

### Three Realms 1161

#### Chapter 1161: To Beat The Veranda Master At His Own Game

The Veranda master had dispelled the formation of his own accord for a clearer view of the ugly struggles of cultivators in their death throes. It was obvious that he hated the royal family quite a bit. His hate encompassed even the entire Great Scarlet Mid Region. And of course, he hated Jiang Chen, the unpredictable variable, immensely as well.

The perfect prey had fallen into his hands, so it would be a crying shame if he didn't fully enjoy and play with them after his success. He had spent many years preparing for the moment, and now was when he enjoyed his harvest! The moment the formation was dispelled, the Veranda master made a beeline for Imperial Prince Zhao with a taunting look. He stomped firmly on the prince's face twice.

"Imperial Prince Zhao, is it? Where's your cool act now, hmm? Why are you lying here like a dying dog? How does this feel?"

Prince Zhao had been a proud man his entire life and had never thought that he would succumb to a situation like this today. Flustered and exasperated as he was, there was nothing he could do about it.

"Kill me if you dare, Cui! My royal brother and forefather will absolutely take revenge for me, for you are the enemy of humanity the moment you submitted to the demons! Even if I were to die today, you will never get me to bow my head and make a fool out of myself!" Prince Zhao knew that it was pointless to beg for mercy, so he didn't even bother trying.

"Kill you? Such naivete." The Veranda master laughed heartily. "You can't die even if you want to now. Didn't that kid tell you all to commit suicide earlier? It might have sounded ridiculous, but it was actually the smartest choice. But it's too late now. Both life and death are literally out of your reach, so just wait here like obedient dogs for the lord demon emperor to devour all of you, hahahaha! I'm sure it'll be the time of your lives!"

Prince Zhao cursed him. "What are you so happy for, Cui? No matter how happy you are, you'll never be able to change the fact that your daughter is the royal family's toy. Tell me, can you think of a single lover in your life that hasn't been taken and enjoyed by the royal family? Hahaha, so I may die today, but it's still worth everything you lost! Can you really wash that shame away even if you kill all of us, Cui?"

The Veranda master's face darkened. "Are you trying to get me to kill you? Dream on! Remember this well: I shall return ten times, a hundred times the shame you've inflicted upon me! I'll invade Great Scarlet and murder your forefather and your emperor. Then I'll rape every Yan woman. Once I'm done, I'll cast them on the streets so that every beggar in Great Scarlet Mid Region will get the chance to enjoy them! They'll provide pleasure until they die!"

Only the heavens knew how big a hatred the Veranda master harbored to say such a thing. All color drained from Prince Zhao's face. He knew that the Veranda master would absolutely do what he said if he really could replace the Yan family.

The Veranda master laughed out loud with great satisfaction when he saw that the ashen-faced Prince Zhao could no longer refute him. He left the prince and walked towards the others.

When the Veranda master stopped by Ole Zhang, a half smile danced across his lips. "My apologies, Old Zhang. I knew that you belong to the royal family. I recruited you as my escort to bring you into this trap. If you wish to blame someone, blame yourself for being as naive as you are at your age."

Ole Zhang responded calmly. "The victor is king, so you may say anything you wish since you've won. It is unfortunate that Prince Zhao didn't listen to me, or you may not have been the final victor."

The Veranda master laughed proudly. "The Yan family has always been a bunch of self-conceited bastards. Such is their fatal flaw."

Ole Zhang couldn't say anything at that. He sighed softly, shook his head, and fell silent.

The cultivators of the three great third rank sects turned their heads away and ignored the Veranda master when they saw him walking towards them.

However, the Veranda master wasn't going to let them off. He taunted, "Not so high and mighty now, are you? Why so quiet, hmm? You're cultivators of third rank sects, aren't you? Your eyes normally grow on top of your heads, am I right? Look at you now!"

His audience wore ugly looks on their faces, but they were unable to say anything in response. They knew that nothing they said now could change their situation.

Someone in the fourth rank sect cried out. "Don't kill me, master of the Veranda. I surrender! I've always admired the demons, so can you recommend me to the demon emperor? I would like to serve him."

"Me too, please recommend us, master of the Veranda. We are willing to serve your every whim."

The Veranda master smiled faintly. "It's true that I am lacking in manpower right now, but even then you weak-minded people are beneath my attention."

The Veranda master was even less interested in the fourth rank sects. His next target was Jiang Chen.

A gleeful victor's smile on his face, the Veranda master walked towards Jiang Chen with unconcealed ridicule. "Boy, you were harder to deal with than that idiotic Prince Zhao. If you hadn't ruined part of my plans, I might have wanted to keep you around. Unfortunately, not only did you do exactly that, you even stole my woman..."

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. "Dog of the demon race, what are you so proud about?"

"Hahaha, the victor is king, and the loser is nothing. I'm the king, so why shouldn't I be proud of myself? The demon race, the human race. Are they really all that important? In the martial dao world, the law of the jungle is the most important!"

"So, you mean to say that victory is in your grasp, is that it?" A hint of ridicule escaped the corners of Jiang Chen's mouth.

"What, am I wrong?" The Veranda master countered with a cold snort.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen leapt from the ground, activating the formation disk in his hands. The moment he did so, the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven instantly wrapped around the Veranda master.

The sudden action stunned the Veranda master greatly. It was unfeasible to him that someone stripped of all fighting ability could summon such explosive strength without warning.

Long Xiaoxuan also acted when Jiang Chen activated the formation, trapping the Veranda master inside a dragon domain. Then, Jiang Chen fired the Featherflight Mirror at the Veranda master in succession and without mercy.

In just a breath's time, the young man had executed three moves at once: the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven, the dragon domain, and the Featherflight Mirror.

All three techniques were entrapment moves.

As strong as the Veranda master might be, he was caught on the back foot after being caught completely off guard. Not reacting in time, the three successive moves had him completely trapped before he could recover his wits.

Long Xiaoxuan might have just entered emperor realm, but he was still a true dragon. As an initial emperor realm cultivator, he could fight an average high level emperor head on.

The Veranda master was just sixth level emperor realm. He cultivated the demonic arts, but Jiang Chen hadn't given him a chance to transform. As a mere human, the Veranda master couldn't struggle out of the shackles that held him in place.

Jiang Chen immediately formed the Vermillion Bird image and sent it flying towards the Veranda master. Long Xiaoxuan also executed the Claw of Crushed Mountains and Rivers and swiped at the Veranda master's face.

The schemer cried out in pain when the attacks hit him. The dragon's attack hit the Veranda master in the head, exploding the latter like a crushed watermelon. The Veranda master barely managed to form a single thought of hatred before he was completely wiped off the face of the earth.

Those outside had no idea what was going on inside the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven. All they saw was the blurry outline of the formation. No one saw Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan working together to kill the Veranda master in the blink of an eye.

They only knew that something had happened, and that the Veranda master seemed to have encountered a bit of trouble. Faint hope rose in everyone's hearts. Although they had been chasing Jiang Chen just now, they all hoped that Jiang Chen would be the victor instead of the Veranda master.

Long Xiaoxuan hid himself when the formation dissipated. A distant-looking Jiang Chen walked out of the air and stood before Imperial Prince Zhao and the others. The prince hadn't imagined that the young man would be the one to walk out of the fight instead of the Veranda master.

"Hmph. Have you come to ridicule me like that Cui, boy? Kill me if you want. I'll be a damned coward if I beg you during the process!"

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently before ignoring the prince completely, dashing straight outside instead. Currently, the most pressing thought in his mind wasn't the demon emperor, but the earth attribute treasure.

The Veranda master had done one good thing prior to his death, and that was to dispel the sea of fog so that he could taunt his enemies. As a result, Jiang Chen could observe everything around him with ease. He swore to find the treasure even if the demon emperor were to awaken from his slumber in the next instant.

They were still all underground. After expanding his consciousness to its fullest, Jiang Chen quickly found the place with the richest source of energy.

"This is it!" Jiang Chen's eyes lit up. When his consciousness swept across this area, he discovered a pouring fountain of earth elemental energy.

Jiang Chen immediately summoned the Goldbiter Rats.

"Head down there and take a look, Ole Gold."

The Rat King had no choice but to comply. Luckily, the pulse of the earth treasure wasn't too powerful even though it was overflowing with energy. It didn't take long for him to hop back up. "Sir Chen, there are actually several levels to this underground world. For example, there's another space beneath here that enshrines a single pearl. All of the elemental energy we're sensing comes from it."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen's eyes lit up. "Let's head down and take a look then."

He immediately went down to the floor below with the Rat King. There were many giant rock pillars inside this layer. They looked like pillars supporting this underground world and were quite fantastical.

An enormous rock sculpture of a giant stood at the center of the rock pillars. Surprisingly, the giant had only one eye. Its eyeball was none other than the pearl the Rat King had glimpsed. Even from afar, Jiang Chen found the giant incredibly imposing.

"Is this the pearl?" Jiang Chen looked contemplative for a moment. He first scanned his surroundings to make sure that these giant rocks wouldn't suddenly come to life and attack them. Then, he summoned the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice for it to grab the pearl with its vines.

#### Chapter 1162: The Demon Emperor Awakens

With a casual sweep, Jiang Chen gathered the pearl into his hand. In the next moment, it was as if the underground world had its soul pulled out. The stone pillars became like paper, collapsing into heaps one by one. Cursing quietly, Jiang Chen immediately called to the Goldbiter Rat King.

"Ole Gold, we have to get out of here."

The Rat King was unconcerned about this layer's loss of structural integrity. "Don't worry about it, Master Chen," he slowly trotted. "Even if the sky falls, I can bring you out with no problem."

