once more."

"Has his ambition reared its head again?" Jiang Chen asked with a smile that didn't reach the eye.

“You can say that.” Emperor Coiling Dragon sighed. “Young lord Zhen, now that you’ve returned, you must strive to run Sacred Peafowl Mountain well. Make some noise and let everyone know that Sacred Peafowl Mountain is still as strong as ever. Only then will the populace maintain their faith and continue to support us. Otherwise, if Emperor Shura manages to gather enough forces to attack us from all sides, Sacred Peafowl Mountain would be in a dangerous situation. We do not want to be on the wrong side of the wheels of history.”

“Brother, you must not take this lightly. The only reason Veluriyam Capital was peaceful for three thousand years was because Emperor Peafowl had absolute authority in this place. Now that His Majesty is gone, a lot of people is soon to bare their fangs and show their ugly faces.”

It wasn’t the first time Jiang Chen had witnessed the cruel fight for power. Emperor Peafowl had long since been wary of Emperor Shura’s kind. The latter had been mentioned more than once during their conversations.

Emperor Shura was the kind of person who might stake everything he had for the sake of grasping power. But on the other hand, he might not necessarily be willing to fight to the death for the future and destiny of Veluriyam Capital. To put it bluntly, he was a power hungry person. He wanted power, but not the responsibility that came with said power.

This was the greatest difference between Emperor Shura and Emperor Peafowl. Emperor Peafowl’s heart was big enough to hold every person beneath the heavens, but Emperor Shura’s eyes were set on his status only.

Jiang Chen dared not treat Emperor Coiling Dragon’s sincere advice carelessly. He had to be on his guard no matter what Emperor Shura’s recent actions might be. After all, there was no telling if his enemies might pull a trick or two behind his back even if they appeared to be at a standstill for now.

More importantly, Jiang Chen was the only young lord left in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. If he was gone, no one would be able to inherit Emperor Peafowl’s legacy. All Emperor Shura needed to do then was to wait for Emperor Peafowl to pass him the throne.

If Emperor Peafowl didn’t return from his trip after a long time had passed, Emperor Shura didn’t even need to wait for Emperor Peafowl to pass the throne to him. He could simply coerce the populace into accepting him as the next ruler of Veluriyam Capital in the name of the greater good. This was an invisible battle between two sides.

The first step of caution Jiang Chen took was to improve his residence’s defense. The residence had its own defensive formations, but they were not his own creations. Therefore, the young man decided to give them an upgrade.

He possessed the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s formation disk and formation flag. The possibilities available to him increased widely as a result. He originally had two sets of formation flags; a primary flag and a secondary flag. He had used the secondary formation flag to arrange a formation at the entrance of the desolate wildlands. It was to prevent more human cultivators from serving themselves up as food for the demon race.

The primary formation flag was still with him. The formation Jiang Chen had set up previously could hold back a peak emperor realm cultivator without problems. However, the same couldn’t be said about a

great emperor. Today, he would try to set up a formation that even a great emperor couldn't break through in a short period of time.

After rummaging through his options for a very long time, Jiang Chen finally chose a particular formation from the ten great ancient formations of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. It was called the Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation.

This formation didn't have many variations, but it was a defensive formation that boasted some offensive capabilities as well. Nine sparks made up the defensive positions of the formation and the formation itself. The petal storm was the formation's method of attack. Any attackers who attacked the formation would be retaliated with a rain of radiant, violent flying flowers.

Although the formation's offense wasn't as strong as its defense, it boasted a great number of projectiles. Anyone who attacked the formation must first consider if their defenses could hold out against the sheer number of projectiles, and it made it difficult for the attacker to launch a full offensive against the formation. In a way, the formation's offense increased its own defensive power.

Of course, the Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation took a long time to set up. Luckily for Jiang Chen, he had a set of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's formation flags with him. It would save him a lot of energy in the process.

The heart of this formation was its etching. The inscription of the formation lines was extremely important to maximize the output of this formation. While the tier of a formation determined the formation's power, the same could be said about the level of the formation's arrangement.

The Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation was a sky rank formation. With proper arrangement, it could contain not one, but two or even three great emperors for a time. This was a massive project, and the amount of spirit stones used was staggering as well. Luckily for Jiang Chen, he had plenty of spirit stones right now.

Everyone donated some spirit stones to Jiang Chen when they heard that he was arranging a great formation. Even Liu Zhen threw half of his wealth into the formation. Those in the young lord's residence weren't aware that Liu Zhen had more than a billion spirit stones in his pockets, earned from the sale of the Radiant Celestial Grass. Thus, many were shocked by this charismatic display. They couldn't help but be impressed by the low key origin realm cultivator's grand gesture.

Liu Zhen had continuously maintained a low profile in the young lord residence. It was because he couldn't find a reason to puff himself up. Everyone in this place were closer to Jiang Chen than he was. For example, Jiang Chen's sect mates, personal guards and family all shared closer relationships than him. It was why he kept a low profile and donated so many saint spirit stones this time. He wanted to assimilate into this larger family more.

Chapter 1138: Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation

The Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation cost two to three billion saint spirit stones to construct altogether. It was a shockingly intensive project. Only first rank sects could spend a sum like that with ease. The average third rank sect simply couldn't provide that much, period. A second rank sect had the ability, but would feel severe strain if they did so.

First rank sects had the budget for this kind of blatant consumption, but spending that much on a single formation seemed overly extravagant. Formations represented continued consumption over time. Without additional investment, its power would wane. Therefore, the two or three billion could only be considered starting capital. Thankfully, any stone outflows at a later date would be much less than this.

At completion, the formation had enough energy to run for a few decades. If there were gaps in the spirit stones within the formation after that, then considerations for later-stage reinforcement could be made. The exact amount required wouldn't be too far-fetched.

The cost in spirit stones was one thing, but the process of setting the formation up was something else altogether. It was much like cooking. Having quality materials available was only one of the prerequisites. Exactly how good the completed meal would be depended on the cook's skill. The Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation would certainly test Jiang Chen's skill to its limit.

Jiang Chen had studied formations in his previous life and was now backed up with the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's heritage in this one. There were no problems with his foundations.

The entire difficulty here lay in the etching of the formation.

The Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation was one of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's ten great formations. It occupied a place of prominence within the sect. Sky rank was what a rudimentary projection of the formation looked like. It had a more advanced form called the Hundred Sparks Petalstorm Formation. The latter was one of the keystone formations of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, a true empyrean rank formation.

Jiang Chen did not even dare think about setting that up. At minimum, it would cost three to five times more in spirit stones... as a conservative estimate. A more likely ballpark figure was as many as twenty billion. Even someone as wealthy as Jiang Chen couldn't shoulder that cost. Therefore, the most he could wish for was to perfect the rudimentary form of the formation.

As long as he did, the formation could handle two or three great emperors without trouble. However, if a gang of great emperors attacked in tandem without pause, then the formation would need a continuous supply of spirit stones as fuel. Ultimately, it would end up a war of attrition. Of course, Jiang Chen would never let that happen.

He had trump cards in his possession that were able to kill great emperors. It was better to not have to use them in the first place, but they were available. Their exceptional value prevented their indiscriminate usage. After all, they were virtually impossible to replace.

It took half a month to construct a basic framework for the formation. Having a framework made the next step simpler. Filling up the formation with spirit energy was phase two. Jiang Chen had no desire to involve anyone else in this process. He could not and would not be replaced. He had to ensure that the formation was absolutely flawless.

The formation was finally finished a month after that. A radius of several dozen miles around the young lord's abode signified the core defense area. Its outer rings were spread out over a hundred. In a sense, the formation had coverage over half of Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

Jiang Chen did not broadcast the fact that he was setting up a formation to a wider audience. Aside from a few select individuals within his abode, the outside world knew nothing of his activities.

Only after constructing the formation did he invite Emperor Peerless and his wife over. He had some idea of how to deal with Madame Yun's condition now. The first step was baptism within the waters of his wood spirit spring. Its purifying power was irreplaceable. The wood spirit spring had the dual abilities of purification and recovery. Sharing the same attribute as its namesake, it radiated vitality and vigor.