The Rat King was scared of a great number of things, but the ground collapsing was not one of them. His race's foremost talent was digging holes. No matter how deep a Goldbiter Rat was underground, a tunnel could be dug out for sure.

Jiang Chen didn't treat it with the same levity. Though he wasn't afraid of losing a clear way out, this underground was a strange and ominous place. It was a literal demon lair. If he unwisely attracted the

demon emperor's premature attention, it would be disastrous. He ascended to a layer above, which was also crumbling to dust with the same speed as everywhere else.

Cries of pain could be heard incessantly from Prince Zhao's direction. They had been utterly consumed by the power of the bloody fog, and couldn't lift a finger to resist their fate. Enormous boulders crashed down from above with alarming frequency, creating more splats of cultivator gore on the ground. Jiang Chen's reappearance elicited relief from the remaining few, as if their savior had finally arrived.

"Save us, save us!" They called out in unison. "Friend, I am willing to pay you thirty million spirit stones if you take me with you!"

"Sir, we don't have a life-and-death grudge between us. All of us can reward your kindness well!"

Imperial Prince Zhao harrumphed. He was unwilling to ask for help. He wasn't going to get it anyways. After all, he had issued a kill command on the young man just moments prior. That alone was grounds for a deep grudge between them. How could he expect the other to save us?

Ole Zhang was far more practical. "Friend, I can speak for both of us. If you save the two of us, the royal family will reward you with one billion spirit stones as thanks."

For the Great Scarlet Mid Region, one billion spirit stones was an insurmountable amount of wealth. But no matter how large that sum was, it was still less than what their lives was worth.

The prince didn't blame the old man for deciding for him. In fact, he secretly felt that Ole Zhang should've named two or three instead. The prince wasn't shameless enough to make the request, but he didn't entirely oppose others doing so on his behalf. Deep down in his heart, he wanted very badly to live. As for the money, the royal family always had ways to make that up.

Jiang Chen harrumphed. The only one that he felt the slightest bit of empathy towards was Ole Zhang. He didn't have any compassion for anyone else here.

"I thought you were the Great Scarlet Mid Region's hotshots? Why are you afraid now? Giving up so soon?" He sauntered over, smiling, his voice filled with contempt.

"Friend, now isn't the time to squabble," Ole Zhang couldn't resist interjecting. "We are in the wrong, yes. We can pay an additional billion on top of the previous promised, as a token of apology."

Prince Zhao couldn't resist his approval of the old man's clever addition. Unfortunately for him, Jiang Chen didn't seem to care. "Whether you want to pay one or two billion, I'm afraid that you'll meet the same fate here today. Death!"

Without saying another word, he used the Supernova Point in quick succession. Each point reaped a life, their owners popping like balloons under the pressure. Jiang Chen was exceptionally cruel with his attacks. He left no room for mercy. Nothing remained in the wake of his fingers' passing. There wasn't even a mote of dust left behind after his total eradication. This was the most fearsome thing about this technique. Anyone hit by it would explode like a supernova, becoming one with nothing in the process.

Jiang Chen's incredible speed at killing off most of the group in an instant made Ole Zhang gasp. He couldn't believe it. "You... you sold out to the demons as well?"

“Ole Zhang, you let me in,” Jiang Chen smiled coolly. “When the prince gave that order against me, you at least tried to do something. I can make an exception for you and let you go. Everyone else has to die.”

His hands did not lie idle as he said this. By now, essentially all of the Great Scarlet Mid Region’s experts were gone.

Imperial Prince Zhao watched Jiang Chen kill with the ease of butchering fowl. His absolute lack of sympathy was the last straw, cementing the thought that he wasn’t going to live today.

“The Great Scarlet Mid Region won’t let you off for this, kid!” Vengeful words, spoken with one’s dying breath, were the weakest of all.

Jiang Chen smiled coolly again. “Don’t worry. I’ll exact the same vengeance upon everyone else deserving in that region, too. I won’t act as the Veranda master against your women, of course, but your experts... well, they’ll join you before long.”

“You...” Prince Zhao was flabbergasted. The young man before him suddenly seemed foreign. Who was he, and why was he so bitter against Great Scarlet Mid Region?

Jiang Chen summoned the Goldbiter Rat King forthwith. “Ole Gold, you go on ahead. Take Old Zhang out of here.”

Without another word, the Goldbiter Rat King did as he was told.

The prince’s face was ashen. He glared at Jiang Chen defiantly. “I can understand the Resplendent Emerald Veranda master’s enmity towards our house. But who are you? What did Great Scarlet ever do to you?”

“The Veranda master’s grudge is small fry compared to mine. When your region invaded Myriad Domain all those years ago, you were certainly more than happy to kill with smooth, steadfast strokes. With much more pleasure than I today, I’m sure.” Jiang Chen’s tone was derisive.

“What?” Prince Zhao’s own voice froze. His eyes betrayed his incredulity. “You... are a remnant of Myriad Domain? Who... who could you...”

Jiang Chen’s smile was unchanging. “There’s no need for you to be concerned about that. Don’t worry, the royal family will join you on the path to oblivion quite soon. I won’t make you wait long for a family reunion.”

With another two points, he killed two of the last three people. Prince Zhao was the only one that remained now. His expression looked absolutely ghastly. “The Myriad Domain... Myriad Domain... who could’ve expected that a remnant of Myriad Domain would stir up... so much trouble...”

Snorting, Jiang Chen pointed at the prince to blow him up as well.

The antique Skyclearer Talisman fluttered into his hand. He put it, along with the storage rings of the dead, with his belongings. After scavenging the battlefield, he lazily began to depart upwards.

As he did so, a majestic voice mentally confronted him from within the chaos. “Who? Who is it that’s meddled in my business?”

Jiang Chen's heart skipped a beat when he heard it. The will of the voice was filled with power and resentment.

"Has the demon emperor awakened?" A scary thought popped into his head. He felt cold sweat bead all over his body, and hurried in his escape. He broke out of the earth not long after and was met by a very anxious rodent.

"Master Chen, it seems... that the demon emperor awakened?"

The Rat King was cowardly by nature. Just being exposed to the will of the demon emperor caused him to shiver uncontrollably.

Jiang Chen looked serious. "Put yourself away, Ole Gold. Don't worry. I have a plan to get out of here."

Having plundered the orb at the source of the earth pulses, Jiang Chen had effectively disabled the outside formation. After making sure the Rat King was safely tucked in, he turned to Ole Zhang. "Go on ahead. If you see the Silversand Cavalier and others, you can leave with them."

Ole Zhang was almost as white as the prince had been. "I've served the imperial family all my life, but you killed an imperial prince. Even if you let me go, how can I possibly live?"

"I spared you solely because of your previous attitude," Jiang Chen waved a hand. "I'm not responsible for any suicidal tendencies you may have because of my other actions."

The old man shook his head. After a long while, he began to drag his feet away with some difficulty. Jiang Chen hadn't personally killed him, but it was impossible for him to leave alive like this. The young man was in no rush to leave himself, though. The demon emperor's presence was terrifying, but he refused to be cowed by it.

The first step of the blood sacrifice had been completed when the demon emperor feasted upon those female cultivators, but the process had also been imperfect without Wei Xing'er. The demon emperor wasn't at the peak of his strength right now. He probably only had a third of his power available at most. In this state, the demon emperor was unlikely to be stronger than a human great emperor.

Therefore, Jiang Chen decided to stay for an opportunity to kill the demon emperor as well. It seemed futile to attempt to stop the demon race's renaissance. But he didn't want the demonic invasion to occur immediately.

Even though it was unlikely that a demon emperor at his peak would be able to destroy the entire human domain, the blood demons' bloodline was exceptionally infectious. If this demon emperor had just a bit of breathing room, he could grow an entire cult of blood demon loyalists in less than a decade.

There were countless human cultivators like the Veranda master or Sir Miao. The best solution was to nip the threat in the bud. Of course, Jiang Chen was aware of the difficulty of killing an ancient demon emperor even in a state of weakness. But he had plenty of aces up his sleeve.

Emperor Peafowl had given him the Imperial Advent Defense and Onslaught Talismans. Each was equivalent to borrowing a great emperor's defensive or offensive strength, respectively. Though one use lasted only about two hours, that was more than enough to do what he needed to do.

Both talismans had three uses before they were used up. Continuous usage demanded immense physical condition and exertion. The slightest indiscretion could lead to tremendous backlash. Typically, talismans like these weren't used consecutively.

Demon Emperor Bloodmalva, emperor of the blood demons, had finally struggled free of his seal. Though the ritual to wake him had been somewhat flawed—notably, the crucial component Wei Xing'er had been missing—the demon emperor had successfully awakened nevertheless. However, he was surprised to find that the one who'd organized the sacrifice had disappeared. There was no response to his attempts at bloodline resonance. Where was the Veranda master?

#### Chapter 1163: Demon Emperor Bloodmalva

Demon Emperor Bloodmalva's sacrifice had lacked Wei Xing'er as a crucial component. Thus, he was only at roughly thirty percent of his full potential. But even a crippled demon emperor was still astonishingly mighty. The great emperor aura filled the interior of the mountain.

The Resplendent Emerald Veranda master's aura is nowhere to be found. Has he died?

Though the demon emperor had only been recently freed, his consciousness was perfectly clear. There was no way otherwise he could've convinced the Veranda master to join the blood demons, nor laid out this plot for his human agent over these several years.

Transforming himself into a bloody cloud, the demon emperor stormed from the altar to the dissipated fog formation. He arrived to the sight of utter ruin. His prepared food was long gone. The only thing that remained was a strong lingering scent of battle.

"Aaah!" Demon Emperor Bloodmalva knew that his plans had fallen awry. He was completely furious. He'd arranged such an intricate plot, only to have its fruit stolen from him at the last second! The imperfect blood sacrifice and the disappearance of his food further detracted from his awakening. Two mishaps in a row upset the demon emperor greatly.

"Was the Veranda master too unlucky after all? Was he insufficient to shoulder the burden of the demon race's destiny? It seems that I've picked the wrong man for the job." The demon emperor's eyes were rimmed with red. He wanted to kill someone. "Who is it? Who dared interfere with my great scheme?! I don't care who you are, I'll eat you alive when I find out!"

This series of disruptions so soon after his revival ignited his demonic malice. Like a crimson haze, a cloud of blood tore out of the area with almost impossible speed.

An immense demonic consciousness spread out instantly for a radius of several dozen miles, seeking out a possible culprit who was still around.

With the Veranda master's death, the demon emperor no longer had a source of information. But Demon Emperor Bloodmalva knew well that the disruptor for such a well-constructed plot was definitely still close by. It was obvious that the fighting within the formation had just ended moments prior. The lingering ripples of battle still clung to the air.

As soon as the demon emperor tore through the earth, Jiang Chen sensed the demonic aura approaching from a great distance. The young man was startled by its sheer intensity.



“Even a weakened demonic emperor has such impressive might! He truly is an emperor from the ancient past. If he’s allowed to return to peak strength, who in Great Scarlet Mid Region, the Upper Eight Regions even, will be able to face him head on?”

Concerned, he began to think of a solution to the pressing problem before him. The selfish choice was to up and leave immediately. But he had to be more responsible than that. If he left now, the demon emperor would have more than enough time to recover and would surely leave Cloudshatter Mountain to wreak havoc in the wider world. There would be a massive loss of life then.

Even if a demonic invasion was inevitable, Jiang Chen wanted to delay that eventuality for as long as he could. Not a single region in the human domain had made sufficient preparations. He began to dash outwards without delay. He didn’t have the luxury of time.

Now that the earth attribute orb was in his possession, the formation on the outside was rendered largely ineffective. Jiang Chen wanted a fight with the demon emperor to take place out of this strange area. It was unwise to fight on unplumbed enemy territory.

As he sped by in the air, he saw Ole Zhang slowly trudging in the same direction far below. Having been corroded by the blood mist, the old man had no strength to go any faster. He walked at a snail’s pace. There was no way he could escape at his current pace.

Sighing softly, Jiang Chen dove down and picked the old man up. “Don’t move,” he growled. “I’ll bring you out.”

With his Kunpeng Meteoric Escape pushed to maximum speed, Jiang Chen was barely affected by his new burden. He pushed outwards once more with all the force he could muster.

On a mountain trail near the outer reaches of the mountains, Jiang Chen keenly spotted a wandering Silversand Cavalier.

“Sir Silversand, the demon emperor has awakened. You must leave Cloudshatter Mountain immediately!” He reminded aloud as soon as he saw the man.

The Silversand Cavalier was surprised by the sound of Jiang Chen’s voice. He saw a bolt of lightning blitz outwards through the air.

“Friend,” he shouted upwards, “how are things inside?”

“They’re all dead. You better hurry up and leave. The demon emperor has descended upon the lands. If you don’t, you’ll just end up as food. He’ll recover faster because of it.” Jiang Chen knew that advice wasn’t always enough to convince men like the Cavalier, but clear analysis usually did the trick.

Right on cue, the cavalier immediately looked apprehensive. The prospect of staying only to become food and strengthen the demons was thoroughly unattractive to him. Having witnessed Jiang Chen’s incredible speed, he didn’t dare defer his own departure.

“Friend, I thought there was a formation outside that restricted our movement?” He asked while running. “Can we really get out?”

“The formation should be gone now.”

“Oh? The formation is gone? But then, if we leave now, what if the demon emperor leaves Cloudshatter Mountain? Won’t a lot of people die?” The cavalier had a stronger sense of racial responsibility than most.

Jiang Chen approved of this trait a great deal, but he wasn’t pleased with the comment’s timing. “If you’re not leaving, then you must be confident in your ability to defeat an ancient demon emperor, correct?”

The Silversand Cavalier blinked. Right, er, did he have that confidence? In his moment of hesitation, an inexorable tide of demonic aura came up behind them. It moved with such velocity and vehemence that the air visibly roiled.

Demon Emperor Bloodmalva’s ominous laughter could be heard within. “I knew there were some stragglers. So, you’re the culprits that ruined my plans?”

The demonic presence rushed in like water, crashing closer with vexing rapidity. Jiang Chen found the last part extremely surprising. Though the demonic emperor wasn’t necessarily moving faster than the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, he wasn’t much slower either. However, it wasn’t a real comparison. Jiang Chen was at close to top speed, while the demonic emperor had regained maybe twenty to thirty percent of his strength.

This benchmark deepened Jiang Chen’s understanding of ancient demon emperors in general. If he pushed his Kunpeng Meteoric Escape to its maximum limits, he’d find it easy enough to outrun the demon emperor’s wrath. But the Silversand Cavalier couldn’t say the same.

The Cavalier wasn’t particularly slow, but the demon emperor blew him out of the water. The former moved at about half the speed of the latter. Thus, the Cavalier’s fate was all but sealed.

When the demon emperor inevitably caught him, he would be turned into nourishment in short order. Though a single third level emperor realm wasn’t near sufficient, it would still be an excellent snack. Any amount of strengthening in the demon emperor’s power at this stage was terrifying to contemplate.

Jiang Chen was at his wit’s end. He was caught between a rock and a hard place. After a few moments, he dipped downwards decisively after all. Tossing the old man in his hands to the Cavalier, he called out, “Take Ole Zhang away. I’ll bring up the rear.”

The Silversand Cavalier couldn’t have imagined this kind of development in his wildest dreams. He instinctively caught Ole Zhang.

“What are you standing around for? Hurry up and go!” Jiang Chen glared at him angrily.

“If you’re staying, then I will stay too. Us two together is better than you alone...” The cavalier stomped his foot.

“Stop wasting time. You’ll just cause more trouble for me if you stay. What’s with all the sentimentality, huh?” Jiang Chen admonished, rather angrily.

The cavalier made to speak some more, but decided against it after noticing Jiang Chen’s increasingly darker expression. The young man spoke the truth.

"Alright," he nodded, "I'll take your kindness at face value, then. I will head for Great Scarlet Capital immediately. You must hold fast as much as you can. You're fast, so try to drag things out as much as possible. When more of us human experts can get here..."

"Get out!" Frowning, Jiang Chen loudly urged the other man away. His tone had become rather harsh. The Silversand Cavalier had a good heart, but now wasn't the time for small talk. A second lingered was a second gambled.

The Cavalier didn't dare venture another word. Old man in tow, he raced outwards without looking back.

Brows still furrowed, Jiang Chen chose not to run any more. Instead, he stood in place, staring at the direction from which he came. He activated his Imperial Advent Defense Talisman. The talisman shone with a blinding light that seeped into Jiang Chen's body.

In the next moment, an invisible shield sprang into being around the youth. The talisman produced an effect comparable to a great emperor's defense. It had a duration of two hours, and each possessed three charges. Jiang Chen's particular talisman had only two remaining.

Within another few breaths, a cloud of blood arrived within the mile. Transforming into a more physical form, Demon Emperor Bloodmalva skewered the young man opposite him with his gaze.

Jiang Chen stared back fearlessly. God's Eye working in tandem with his Evil Golden Eye, he confronted the demon emperor's look head on.

The demon emperor was enshrouded in a bloody haze. The body within was extremely burly and tall, and wore scarlet armor. There was a mark on the body's forehead, unique to the blood demons. It was a flame-shaped sign, diabolic in its fascination.

"You again?" Demon Emperor Bloodmalva dug into Jiang Chen with a fierce look. "I remember you. You've been to my altar! You stole a girl from me. You! You were the one that ruined my revival."

The demon emperor had still been within his seal then, but Jiang Chen's presence had made a strong impression. After all, the bloody formation around the altar had failed at trapping him. It was easy to remember someone so exceptional.

#### Chapter 1164: Defying the Demon Emperor

Jiang Chen wasn't surprised that the demon emperor had recognized him.

"You shouldn't have awakened. You escaped death during the ancient cataclysm, and should've been obediently stayed hidden in your seal. Why are you in such a hurry to die? We are no longer in the ancient times, and you no longer a demon emperor that can rampage through the lands!"

Emperor Bloodmalva smiled angrily. "Human brat, how dare you insult a demon emperor when you still reek of your mother's milk? You're merely a half-step emperor! I've slaughtered more half-step emperors than I could possibly count! Ignorant child, you should know better!"

Jiang Chen laughed coldly. "This half-step emperor shall be your maker. You've left your home and crossed countless planes just to die in a foreign land. Is that really worth it?"

The demon emperor was taken aback. "Brat! You know about the planes as well? When did the humans from the Divine Abyss Continent become so knowledgeable?!"

"Hmph! How could a foreign invader possibly know about the depths of our knowledge?" Jiang Chen answered mockingly.

The demon emperor suddenly flashed an odd smile and nodded. "Brat, you're clearly stalling for time! Sadly for you, whatever you have up your sleeves won't be effective against me. Killing you will only take a second. Your hard work thus far will be all for naught. You've single-handedly foiled my plans and ruined my feast! I have no choice but to have you as appetizer. Something tells me that your flesh will be tastier than those cows or lambs!"

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. "You want to feast on my flesh? At your current strength?"

The demon emperor burst into laughter. "You're a mere half-step emperor! I could easily slaughter you with just a tenth of my power! Killing you will be as easy as squashing a bug!"

"You sure talk big." Jiang Chen decided to stop stalling as the enemy had seen through his plans.