Madame Yun had never enjoyed waters as pure as these before and found the experience quite delightful. A seven-day soak was sufficient to remove the majority of her old injuries. Of course, the spring could not weed out the root of her problems. Jiang Chen needed another method to accomplish that.

After plenty of consideration, he finally arrived at a conclusion that he felt was most appropriate for his friend's wife. There were two vectors of attack to this plan. One of them involved ingesting a pill, and the other utilized potent inner energy in a cleansing effort.

Emperor Peerless was necessary to this end. Jiang Chen's own inner energy was not yet sufficient to carry out a project as large as what he had in mind. There was no reason for the emperor to decline a request where his partner was the main beneficiary. Under Jiang Chen's guidance, he took every precaution to protect her from potential harm.

The plan took gradual effect as soon as its execution began. After only half a month of therapy, Madame Yun was largely healed. Even the patient found it incredible. For a long time now, she'd expected her wounds to remain for the rest of her life. She had been prepared for extended suffering. So, her restoration to good health once more in Veluriyam Capital was wholly amazing.

Emperor Peerless's eyes reddened. "Little brother, my promise holds then as now. If you need me, give me a call any time. My life is yours."

Madame Yun's anguish these past few years had affected him even more adversely than it had her. Blessedly, his cultivation partner had been cured almost overnight. How could he not be excited at that?

After resolving his affairs one by one, Jiang Chen finally had time to refine pills once more. He had so many specimens of Celestial Grass on hand, but there wasn't a single cauldron of Sage Smile Pills to his name. A strand of grass was good for a dozen or more pills. If he was lucky, he could instead extract several times that amount. This much Celestial Grass was sufficient for more than a thousand. It was an overwhelmingly attractive prospect even for him.

Jiang Chen did not need the pills himself. He couldn't use them at all. But many close to him could use them very well. The best thing about these pills wasn't that a sage realm cultivator could gain a free level from one; it was that they had no side effects on their users' future cultivation whatsoever. That was the most attractive thing about them.

Refinement of the Sage Smile Pills was a piece of cake for Jiang Chen. The most difficult thing about it, if it could be called that, was getting one's hands on Celestial Grass in the first place. With that out of the way, the refinement process itself was trivial.

Jiang Chen did not leave a single strand unused. There was no point to doing so. The sole purpose of Celestial Grass was to refine Sage Smile Pills. It had no other meaning for its existence. Keeping it only delayed its moment of destiny. What difference did it make?

One by one, the pills exited the cauldron. At first, Jiang Chen's methodology was a little imperfect. He was mildly wasteful with the details. Of his initial cauldrons, none produced more than twenty pills. But the more he refined, the better he performed. On the final cauldron, he received a whole three dozen of them.

Summing all the pills up resulted in six to seven hundred. This harvest filled Jiang Chen with confidence. He gave one pill to every member below sage realm of Taiyuan Tower and his young lord's residence. The slaves bought from the markets who'd demonstrated good performance were included in the mass gifting. Jiang Chen intended for his handout to them as a token of encouragement.

It was completely unheard of for a slave to receive a top rank pill like the Sage Smile Pill as a gift. If the outside world knew about it, countless would curse him for a wasteful dandy. Something like the Sage Smile Pill could easily fetch ten or twenty million saint spirit stones in the open market and often traded for more. Yet, he was such a treasured pill as a reward to his slaves!

Everyone knew that it was an act done to purchase popularity, but people were emotional creatures. Who wouldn't jump at such a gift? Responding with wholehearted adoration was the least they could do.

Liu Zhen received two Sage Smile Pills. The original agreement had been only one, but Jiang Chen gave him an additional because he deserved it. As the provider of the Celestial Grass in the first place, Liu Zhen had the lion's share of credit. But Jiang Feng had a part in it too, of course.

Giving away Sage Smile Pills to everyone relevant was the same as leveling up all the sage realm cultivators by one. This essentially improved the young lord's residence and Taiyuan Tower's overall strengths by the same amount.

Jiang Chen also delegated to Lin Yanyu the task of delivering three Sage Smile Pills to Emperor Void and Coiling Dragon. Both these great emperors were close friends of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It was natural to provide one's friends with some complimentary benefits from time to time.