If an earth-shaking and tremendous fight was what the enemy wanted, then an earth-shaking and tremendous fight it would be. No one else was around. It was a good opportunity for him to flex his muscles.

Jiang Chen had fought many powerful experts ever since embarking on the path of martial dao, but not a single one was as frightening as the enemy he was currently facing. Fortunately, the demon emperor was still far from top shape and seemed to only possess a rough third of his true potential. If the opponent was in prime form, Jiang Chen would have no choice but to run. If his speed wasn't enough, he might not even make it out alive.

He immediately drew out his strongest weapon, the Pentecolor Divine Sword. He wasn't confident enough to take on his opponent without a weapon.

Demon Emperor Bloodmalva cackled oddly. An enormous wave of bloody mist suddenly shot forth. The demonic clouds were much more frightening when the demon emperor was wielding it. The clouds converged into an enormous vortex that sucked in all of the surrounding air.

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded. This must be a demon emperor's unique domain power. He never thought that a domain formed out of demonic clouds could actually be so powerful.

He was nearly sucked in with his surprise and couldn't believe his eyes. The demon emperor had dealt a strong attack right from the start! Fortunately, he was prepared for such an occasion. He executed the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape and turned into a bolt of lightning, piercing through the bloody vortex.

"Mm?" The demon emperor was mildly surprised. His demonic miasma was much weaker than what it could've been at his peak, but it was still a combination of his strength and domain power. It seemed powerful, but only contained a tenth of his true power. However, he didn't think that it'd fail to restrict the young cultivator. He was rather taken aback by this.

Jiang Chen could feel cold sweat running down his back. He grabbed an Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman and contemplated using it. The talisman was roughly equivalent to a great emperor's attack power.

Using it was one of the best ways to exterminate the demon emperor, but activating both talismans at the same time would impose an enormous burden on his body. They were both extremely heaven-defying talismans. Even a single use meant a great amount of stress on the cultivator's body.

Cultivators with insufficiently tempered bodies could even implode if they used talismans that were too strong. It was extremely dangerous act. Just one talisman was uncomfortable enough, so Jiang Chen wasn't completely confident that his body could handle two. However, he knew very well that there was no going back. In order to deal lethal damage to the demon emperor, he'd have to rely on the Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman.

And so, he stopped hesitating and immediately activated the talisman. A fierce and domineering beam of light poured out from Jiang Chen's body. His body was roiling with power. It almost felt like he was in a berserk mode. The talisman's power flowed into Jiang Chen's body and formed a link with his own energy.

The demon emperor furrowed his brows. "You're using a strength enhancing talisman?"

He had been sealed for countless of years and thus knew nothing about the Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman. However, he was certain that it was some kind of strength enhancing talisman.

"Hmph! A mere half-step emperor human dreams of defeating a demon emperor with just a strength enhancing scrap?" The emperor snorted coldly. He tightened his grip to materialized a crimson red blade in his hands. The blade was shaped like a curved moon and was wreathed with an eerie and terrifying aura. It projected a bloodthirsty and cruel presence of having devoured countless ferocious beasts.

"Brat, I'll send you off with my Bloodmalva Demon Blade. Don't worry, not a single drop of your blood will be wasted!" The demon emperor flashed a sinister smile. A scarlet tidal wave immediately crashed down on Jiang Chen.

The frightening blade shimmered a the blood-red cosmos. The blade strike felt like a ravenous beast prepared to ravish its prey. It was so brutal that it split the air in half and pierced through the void to appear right in front of Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen leaped and turned into a flash of light to avoid the sword strike. Even though he was armed with the dual talismans, he wasn't willing to take the blade strike head on. The strike wasn't just incredibly lethal, it was also immensely corrosive. This power was the blood demons' most frightening ability. It could eat away a cultivator's bloodline, weapons, pills, and many more. Almost nothing was immune to the power of corrosion.

The Pentecolor Divine Sword was legendary, but Jiang Chen wasn't going to take any risks.

"Hmph! Your speed is impressive, but my blade will not be hindered by it! I'll dice you into pieces!"

Another strike! This time, it descended as a powerful meteor and was accompanied by a torrent of blood that quickly formed a threatening vortex. The surrounding air was immediately drawn into it.

It was a strike that moved the heavens and shattered the earth, cleaving seas and mountains! The enormous vortex blotted out the sun, sucking in the surrounding air in its vacuum. Jiang Chen was incredibly solemn when he experienced the momentum. Countless rays of blade qi abruptly shot out from the vortex and furiously laid siege to Jiang Chen like ghouls and ghosts that wouldn't be chased away.

Materialization of the blade stroke? Jiang Chen noticed the profoundness of the strike. He knew that he'd die a very gruesome death if he met it head on. That was tantamount to suicide.

He immediately took out the Featherflight Mirror and flashed it on the relentless blade qi. At the same time, he used an escape art and flung himself towards the outer regions of the vortex. Unfortunately, the restrictive power of the vortex was simply too intense. After multiple tries, he failed to pierce through the vortex even with the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape,

"Brat, do you really think that you can pierce through my ultimate sword intent with a simple escape art? You're too naive!" The demon emperor burst into an eccentric cackle.

Jiang Chen kept on trying, but the thick killing intent only became thicker as time went on. This surprised him greatly. He never imagined that his opponent's blade strike would contain such a profound formation. Blade and formation had merged into one.

The demonic miasma was truly a toy in the Veranda master's hands. Only the demon emperor is capable of harnessing its true might and frightening power. After a few more attempts, Jiang Chen realized that the vortex was regenerating too quickly for him to pierce through it with speed alone. Without wasting any more time, he grabbed the Pentecolor Divine Sword and chanted the incantation.

"The first strike shocks the heavens, the second strike moves the earth.

"The third splits the yin and yang, and the fourth encroaches on the sky.

"The fifth condenses all five elements and coalesces thunder. Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords, pierce through the heavens!"

The Pentecolor Divine Sword drew in the five thunders of heaven and earth to form an ultimate thunderclap. Natural phenomena danced in the sky and condensed into incredibly frightening sword intent. Like a ferocious ancient beast freed from its cage, the sword intent immediately charged towards the demonic miasma.

Boom!

At the great emperor level, the Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique was an unbelievably powerful technique. Even Emperor Peerless would struggle to receive the attack head on. Boundless sword light and thunderclaps merged to form the most powerful attack. Light erupted from the sword, narrowing into a small dot, and shot towards the miasma.

Boom!

A large hole appeared in the miasma. Jiang Chen immediately turned into a flash of light and flung himself through the hole.

“Well met!” The demon emperor was incredibly taken aback when Jiang Chen pierced through the clouds. However, a demon emperor wasn’t to be trifled with. Although he was surprised, a counter response was already at hand. With a palm strike, he slammed an enormous, red mountain shape down upon Jiang Chen’s head.

#### Chapter 1165: Ambush

A demon emperor who’d just regained roughly thirty percent of his strength was theoretically inferior to a human great emperor, but really wasn’t as far as behind as the numbers might imply. An average peak ninth level emperor would be lucky to escape Demon Emperor Bloodmalva with the demon’s current state, much less fight him head on.

But Jiang Chen wasn’t afraid of the palm seal bearing down on him at all. Instead, he blurred into a beam of light with increased speed and dived at the ground even more quickly than before. He passed right through the ground in an instant.

“Useless effort!” Demon Emperor Bloodmalva proclaimed in a cold, indifferent voice, raising the his blade and slashing at the ground repeatedly like he was tilling the fields.

Crash! The giant rocks on the ground split apart like tofu beneath the Bloodmalva Demon Blade’s assault. Deep ravines crisscrossed the ground.

“Hmm? He can dive this deep?” Emperor Bloodmalva sounded a little surprised. At this point, he was forced to admit that the young man was more capable than he’d initially imagined. Although the demon emperor had only executed a few moves, they were all unique techniques that he was renowned for.

Of course, their strength were incomparable to when he was at his peak, but Emperor Bloodmalva had thought that victory was all but certain since his opponent was just a mere half-step emperor youngster.

And yet, reality was a cruel mistress. He was unable to defeat the young man despite using many moves. While it was true that that young man had empowered himself with a strengthening talisman, his continued existence still was unbelievable to the demon emperor.

After all, he was an ancient demon emperor! According to the Veranda master, the cultivators of the human race had become much weaker and more cowardly compared to the ancient times. Barely any ancient human cultivator had left legacies behind at all. Emperor Bloodmalva had been emboldened by this information. In the ancient times, he had been just an average general. He was too weak to qualify as a commander, much less a demon forefather.

At first, he’d thought about hiding himself even after returning to peak strength, but then the Veranda master had told him that there hadn’t been an empyrean expert in the human domain for many years. In fact, the general populace believed that empyrean experts no longer existed in the human domain. All powerful empyrean experts had either been forced to depart to another plane due to the heavenly laws or had left for other mysterious lands.

This had greatly boosted Emperor Bloodmalva’s confidence. It even made him scorn the human cultivators of current times. However, after he’d broken free, he discovered that he was unable to take down the very first human youngster he encountered despite using nearly every powerful skill in his arsenal. He began to begrudge the Veranda master.

Emperor Bloodmalva's murderous nature was fully provoked by Jiang Chen at this point. His blade strokes and blade qi nearly turned every inch of the floor upside down. But no matter how powerful his slashes were, he wasn't able to dig out Jiang Chen.

"Boy, I'll catch you and skin you alive even if you escape into heaven or hell!"

Now incredibly enraged, Emperor Bloodmalva transformed into a bloody cloud and charged into the ground. It was obvious that the demon emperor hated Jiang Chen so much that he was willing to go through any trouble to find the human.

Jiang Chen was currently very deep underground thanks to the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. He knew that the demon emperor's consciousness was a high enough level that the demon could track Jiang Chen through lingering traces of presence. This was why Jiang Chen didn't plan on hiding. As for using the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice to fight Emperor Bloodmalva, the idea never crossed his mind.