The cost of Jiang Chen's present surprised Emperor Void, who reciprocated with a present of his own. Emperor Coiling Dragon knew how able Jiang Chen really was, and accepted without much ceremony.

One day, as Jiang Chen sat in closed door meditation, a stray recollection suddenly popped into his head. With a slap of his leg, he swore silently. He opened his eyes, face full of shame. He'd suddenly recalled a matter that involved a woman.

The former disciple of the Walkabout Sect back in Myriad Domain, present young mistress of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Wei Xing'er.

At first, Jiang Chen had thought that Wei Xing'er was perfectly happy with her new position. He found out later that she actually had as much authority as a lamp post. The Veranda master had made her the young mistress because he wanted her to become a pure yin human cultivation cauldron. She would be a useful tool for the master's breakthrough to seventh level emperor realm.

He had discovered this during his expedition into the desolate wildlands to retrieve some Requiem Wood. It had been over three years since then. In the heat of the moment, Jiang Chen felt a bit of embarrassment. He hadn't promised Wei Xing'er anything, but his ultimate decision had been to return and rescue her. If he did so now, would he make it in time?

Huang'er had been privy to the matter as well, but it had been a long while since then. The removal of her Generation Binding Curse and the subsequent convalescence had led to it being forgotten.

He had been fine in his forgetfulness, but remembrance caused a small shadow to edge into Jiang Chen's heart. It was best to make a trip to the Great Scarlet Mid Region and take a look for himself. Regal Pill Palace's reconstruction had taken great strides forward already. A jaunt to the Great Scarlet Mid Region could very possibly result in some news relating to them?

Chapter 1139: Revisiting Great Scarlet Capital

Veluriyam Capital was a haven for wandering cultivators. The weather was nice and the environment not as harsh as Pillfire City's. It was one of the most tolerant nations towards foreigners in the Upper Eight Regions as well. Take the Geng brothers, Geng Qianchi and Geng Qianzhang for example. After they escorted Mu Gaoqi back to Veluriyam Capital, they discovered that the longer they stayed, the more they fell in love with the city. Since Emperor Peerless himself was planning to stay in Veluriyam Capital, the Geng brothers decided that they would remain as well.

Since they used to operate in the northern area of the Upper Eight Regions, the unique culture of the south was also of great interest to them. Most importantly, Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Taiyuan Tower possessed a lot of cultivation resources. Being friends with Emperor Peerless and Jiang Chen, they didn't need to worry about resources at all.

When Emperor Peerless and the Geng brothers heard that Jiang Chen wanted to visit Great Scarlet Mid Region, they all expressed their intentions to accompany him. He was aware that they meant well, but a bigger group would only be detrimental to his journey this time.

After all, everyone knew about Emperor Peerless now. He attracted attention like a magnet wherever he went. Moreover, at this point, everyone in the entire Upper Eight Regions knew that the so-called Pill King Shao Yuan was in fact the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Pill King Zhen himself. Therefore, anyone could arrive at the assumption that Pill King Zhen was nearby if Emperor Peerless were to show his face. Jiang Chen could hardly cover his tracks this way.

He most certainly had the Han brothers of the Great Yu Skysword Sect to thank for his dilemma. In order to get word out that Pill King Zhen had become their guest pill king, they spared no effort in promoting the fact that Sir Shao, the pill king who had become famous in the west and the north region not long ago, was none other than Pill King Zhen himself. As a result, Pill King Zhen became the center of attention in the Upper Eight Regions once more.

Admittedly, the Han brothers' motives were kind, but that wasn't to say that their efforts were completely selfless. The good was that Jiang Chen's fame had reached even farther corners of the world. His legendary stories were now sung not just in Veluriyam Capital, but the entire human domain.

Back then, Jiang Chen was able to beat Pill King Ji Lang over the Longevity Pill because they were battling in his home ground. Pillfire City claimed that Pill King Ji Lang hadn't made much preparations before he

attended the competition, so his loss to Jiang Chen wasn't that big of a deal. Pill King Ji Lang should've taken the pill battle more serious than he had.

But this time, neither side had known that they were competing against one another while they were attempting to cure the Moon God Precious Tree. Neither side had known what to expect. In the end, Pill King Ji Lang was completely clueless, but Pill King Zhen had easily treated the tree.

Although this still didn't mean that Pill King Zhen completely surpassed Pill King Ji Lang in every way, it at least pointed out that Pill King Ji Lang was not infallible. Previously, Pill King Ji Lang was famed for being undefeated in his whole life and untouchable by anyone amongst the younger generation. However, he had lost twice to the same person already. As a result, Pill King Ji Lang was starting to look like Pill King Zhen's stepping stone.

It was exactly because "Pill King Zhen" was famous that Jiang Chen was forced to watch his every move. After all, there was no telling how many pairs of eyes in the entire human domain were fixed on him behind his back now.

This wasn't the first time Jiang Chen had visited Great Scarlet Mid Region, but his anger hadn't diminished with the passage of time at all. Although the Eternal Celestial Capital was the mastermind behind the destruction of Myriad Domain, Great Scarlet Mid Region was the main force who did the dirty work. Even if they were just a tool that was manipulated by the Eternal Celestial Capital, it didn't change the fact that they were one of the main culprits. This was without mentioning that the bounty for his head, that had in fact, increased several times over.

He wasn't planning on starting a slaughter in Great Scarlet Mid Region just yet. To begin with, the timing wasn't right. Two, the main reason he was visiting Great Scarlet Mid Region this time was to rescue Wei Xing'er. Wei Xing'er had helped Jiang Chen a great deal during the auction at Great Scarlet Capital. He owed her a big favor.

Moreover, that was the first time Jiang Chen realized that the temptress had another side to her facade. No matter how bad she was in the past, Jiang Chen believed that she was worth saving after everything she had done for Myriad Domain.

In Great Scarlet Capital, Wei Xing'er was the young madam of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda. The Resplendent Emerald Veranda was a great faction in Great Scarlet Capital. Here, there were very few factions who possessed greater wealth than them, and there were less than twenty factions whose power exceeded theirs. Even the fourth rank sects of Great Scarlet Mid Region had to toe the line before the Resplendent Emerald Veranda. The only sects that came to the attention of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda in Great Scarlet Mid Region were the third rank sects. One might say that there were almost no factions, barring the royal family, who could make the Resplendent Emerald Veranda submit.

The headquarters of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda was located in the most illustrious district of Great Scarlet Capital. This was also where Jiang Chen happened to be at the moment. When he looked in the distance, he was surprised to find that the entrance of the headquarters was surprisingly crowded. People thronged outside the wide entrance.

"Hmm? What's going on?" Jiang Chen was a little astonished by this. To his knowledge, the Resplendent Emerald Veranda was a great faction that specifically traded in all sorts of precious and rare treasures.

This faction had an almost perfect monopoly over the high-end market of the entire Great Scarlet Mid Region.

Since it specialized in high-end trade, it was hardly a place that could be afforded by most wandering cultivators. This meant that a festive scene and bustling crowd would never appear in any store belonging to them.

“Are they hosting an event or something?” Jiang Chen approached the crowd with doubts in his mind.

“The ranking list is about to be announced. I can’t wait! Four of the protectors chosen by the Veranda master were wandering cultivators, you know.”

“Hehe, they don’t exactly have a choice in this matter, do they? They can’t hire anyone from the great sects, and the senior executives of fourth rank sects suffered heavy losses when they were pursuing Jiang Chen. Right now, Great Scarlet Mid Region is in dire need of talent.”

“That’s true. If it wasn’t for that disaster, a wandering cultivator would never have been able to become a protector.”

“Haah, if only I could be as rich as the Veranda master! The Resplendent Emerald Veranda is quite possibly the only one who can afford twelve protectors at once. A normal faction would be hard pressed to hire one or two protectors, much less twelve.”

Jiang Chen couldn’t figure out what was going on despite eavesdropping on the crowd for a moment. Left with no choice, he asked, “Excuse me, friend, but may I ask why the Veranda master had hired so many protectors? Is the Resplendent Emerald Veranda planning to do something big?”