At this level, there was almost nothing that the Lotus could do against the demon emperor unless the spirit creature broke through to great emperor realm. While the Imperial Advent Defense and Onslaught Talismans had enhanced Jiang Chen greatly, the same couldn't be said for the Lotus.

Jiang Chen calculated the elapsed time before suddenly activating the Ancient Crimson formation disk in his hand. Out of the ten great formations it could simulate, he immediately chose the Major Artifice Formation without much thought.

He didn't expect the formation to be able to contain the demon emperor at all. All he wanted was to restrict Emperor Bloodmalva for an instant, just enough for him to launch a single attack. Chances of success aside, it was something he had to try.

"Brother Long, don't reveal yourself just yet. Attack together with me when I give you the signal to. Everything hinges on this one attack!"

Jiang Chen knew that he was incapable of beating Emperor Bloodmalva even in the demon's limited state. The talismans were just temporary enhancements. He wasn't actually a great emperor, and the rest of his equipment weren't up to par either. He was strong, but his fighting prowess was ultimately incomparable to that of a true great emperor. The sheer gap in power meant that his chances were few from the start. It was exactly because that his chances were few and far inbetween that Jiang Chen wished to attempt an attack using the underground terrain.

Emperor Bloodmalva chased after the human murderously. The demon emperor wasn't especially proficient at fighting underground, but he was powerful, angry, and confident in his abilities. That was why he chased Jiang Chen while throwing caution to the winds.

Jiang Chen activated the formation disk when he saw the rapidly approaching crimson cloud. The Major Artifice Formation instantly came to life. Emperor Bloodmalva's surroundings immediately changed.

"Hmm?" The demon emperor frowned slightly, but he quickly grasped what was going on. "A formation? Boy, you are but half-step emperor. Even if the talismans have enhanced you to the realm of great emperor, do you really think that you can trap me with a formation? You are far too naive!" The demon cackled gruesomely and swung the Bloodmalva Demon Blade. He was actually planning to slash through all obstacles with brute force.



His reputation was well deserved. His eyes were so keen that he was able to instantly discern that the formation was just an illusory formation used to confuse one's opponents.

The demon emperor waved his weapon and parted the air with terrifying blade qi, yelling, "These are all just fabricated lies! Destroy, destroy, destroy them all!"

The Major Artifice Formation was ten times stronger than the Minor Artifice Formation and more, but it was nothing more than a small trick in the ancient demon emperor's eyes. Of course, the formation was weak because Jiang Chen could only do so much with his current level of power. If it was commanded by a real great emperor expert, the effects would've been entirely different.

That being said, Jiang Chen had never planned to trap Emperor Bloodmalva with the formation in the first place.

The young man yelled when he saw the demon emperor waving his blade to cut through the formation. "Brother Long, now!"

Jiang Chen activated another formation, this time the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven. It was the same formation he'd used to ambush the Veranda master. He had arranged a formation within a formation. Everything had been set for this one attack, and now the time to do so had arrived.

Jiang Chen unleashed the golden body of demons and gods to the maximum and gathered countless flames of Prehistoric Flame Essence to summon the Vermillion Bird image. The attacks erupted towards the demon like a violent volcano.

Meanwhile, Long Xiaoxuan revealed himself in full draconic glory and brought his own domain to bear. He swiped repeatedly at the air and drew in the qi of five thunders to form a terrifying dragon seal of five thunders, sending it flying towards the demon emperor as well.

These two attacks were the strongest attacks Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan could muster at their current level. Long Xiaoxuan had called upon his bloodline and entered a berserk mode, enhancing his attacks so that they rivaled that of a half-step great emperor's. Jiang Chen's Vermillion Bird image was also on par with a great emperor's attack as it was composed of Prehistoric Flame Essence and he himself was enhanced by the Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman. Emperor Bloodmalva broke out in a cold sweat as the combined attack hurtled at him. The Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven had distracted him at the perfect moment, so by the time he reacted, the two attacks were already closing in on him. Panic finally dawned on the demon emperor's face as he swiftly summoned demonic clouds to form a line of defense around him.

However, the terrifying attack instantly tore through the makeshift defenses and barged straight at his chest. Emperor Bloodmalva raised his demonic blade defensively in front of him.

Bang!

The powerful attack sent him flying backwards. The collision was so powerful that it ignited countless shockwaves and literally tore a hole several kilometers wide in the underground world. His qi and blood roiled as he spat repeated mouthfuls of blood.

Jiang Chen hurriedly cried out to Long Xiaoxuan. "He's hurt! Get him!"

Jiang Chen's decisiveness had allowed him to seize an opportunity to hurt Emperor Bloodmalva. If they didn't attack him now, they wouldn't get a second chance to kill him.

Emperor Bloodmalva had never suffered such a terrible loss except at the hands of empyrean experts. For a time, he could hardly believe this was happening.

The demon emperor finally snapped out of his shock when he saw Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan pouncing towards him. He understood that his life was literally on the line now. The attack earlier had completely crushed his courage, so he shrieked with no trace of imperial dignity left, turned into a bloody cloud, and fled madly towards the surface. Obviously, Emperor Bloodmalva was sounding the gong of retreat.

"Don't let him escape!"

Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan gave pursuit without hesitation, but the demon emperor's speed was barely affected even though he'd just suffered an injury.

The trio quickly returned to the surface and Emperor Bloodmalva turned around back to the altar. It was obviously that he was planning to escape back into his old haunt. Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan chased after him relentlessly. Jiang Chen knew that they wouldn't be able to get another opportunity to kill the demon emperor if he was allowed to regain his full strength.

Forget Great Scarlet Mid Region, the entire human domain would be at risk if Emperor Bloodmalva managed to return to his peak form. Jiang Chen might dislike Great Scarlet Mid Region, but he also knew that Emperor Bloodmalva's ambitions didn't encompass that region alone.

Meanwhile, the demon emperor was feeling a mixture of anger and shock after Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan dealt him an injury. He never imagined that he would be hurt by a human, much less a half-step emperor youngling. It was unprecedented humiliation to say the least. Moreover, the human boy was accompanied by a dragon! The demon hadn't had the chance to catch a clear glimpse, but it really did look like a true dragon.

Chapter 1166: Charging Back to the Altar

Demon Emperor Bloodmalva wasn't scared of anything in the world. In particular, he tended to hold human cultivators in contempt. But now, before this particular human, he felt the slightest sliver of fear. It was because of none other than Long Xiaoxuan.

"Just where did this human cultivator come from? How did he manage to contract a true dragon as his battle-beast? The true dragons are a proud race. Why would one of them serve a mere human?" The demon emperor was thoroughly confused. Unfortunately, it was a bad time to grapple with philosophical problems such as this.

Breaking free from the chase was a top priority. A great demon emperor was being hunted down by a brat still stinking of his mother's milk! The demon was even as frightened as a stray dog. The very thought of it pained Emperor Bloodmalva's heart. It was so frustrating that he almost wanted to cough up blood.

Shame, aversion, dejection. A multitude of emotions hung upon his chest, pressing against it uncomfortably. Thankfully, the demon emperor was no slouch in terms of quickness. He reached the altar in no time at all. Getting there gave him a much needed boost in confidence.

Turning from bloody cloud into a streak of red light, he darted towards the center of the altar. This was the place where the blood sacrifice had been completed. Apart from Wei Xing'er, the eighty-one female cultivator girls had been sucked dry of their blood and essence. Their corpse-like bodies were laid out on the altar's smaller satellites.

Sitting down upon the main altar, Emperor Bloodmalva activated the formation embedded within. The eighty-one smaller altars began to turn gradually, spinning into orbit around the main one.

The bright mark on the demon emperor's forehead suddenly lit up. An unnatural ray of red light shot out towards the eighty-one smaller altars, like a candle lending its flame to a mass of peers.

All of the bodies upon the smaller altars trembled in synchronicity. All at once, they began to slowly crawl back up. But these young girls' faces were bloodless, their expressions stiff and numb. They were like actual corpses that had been reanimated, and that actually wasn't far from the truth. It was an oddly chilling sight.

The demon emperor's light produced similar marks upon the girls' foreheads, though their versions were a tad fainter.

"O demonic soldiers, heed my command! Battle preparations, for an enemy comes!" As he spoke, bloody demonic clouds began to roil around the altar once more. Crimson wisps began to coalesce into the girls' bodies.

There was more than enough bloody clouds to go around here. Being charged with demonic energies gave the cultivator girls newfound strength, and they moved with renewed speed. They brimmed with terrifying demonic aura and were creepily eerie. The once-pretty girls now looked more like female demons, and soulless ones, at that.

"Here we are, Brother Long. Be careful!" Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan arrived only a few moments later.

A bizarre scene jumped into focus as soon as he descended into the subterranean structure. Jiang Chen frowned at the corpse desecration. "Evil must be purged. What has caused this perversion must die also!"

It was patently clear to him that the cultivator girls were no longer among the living. They emanated the same aura as the blood demons' demonic clouds. They had unquestionably become not only Emperor Bloodmalva's sacrifices, but his soldiers as well. This made him quite upset.

"The blood demons are truly the worst of their kind!" Jiang Chen declared angrily.

Emperor Bloodmalva was still somewhat pale. He sat upon the main altar, a flock of his girl soldiers all around him. Bloody haze from demonic clouds permeated the air. Furthermore, he had a formation to protect him. He felt much safer now. He glanced coldly sidelong at Jiang Chen, as if wanting to burn an image of the youth into his mind.

"I don't care who you are, kid. The humiliation you brought me today will be visited tenfold upon you! Mark my words, that day will come."

"Why wait?" Jiang Chen snickered. "Victory and defeat, life and death; everything will be decided by the end of today."

"I admit that you have some skill," the demon emperor replied coolly. "But you achieved what you did purely through ambush. When I have but half my strength, I'll be able to kill you as easily as stepping on an ant."

Emperor Bloodmalva was exaggerating things a little, but his claims weren't entirely unfounded. He had suffered a loss today because of two reasons. One, he hadn't recovered the bulk of his strength yet, and two, he'd been snuck up on. In a full-on fight, he absolutely did not believe that he would be wounded.

Regardless of those contributing factors, however, the demon emperor took to heart the unprecedented humiliation of being hurt. Thus, he hated Jiang Chen to the bone.

"Brother Long, back me up. I'll try to break through the formation!"

Jiang Chen wasn't scared of the demonic clouds. Though Long Xiaoxuan was a true dragon, he wasn't necessarily immune to the corrosion from the same. It was better for Jiang Chen to do the work himself. A wounded demon emperor meant an even weaker opponent. He wanted to strike before Bloodmalva had a solid handle on anything.

Without hesitation, he drew his Pentecolor Divine Swords. The beginnings of his Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique began to form.

Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords! That was one of the most lethal techniques of the Thunderclap Sword. Will brought into being a myriad of blades. A single sword was enough to lead them, and ten thousand moved with the unity of one. The swords gushed forth like an incessant flood.

The demonic clouds were quite potent defensively. But the Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords, bolstered by the Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman, was even more jaw-droppingly powerful. The swords became countless streaks of light, pouring down from the heavens like a shower of stars.

Boom, boom, boom.

The formation around the altar was beginning to crack under the pressure of the unrelenting sword-strikes. Jiang Chen escalated the force of his assault by producing his Vermilion Bird image once more. He pressed down on the formation with the momentum of a volcanic eruption.

Boom, boom, boom!

Despite the duress it was receiving from Jiang Chen's attacks, the formation just barely managed to maintain its integrity. Any crack that appeared was instantly filled by new haze. However, the speed of Jiang Chen's attacks was noticeably faster than that of the crimson mist filling in formation cracks. Therefore, the formation swayed and seemed even more tenuous.

On the main altar, the demon emperor became more and more restless as the formation was subjected to increasing stress. Without his recent wound, he would've long leapt into action.

“Demonic soldiers, marshal yourselves. Attack that fool with all haste!”

The cultivator girls had become Demon Emperor Bloodmalva’s puppets. They jumped out at the demon emperor’s words, wrapping themselves in demonic clouds without hesitation, then assailed Jiang Chen without hesitation.

Snorting, Jiang Chen formed another sword seal, delivering a decisive strike at the girls. Their blood and essence sucked out by Demon Emperor Bloodmalva, the girls were no longer human. At best, they were walking zombies. Even if he did rescue them, he wouldn’t be able to restore their former selves.

In actuality, they were already dead. Their bodies had merely been taken advantage of by the blood demons’ secret arts, transformed into soldier puppets by demonic energy. These demonic soldiers were not to be underestimated. The transformation enhanced their fighting prowess to three to five times what it’d been. A combined strike from eighty of them had remarkable power.

Thankfully, Jiang Chen was never one to shy away from a good brawl. The Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords, for example, excelled at fighting a multitude of targets. Mobilizing the torrent once more, he ordered innumerable sword auras to deliver relentless cuts across the demonic soldiers.

Tss, tss, tss... The demonic girl-soldiers were sliced up as easily as bread.

Appalled at the loss of his troops, Demon Emperor Bloodmalva hastily directed the remainder to withdraw. Each returned to her own satellite altar. One skirmish had been enough to cut down more than a dozen of the soldiers. Only sixty-odd remained.

Jiang Chen was a little suspicious of the instruction to retreat. The demon emperor was neither kind nor sympathetic. He definitely had other ideas for these demonic girl-soldiers. Though Jiang Chen presently had the advantage, he wasn’t going to take the demon emperor so lightly.

He was perfectly aware that his opponent was a demon emperor. No matter that he had only twenty or thirty percent of his full power, Jiang Chen couldn’t afford to dismiss him all the same. Given how long these demon emperors had lived for, none of them were lightweights.

A glimmer of hatred flashed through Demon Emperor Bloodmalva’s eyes. He glared viciously at Jiang Chen. “You bastard whelp! Do you really intend on hounding me unto death?”

“You’re the freak here, demon,” Jiang Chen sneered. “Demons are like weeds. Any that are not completely uprooted will spiral into disaster for its surrounding environment.”

The demon emperor broke into hideous laughter.

“How quaint! After a hundred thousand years, you humans are still as scared of us demons as ever, hahahaha. Kid, I haven’t seen a human cultivator as talented as you even in ancient times. A man of your gifts should just join up with us, hmm? Don’t you know that humans are a hopeless race? We demons, on the other hand, are exalted within the heavenly planes. The Divine Abyss Continent will fall into our hands sooner or later. Rather than futilely resisting, it’s better for you to surrender outright. If you join our cause, then you’ll be amply rewarded on the day of our dominance. I firmly believe that you’re more suitable than the Resplendent Emerald Veranda master as one of us blood demons. Perhaps you’ll even become our young lord one day, heir to the greatest dao...”

The demon emperor's speech was reasonably convincing. More remarkably, he resorted to solicitation without hesitation when he found that he was at a disadvantage.

However, giving Jiang Chen that spiel was like talking to a wall. Anyone on the Divine Abyss Continent could join up with the demons, but it was flat-out impossible for Jiang Chen. Doing so would be an enormous loss of face. He was the son of the Celestial Emperor! He wouldn't know how to face his father if one day they came face to face again.

"Bloodmalva, the demons do very well within the heavenly planes, but they are hardly the only dominant race. Put away your ridiculous superiority complex. Do you think that everyone wants a demon bloodline?" Jiang Chen's tone was filled with derision.

#### Chapter 1167: Bloodline Reversion

The demon emperor's solicitation was just another tactic to stall for time. His eminence among his fellows came with uncanny astuteness and experience. The momentum of Jiang Chen's pursuit indicated that the young man hated demons' guts. There was zero chance that he would join up with any demon race.

Given the young man's breadth and depth of methods and tools, he had to be one of the humans' best geniuses. Though Emperor Bloodmalva didn't know Jiang Chen's particulars or any exact details about his background, there was no doubt that someone who had a true dragon as a companion was one of the luckiest few, even amongst geniuses.

A genius of his caliber had to die. Regardless of cost, regardless of price!

Jiang Chen wasn't aware of the demon emperor's two-faced behavior, that an evil heart was hidden behind the offer of allegiance.

Emperor Bloodmalva smiled sinisterly. "A demon bloodline reigns supreme above all. You dare to belittle us, puny human?"

"Reigns supreme?" Jiang Chen snickered. "Demons are just the heavenly planes' locusts. They bring destruction wherever they go. How many divine emperors are of the demon race, hmm?"

"You're just a mortal, kid! Don't make things up about the heavenly planes. So, you look down on our race's bloodline, hmm? Good, good, good! I'm going to teach you a lesson today, so that before you die, you'll know how powerful a demon bloodline truly is! You'll learn why it's unquestionably invincible!"

Jiang Chen's expression froze. He didn't know what the demon emperor was plotting, which made it all the more necessary to exercise caution. "Brother Long," he said to the dragon, "Hide yourself first."

Long Xiaoxuan obeyed the advice wordlessly, turning into a mote of dust that clung to his friend. Counting the time, Jiang Chen noted that his two hours from the Defense and Onslaught Talismans were almost up. He needed to engage in the next few minutes. No matter what conspiracy the demon emperor was cooking up, he needed to deliver a lethal strike. He produced his magnetic golden mountain once more.

"Fall!" Jiang Chen smashed the hundred-yard-tall mountain into the formation.

Boom! Once, twice, thrice!

The mountain grew in might and stature with each consecutive smash. After fifteen or sixteen, the formation finally split open with a resounding crack. All of the demonic miasma was forced aside. Putting away the golden mountain, Jiang Chen produced his Pentecolor Divine Swords once more. He slashed towards Demon Emperor Bloodmalva in an arc of lightning. "Die!"

There was no fear on the demon emperor's face. Instead, he looked decidedly pleased. In the next instant, he pushed both hands outwards. A burst of bloodline presence shot out from each palm, inundating the space with frightening power.

The sixty-odd remaining demonic soldiers shook at the aura, as if they had truly come alive. In the next moment, they galvanized into frenzied action. Like human bombs, they charged at Jiang Chen with wanton disregard.

"Prepare to meet your demise, kid! Bloodline reversion, explode!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! The demonic soldiers cannonballed towards the youth, detonating their bodies as soon as they reached their target. The blast caused Jiang Chen's own blood to roil.

"Bloodline reversion?" Astonished, Jiang Chen suddenly remembered something. The blood demons had a devastating secret art known as bloodline reversion. This was the action of returning the blood and essence they'd consumed and refined back to the original owners.

It sounded simple,, but the amount of power in the returned blood was ten or twenty times what the bodies could bear. The overflow naturally led to the puppets' detonation.

Of course, this was a painful process for the demon user as well. Especially on a large scale, it was tantamount to an almost suicidal attack. Emperor Bloodmalva had only done this because he was at his wit's end. He had been ambushed at thirty percent strength, and thus could only use a fraction of his cultivation.

If Jiang Chen was allowed to pierce his defenses unhindered, he would surely die. That was why he was willing to use bloodline reversion in an attempt to blow Jiang Chen to smithereens. The cost of a hundred years of cultivation barely mattered considering the gravity of the situation.