“Hah, you’re obviously not from around here!” The guy receiving the question answered proudly, spewing spittle everywhere. “The Veranda master is planning to break through to sixth level emperor realm, so he wishes to hire a group of protectors to protect him while he makes the attempt. This has been the hottest news in Great Scarlet Mid Region for the past few months.”

Great Scarlet Mid Region wasn’t completely lacking in high level emperor realm cultivators. At the very least, the royal family and the third rank sects possessed experts at this level. However, the Veranda master either couldn’t afford to hire such experts, or the other parties thought the task to be utterly beneath them.

The Veranda master might be rich and powerful, but there would always be people who couldn’t be moved with just wealth and power. After all, there was always someone even richer and more powerful in Great Scarlet Mid Region. That was why the Veranda master had no choice but to set up a public tryout to choose his protectors.

This was where the Veranda master differed from a sect expert. If a sect expert was about to achieve a breakthrough, his sect mates would naturally act as his protectors. While Jiang Chen was listening for more information, a commotion suddenly broke out at the front.

“It’s coming out, the ranking list is about to come out!”

“Hehe, I’m looking forward to this. I’m guessing that all the ones who are chosen have to be at least third level emperor realm. Those who are first or second level emperor realm may not even qualify to enter!”

“But of course, a first or second level emperor realm cultivator is a little too weak compared to the Veranda master.”

Jiang Chen was pleasantly surprised to hear this. The Veranda master hadn’t made his breakthrough to seventh level emperor realm just yet. As the cultivation cauldron, Wei Xing’er must still be safe for now. This meant that he hadn’t come in vain.

Truthfully, the one thing that worried Jiang Chen the most was that the Veranda master had already sacrificed Wei Xing’er and made his breakthrough before his arrival. If that was the case, then even he couldn’t turn back time and save her.

“Please be quiet, everyone. The final list of the protectors has been decided after the Veranda master has gone through the names multiple times. The list will be announced right away...”

The ranking list was hung high, revealing many prominent names in Great Scarlet Mid Region to everyone.

“Tsk tsk, Ole Zhang is on this list? But he’s a sixth level emperor realm expert! He isn’t weaker than the Veranda master at all. What on earth did the Veranda master pay him?”

“Hasn’t Ole Zhang disappeared from public view for several hundred years? Did he seriously come out just to act as the Veranda master’s cultivation protector? Just how persuasive is this Veranda master?” A series of shocked exclamations broke out from the crowd.

“Look, Elder Gao is in the list as well. Elder Gao is a third rank sect elder and supposedly a mid level emperor realm cultivator. I can’t believe that the Veranda master is able to hire a sect elder!”

The names on the list represented a certain identity and status in Great Scarlet Mid Region. Even the four wandering cultivators at the end of the list were extremely famous in Great Scarlet Mid Region and its surrounding regions. The level of the protectors drew many admiring exclamations from the crowd.

Almost all of the names were unknown to Jiang Chen. However, he knew that none of these protectors were small fry. They were all obstacles who would stand in the way of his attempt to save Wei Xing’er.

“It seems that this Veranda master has offended a lot of people and made a lot of enemies. If not, this level of protection is quite unnecessary.”

Chapter 1140: The Four Great Wandering Cultivators

Jiang Chen paid attention to the list of names. Just as discussed, the weakest of the protectors was third level emperor realm. The strongest among them was sixth level: Elder Zhang, the man who was presently a hot topic of discussion.

Another was fifth level, a secluded elder of a certain third rank sect of the region, boasting of immense strength and eminence. Aside from those two, most on the list were fourth level emperor realm. Even the four comparatively weakest names had reached, rather alarmingly, third level emperor realm.

The fact that strength was all relative had to be emphasized. In truth, 'weakest' wasn't really the right word. Third level emperor realm cultivators were uncommonly valuable even in the likes of Veluriyam Capital. In a first rank sect, they would be more than worthy as common elders. If they were from a prominent or powerful background, their position would be even loftier.

The leader of Eternal Celestial Capital's invading force had only been fourth level emperor realm, his name Gong Wuji. Therefore, a third level emperor realm cultivator was more than adequate of ruling over a fourth rank sect.