One or two detonations didn't have a lot of destructive power, but sixty-plus in tandem could wound even an empyrean cultivator. Receiving the brunt of the damage was mortal for a great emperor realm cultivator, not to mention anyone below that. Thus, the demon emperor adopted a victor's stance after deploying the technique. He knew that his victory was assured.

The brat was dead without a doubt!

Alas, his plan to return to the world was foiled with this development. Using bloodline reversion to detonate his puppets cost him more than a few decades of cultivation. He needed to turtle up and hide again for approximately the same. The prospect of being found out and hunted down by more human experts in his weakness was disastrous.

Bang, bang, bang, bang. The blast waves pressed inward, the ripples set on besieging Jiang Chen. The simultaneous discharge of sixty-odd girl puppets made the available window of reaction very small.

The destructive energy swelled upon their target in an instant. Jiang Chen felt an unprecedented sense of danger because of it.

"This isn't good! The collective energies of the blasts have gathered together and I'm their only outlet. If I take this hit, there won't be much more left of me than a few particles of dust."

There was no time to delay. Jiang Chen hastily grabbed his spacetime seal. It activated in a hair's width of light, pulling him through the fabric of reality into nonexistence.

Boom!

The blast waves finally congregated at a single point, a space where the youth had been just a second prior. The aftershocks of the explosion shook the air for miles around, and the altar complex was instantly upended. A crater a few hundred yards deep was left where it had been. The subterranean levels, every building, and all the altars within had been annihilated by the blowout.

A crestfallen Emperor Bloodmalva crawled out from the crater, scanning the ruins. In theory, the blast should have eradicated all traces of the young man's physical form, including any leftover limbs. The demon emperor licked away the blood at the corner of his mouth. He frowned as he continued to survey the wreckage, his heart doubtful.

"So... did that kid die or not?" He was unsure whether theory had transferred perfectly to reality. There wasn't a good reason for the kid to not have died from his bloodline reversion technique...

But there hadn't even been a scream. Moreover, there'd been a hair of light where the kid had been. However minuscule it had been... however imperceptible to physical eyes...

it induced in the demon emperor a sliver of uncertainty and discontent.

"If he didn't die after that, then he is an opponent to be feared." The demon emperor muttered under his breath. Despite his past glory as a ruler of demons, he didn't have enough experience to say whether the young man was dead for sure. He'd left no traces behind in the crater. Oddly enough, not even his aura lingered.

"Very strange. Did he... maybe... did he really escape?" The more he thought about it, the more it discomfited him. He was the wrathful emperor of the blood demons, and fear and discomfort were emotions foreign to him. Indeed, any demon would find it unnatural to feel these. And yet, that didn't change the fact that he did feel them at the moment.

"Impossible, impossible... even if that kid had two more heads and four more arms, he wouldn't have been able to flee from such a deadly situation. If he fled in that thread of light, then I would have seen him. I didn't see any light escaping from the blast. Maybe I'm just overthinking things..." Demon Emperor Bloodmalva tried to convince himself.

After walking around the crater a long while, he finally shook his head in exasperation. "Never mind, this place has been totally destroyed. It seems that I must find a new lair elsewhere. If strong human cultivators showed up right now, I will surely die."



The demon emperor had been further weakened as a result of bloodline reversion. Even a high-level emperor realm cultivator could kill the current him. As long as they had a way to deal with his demonic clouds, of course.

The demon emperor knew that some had escaped from Cloudshatter Mountain. Those who had would surely spread the news about him. Therefore, this place was no longer safe. Demons were a tyrannical bunch, but they also exercised caution when necessary. Though the demon emperor was displeased about having to do so, he left without hesitation anyway.

As for Jiang Chen, he'd been swept away by the spacetime seal he'd activated. The thread of light took him across space to arrive at a new place. When he recovered from the shock of displacement, he noticed that his trip was already over.

"Young man, welcome to the second palace of the Six Palaces of Heritage, the Crimson Heavens Palace!"

Jiang Chen had scarcely steadied his step before a clear notification rang at his ear.

The Crimson Heavens Palace? The name shook him to the core. That was the name of the second palace? Back at the first palace, Master P'eng had spoken of a revered senior from the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect who resided within another of the six palaces.

Was this second palace where that senior was? He had an interesting relationship with this place, then. Most of brain was still stuck in the combat with Demon Emperor Bloodmalva. Only after hearing the message did he completely snap awake.

"Hmph, absent-mindedness is a sign of discourtesy. Is this the level of humans' culture of martial dao these days? It's been a long time since anyone has come to the Six Palaces of Heritage. That a person who does is so stupid is... disappointing." The voice spoke with a serious, almost dark tone.

"Please do not misunderstand, senior," Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "I was embroiled in a fierce battle with demons in which I was forced to use my spacetime seal to escape. I'm still trying to recover from the shock of that battle. Forgive my inattentiveness."

"Demons? Has the demon race reappeared in the world once again?" The voice was surprised.

"Not on a large scale," Jiang Chen sighed softly, "but demons everywhere are reawakening. Traces of their activities are becoming much more commonplace."

#### Chapter 1168: Venerated Skysoarer

"The demon race, the demon race..." The muttering sounded extremely sad and hateful. The owner appeared to be fuming with rage behind gritted teeth.

Jiang Chen knew that practically all ancient experts hated the demon race. Even the ones who'd escaped to Myriad Abyss Island hated them. After all, the demons had forced them to leave their homeland. Because of the demons, they endured the unsightly label of a deserter and a never ending guilty conscience.

The demon race had terrorized all living beings, destroyed the human domain, damaged the spirit veins within, and consumed a large amount of resources. That was why the surviving ancient experts had no choice but to head for Myriad Abyss Island.

Jiang Chen didn't interrupt him. He sat down cross legged and stayed silent. The earlier battle had sorely tested his strength and exhausted him greatly, especially because he'd activated both the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman and the Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman at once. The pressure that he'd had to bear at mere half-step emperor was enormous to say the least. If he hadn't cultivated the golden body of demons and gods, he would've been lucky not to be crushed outright by the combined pressure. At the very least, he would've suffered severe injuries.

The protector of Ancient Crimson Palace was taken aback by Jiang Chen's actions. "Young man, I can see the lingering aura of powerful talisman around your body. Were you using some sort of unnaturally powerful talisman just now?"

Jiang Chen didn't deny it. "Yes. I'm half-step emperor realm and used both the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman and the Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman. As a result, I am deeply exhausted."

"Half-step emperor realm?" The Ancient Crimson Palace protector seemed surprised. "You're only a half-step emperor realm cultivator, and you made it into the Six Palaces of Heritage?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "It's true that I'm not officially an emperor realm cultivator yet."

The protector looked even more surprised. "Incredible! To think that the next genius to enter the Six Palaces of Heritage tens of thousands of years later would be a mere half-step emperor!"

Jiang Chen wasn't sure how to answer. However, judging from the protector's tone, it didn't sound like he was complaining about Jiang Chen's low cultivation level.

"Young man, I believe you are in your twenties, aren't you? There were a lot of youngsters who reached emperor realm at your age in the ancient times as well. However, I can tell you for sure that you're at the very least as talented and intelligent as they were!" The Ancient Crimson Palace protector was sounding a little impressed by now.

In the ancient times, cultivation was never the first parameter to consider when a genius was selected. The most important was one's growth potential. With the current state of the martial dao world, it was incredibly rare to find someone who could cultivate to half-step emperor realm at Jiang Chen's age.

What was even better was that Jiang Chen had successfully challenged all nine Veluriyam Obelisks and obtained the right to enter the Six Palaces of Heritage. He'd even made it past the first palace's test. This last achievement was the one that surprised the protector the most.

"The fact that you had passed the test of the first palace is proof that you share an unseen bond with the Six Palaces of Heritage. My name is Skysoarer. I am the protector of the second palace, the Ancient Crimson Palace. Tell me your name, young man."

"This junior is named Jiang Chen." Jiang Chen hadn't concealed his identity when he entered the first palace and spoken to its protector. Since the second palace was called the Ancient Crimson Palace, he had even less of a reason to conceal himself. After all, it could be said that both he and the protector of Ancient Crimson Palace shared common origins. "Very good, very good! Jiang Chen, please forgive my earlier misunderstanding. I must admit that it is truly rare to hear of a half-step emperor fighting a demon emperor and coming away unscathed. A genius like you is exactly what the Six Palaces of Heritage has been looking for all this time. That being said, I won't give you preferential treatment just

because I admire your talents. If you wish to pass through Ancient Crimson Palace and claim its inheritance in the process, you must go through three tests just like before.” Skysoarer didn’t hide his admiration for Jiang Chen at all. It was quite similar to Honored Master P’eng’s reaction.

Jiang Chen knew that the protectors had all been important figures during the ancient times. However, the creator of Veluriyam Pagoda had been stronger and more powerful than all of them. That was why he’d been able to coerce these important figures into guarding the Six Palaces of Heritage.

Who knew how many years it’d been since the ancient times? The protectors no doubt felt very lonely while they waited through an infinity of time. It had been at least tens of thousands of years since the last genius that entered the Six Palaces of Heritage.

So it was no wonder that the protectors were eager to meet every challenger who successfully made it into the Six Palaces of Heritage. As long as their attitudes weren’t too awful, the protectors almost always liked the challengers.

“Venerated Skysoarer, while I was exploring the Upper Eight Regions some time ago, I encountered a sect called the Celestial Cicada Court. They gave me a formation diagram that they’d claimed to inherit from the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. If I may ask, are you...” Jiang Chen asked tentatively without reveal everything.

“What?” As he had expected, Skysoarer’s voice abruptly turned serious. “The Celestial Cicada Court? The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect? Young man, where did you learn about the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect?”

Jiang Chen grew even more confident when he took note of the urgency and hastiness in the protector’s voice.