The fourth rank sects that had come with Gong Wuji were led by sect heads who'd chiefly been second level emperor realm. Third level emperor realm sect heads were more than scarce. A certain Sect Head Qin Mo, third level emperor realm, spearheaded the advance into Myriad Domain because of his slight edge in cultivation. He'd managed to capture Ling Bi'er to blackmail Jiang Chen, who cut the sect head down by activating restrictions left behind by a mid level empyrean cultivator Guo Ran.

From this, it was evident that a third level emperor realm cultivator was more than qualified to lead a powerful fourth rank sect. By extension, they occupied a tangibly important position in Great Scarlet Mid Region. And yet, the master of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda had been able to casually invite twelve emperor realm cultivators. Among the list of protectors, third level emperor realm ones were the weakest! Jiang Chen could only cluck his tongue at the luxury of the line-up.

Great Scarlet Mid Region wasn't exactly a remarkable presence in the entirety of the human domain. It couldn't hold a candle to several of the stronger middle regions, much less the Upper Eight. This comparison also illustrated how insignificant Myriad Domain had been. The lower region didn't even have a single emperor realm of its own.

Granted, there had been a possibility that Myriad Domain could've stood on its own merits at one point in time. The invasion from Great Scarlet Mid Region centuries ago had weakened it to a pitiable point.

All of the domain's emperor realm cultivators had been slain in that clash, as had any sky sage realm ones. The cataclysmic event had been the deciding stroke in the Myriad Domain's eventual decline. Otherwise, the domain had had the foundation to develop into a mid region once upon a time. Though it had lacked in both soft and hard power compared to the Great Scarlet Mid Region, the gap had been slowly shortening.

That was another reason for the Great Scarlet Mid Region's fervor in invading the Myriad Domain. The threat from a promising upstart and the push from their hidden backers in the form of Eternal Celestial Capital had both been compelling reasons for their mobilization.

Jiang Chen stared at the Resplendent Emerald Veranda's bustling doorstep, then glanced back at the list of names again. He sunk into deep reflection. The more he thought about it, the more he was convinced that something was off. If the Veranda master really did have so many enemies, he should've maintained a lower profile to weather out a potential storm. That group of protectors should've been hired privately instead.

The unnecessary publicity was nothing short of an open announcement to any mortal enemies that hey, he was going to break through, and if they had any balls, then they should come and get him! Such behavior was understandable from a younger man, but the Veranda master was a successful

businessman. Caution and risk management should've been part of his creed. Thus, Jiang Chen found the situation increasingly fishy. Exactly what about it was dubious, though, he couldn't figure out just yet.

He silently committed the list to memory. At the same time, the crowd suddenly diverted to the two sides. They were voluntarily moving aside, making way for someone apparently important. Jiang Chen kept his own troublemaking to a minimum and went with the flow.

Four emperor realm experts padded down this newly-created path. They all looked like wandering cultivators, taking large strides towards the Veranda headquarters' doors. Some of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda's most elite cultivators served as their ushers.

"It's them!"

"I know who that white-haired emperor realm cultivator is. He's Ole Clearcloud! A very distinguished senior wandering cultivator in the surrounding regions."

"Who doesn't know him? Senior Clearcloud defeated an entire fourth rank sect by himself many years ago and almost destroyed that sect entirely. That happened in the Swordfield Mid Region, I believe. After that, countless sects from the region invited him to join their sect. Many promised him their highest elder positions. But Senior Clearcloud refused all of them."

"Senior Clearcloud is a wild and unworldly man. I don't think he would much enjoy life in a sect. But a senior is a senior, alright. He's done well for himself despite his lone status."

"That's true. The strongest senior wandering cultivators have it much tougher than those in sects."

"Of course, of course. If the senior wandering cultivators had good backgrounds and plentiful resources, perhaps they'd have attained even greater heights by now."

"Senior Clearcloud aside, what of the three other seniors? Who are they?"

"I recognize that silver-browed senior! He is a wandering cultivator as well, though I recall he tried to join a sect at some point. But apparently that sect then angered a bigger sect and was completely wiped out. The senior remained unscathed, though... many call him Senior Silversand, or the Silversand Cavalier."

"What, so he's Senior Silversand?!"

There was a wave of cheers. The admiration for senior wandering cultivators was evident. Besides Ole Clearcloud and the Silversand Cavalier, there were two other wandering cultivators as well.

One of them was a decrepit old woman who looked like she could collapse at any moment. Her feeble mannerisms evoked suspicion in many whether she was merely here to make up the numbers. However, her eyes did exude a strangely bone-chilling light that caused involuntary goosebumps in the peanut gallery. A sharp gaze like that was clearly not within the capabilities of just any ordinary woman.

The last one was the handsomest and most well-dressed of the four. He was tall and slender, and carried a paper fan. He moved with a natural elegance and grace that was befitting of a dapper gentleman.

Despite his looks, his mouth was curved in a strangely eerie fashion. The corners of his eyes being snidely upturned certainly didn't help things. Thus, he exuded an aura of aloofness. Though his appearance was comelier than the rest, it was difficult to feel any sense of friendliness from his direction. The other three cultivators walked with blank expressions, not looking to the left or to the right. In contrast, this gentleman's eyes wandered side to side as he moved, his irises mildly bewitching.

Jiang Chen stared at the man with indescribable disgust. He didn't want to give himself away and avoided locking eyes with the other man. At this time, a group of men exited the Veranda headquarters' doors. The man in the lead had a genteel demeanor of his own and commanded the limelight from his cronies. In this way, he was distinguished from the rest.

Is that the master of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda? Jiang Chen's heart skipped a beat. Although he had never seen the man in person before, he locked onto the man instantly. It had to be him, no question about it.

When one did not disguise one's bearing and mannerisms, he became easy to identify at a glance. The display that the Veranda master was putting on embodied that axiom perfectly. Unfortunately, Wei Xing'er was missing from the master's groupies.

"Haha, thank you for coming right on time. I greatly appreciate your presence and attendance. Come, come, please step inside." The Veranda master spoke with excessive politeness.

Even though the four of them were only wandering cultivators, emperor realms who were lower level than he, the master nevertheless made sure not to offend any of his guests. Each and every word and action was filled with respect. The four cultivators were beyond flattered.

"I've heard stories about the Veranda master's courtesies to the talented," Ole Clearcloud exclaimed. "It is clear to me that those stories, and more, are true of the man himself. You have my admiration."

The Silversand Cavalier inclined his head in agreement.

The decrepit old woman commented as well, her voice hoarse. "Your fame has spread far and wide, master of the Veranda. One of the reasons I even agreed to come in the first place. If it were anyone else, why should I bother? Not that anyone would care. I'm just a frail old woman."

"Hah, if Granny Goldneedle can be called a frail old woman, then no man in the surrounding domains can be called at all strong!" The Resplendent Emerald Veranda's master roared with laughter.

Finally, he looked to the handsome young gentleman. "Sir Miao, you've made quite the name for yourself these past few years. Perhaps it's your first time here in the Great Scarlet Mid Region? Your face might be an unfamiliar one, but I assure you that you are known far and wide."

Sir Miao? The name caused another ripple to wash through the crowd.

"He's Sir Miao?"

"So that's the famous Sir Miao, huh?"

"Tsk tsks, Sir Miao is a rising star in the wandering cultivator world. He's pretty well-known, both here and in the surrounding regions."

“I didn’t think the Veranda master had so much face that even Sir Miao came at his call!”

“Granny Goldneedle, too! She’s another of those senior wandering cultivators. As expected of the Veranda master’s splendid resourcefulness.”

Sir Miao? Granny Goldneedle? The names rang hollow on Jiang Chen’s ears. He had known very little of the outside world back when he was in the Myriad Domain. After he came to Veluriyam Capital, his horizons were restricted to the Upper Eight Regions. He had neglected to gather any info about any lower and middle regions.

He knew of some of the bigger factions, but very little about their wandering cultivator bubbles. The four people here were likely the leading members of these bubbles. They wouldn’t have entered the sight of a character like the Veranda master’s, otherwise.