“The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect is a great formation sect during ancient times. Although there are no written records left in the world, the name of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect is passed down verbally. I would occasionally hear of this sect being mentioned, and these days the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect is referred to quite often when the subject of ancient formation experts is brought up.”

What he said was actually less the truth and more flattery. There were very, very few ancient sects that managed to leave behind a legacy. The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect couldn’t really be considered a top tier sect back in the ancient times. At best, they were half a rank below the top tier sects. Therefore, they weren’t particularly influential.

This was especially true after the ancient experts had migrated to Myriad Abyss Island. Their departure meant that a gap had formed in numerous human martial dao inheritances, resulting in the loss of many ancient inheritances.

The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect had sealed off their entire sect when they met the demon race in battle, so they’d left behind practically no inheritances. Even if there had been, it was likely the work of other branches.

“Young man, did Honored Master P’eng teach you these words?” Skyddiver’s voice abruptly turned cold. Even his earlier admiration had thinned a little.

Jiang Chen understood that Skysoarer had misunderstood. But instead of explaining, he smiled. "You've misunderstood me, senior. I just want to confirm if you hail from the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect."

"What if I am? What if I'm not?" Skysoarer sounded a little stiff.

"If you really are a senior in Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, then there's something I would like to show you. If you aren't, then I would like to move on from this."

"What is it?" Skysoarer asked indifferently, "Show me."

Jiang Chen didn't hesitate. He opened his palm and revealed the Ancient Crimson Medallion he'd obtained from the sect's tower of inheritance.

"Please, have a look." Jiang Chen tossed the medallion into the air. An unnatural wind held it in midair.

Although Venerated Skysoarer couldn't move as he pleased, his consciousness enveloped the entire Ancient Crimson Palace. He was greatly stunned the second he saw the medallion.

"The Ancient Crimson Medallion?" Skysoarer cried out involuntarily. "Young man, where did you obtain this item?"

"I obtained it from the ruins of Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect at Mt. Rippling Mirage." Jiang Chen finally decided to let it all out.

"What?" The voice sounded shocked. "You... you entered Mt. Rippling Mirage? You found the ruins of the sect? Does that mean... does that mean you've obtained the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's legacy?"

Jiang Chen took out the Ancient Crimson formation disk and suspended it in midair for display.

"All three items of inheritances of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect yet exist. You can see I have the Ancient Crimson Medallion and the formation disk here. The formation flags aren't with me right now because I used them for some other purposes."

There were two sets of Ancient Crimson formation flags. The secondary set had been used at the entrance of the desolate wildlands, and the primary used on the Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation he'd arranged at Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord residence.

Skysoarer couldn't quite control his emotions because he hadn't expect to be able to see his sect's keepsake after tens of thousands of years. He murmured, "It's true. It's actually true... To think that the sect would be able to see the light of day once more. Heavens bless the legacy of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect!"

Skysoarer remained agitated for a very long time before he recovered. "Young man, you said your name is Jiang Chen, am I right?"

"Yes, senior. This junior is named Jiang Chen."

"Oh no, no, no, you can't call me a senior. You are the holder of the Ancient Crimson Medallion, so that means you are the current sect head of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. I may be an elder of the sect

since ancient times, but all elders are required to serve the sect head. Therefore, I cannot possibly allow you to call me your senior!” Skysoarer sounded both serious and happy.

“Don’t be nervous. Feel free to act as you like, sect head. You’ve successfully entered the forbidden ground of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, passed through many tests and obtained our three great inheritances from the tower of inheritance. This means that your status was acknowledged by everyone in the sect since the experts crafted the tests together. Since you’ve passed through the tests, this means that you are the new sect head of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect!” Skysoarer’s explanation rambled on non-stop, almost as if he was afraid that Jiang Chen would turn around and walk away.

To an ancient expert, there was nothing more reinvigorating than hearing news of their sect. Skysoarer had participated in the war against the demons and nearly all of his sect mates had perished back then. However, the master of Veluriyam Pagoda had rescued him from the battlefield and brought him here.

When Skysoarer had first arrived at Veluriyam Pagoda, he’d been absolutely shattered. His sect had been destroyed, and his sect mates were dead. To a person who felt very strongly towards his sect, the blow felt that it would be the end of him. If the master of Veluriyam Pagoda hadn’t tricked him, he might’ve committed suicide and joined his sect in death.

As the years passed, the infinite passage of time slowly eroded the pain in Skysoarer’s heart and helped him get used to being a protector of Veluriyam Pagoda. However, his hatred towards the demon race burned as brightly as ever despite the sands of time. His longing for his sect hadn’t changed either.

Today, Jiang Chen had appeared out of nowhere and brought him news of the sect. How could he not be overjoyed by this? If his impression of the young man before was mild admiration, it was now deepest affection after he learned that the young man had obtained the legacy of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.

#### Chapter 1169: Breaking Through to Emperor Realm

Jiang Chen patiently recounted all that had taken place at the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles to the venerable master. After all was said and done, Venerated Skysoarer sighed. “I designed the formation outside Mt. Ripping Mirage. My first version was extremely difficult, but the sect head at the time advised me otherwise. If the formation outside is this hard, he said, then how can anyone have a chance at entering the restricted area?”

The exterior of Mt. Ripping Mirage, the ancient spirit herb garden, the sacred altar: all of these were an interconnected part of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s grounds. The caveat was obtaining the nameless saber first. The unassuming weapon was the real key to opening up the ruins. One would be lucky to get to the ancient spirit herb garden otherwise, with no possible entry into the sect’s ruins proper.

From Jiang Chen’s mouth, Venerated Skysoarer heard the entire story of how Jiang Chen had gotten his hands on the saber. It had been confiscated as part of a certain Hidden Dragon Trials examiner’s possessions back in the Eastern Kingdom.

Jiang Chen had taken it purely because he thought the saber was a nice weapon. He hadn’t dreamed that doing so would lead to the events that proceeded much later down the line. Fate and destiny were sometimes wondrous things.

Venerated Skysoarer grew emotional as he listened to Jiang Chen's retelling, especially the details about several of the dangers he had fortunately evaded in the restricted area.

"Sect Head, the mechanisms I prepared target the hearts of men. If someone with ignoble morals entered the sect's grounds, they would not be able to pass those tests. Our heritage is not meant for the villainous and vile. That you were able to obtain the inheritance proves that you are deserving."

The venerable master became animated as the topic of conversation shifted. He asked incessantly about the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, and Jiang Chen withheld nothing from the old man. When he had heard all, the venerable master sighed.

"Now that our sect can see the light of day again, I have no regrets. Sect Head, as a guardian of the Six Palaces of Heritage, I made a promise to the lord of the Veluriyam Pagoda. Therefore, I cannot cheat on your behalf. My apologies in advance."

"I'm not here to cheat," Jiang Chen smiled. "If I pass the challenges with such underhanded methods, what's the point of taking them in the first place?"

"That is so." The venerable master was even more certain that Jiang Chen was an upright man, worthy of shouldering the sect. "However, you should've seen them already back at the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's tower of inheritance. Though they've been scaled up several times in difficulty, it shouldn't be an arduous task for you."

Jiang Chen's jaw dropped. "Not the Minor Artifice Formation, Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven, and the Great Dream of Spring and Autumn Formation?"

"The Minor Artifice Formation has been ranked up to Major Artifice, and Ancient Slaughter is at its highest difficulty. Similarly, the Great Dream formation has been increased greatly. But before you take the challenge, we have a great deal of information here available for your study. The time limit is three months."

Jiang Chen thought about it for a moment. "Venerable master, I'd like to solidify my cultivation a while before I take the challenge and break through to emperor realm."

"Of course, feel free."

The young man had had the opportunity to break through to emperor realm for a long time now, but he had intentionally held himself back. Now, after obtaining the earth attribute orb from Cloudshatter Mountain, Jiang Chen had a treasure from all five elements. He was finally ready to make the leap.

He took the orb out from his storage ring and couldn't help but relish the potent earthen aura that filled the air. The orb was extraordinary without a doubt. The tremendous power contained within its pulses and its sheer ability to sustain an entire subterranean realm were both clear indicators of that fact. The powerful formation it fueled in addition to that only cemented that conclusion.

The collapse of the realm at the orb's removal was a testament to its absurdity. The Crimson Heavens Palace was instantly enveloped by powerful earth energy when he took the orb out, filling the air.

"Hmm? Sect Head, the orb in your hand is... curiously exceptional." Even an ancient expert like Venerated Skysoarer was moved at the sight of Jiang Chen's treasure. After hearing the youth's retelling

of how he'd procured it, the master gasped. "From what you say, Sect Head, this orb is the Earth Bodhisattva Orb, from the sect of the same name."

"The Earth Bodhisattva Orb?" Jiang Chen was surprised. "Is the, er, Earth Bodhisattva Sect an ancient sect as well?"

"Not just an ancient sect. One of the greatest and with a name for formations. Possibly stronger than the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect in some respects. They didn't surpass us in terms of technique or heritage, but their possession of this Earth Bodhisattva Orb gave them an edge over us."

"You are a blessed man, Sect Head," the venerable master sighed softly. "To receive the crowning treasure of the Earth Bodhisattva Sect... Hahaha, I remember their swaggering ways way back, and how they used to call themselves the number one formation sect, but what now? Their treasure is in our sect head's hands! The ways of fate are strange indeed."

Jiang Chen savored the potent spirit energy from the orb. It certainly lived up to its outstanding reputation as a top ancient sect's paramount treasure. The formation that had harnessed the earth pulses was proof alone how terrifying the orb could be.

The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect had a great deal of formation-related knowledge, but it lacked a sovereign treasure that it could call its own. With this orb in hand, even the weakest of formations could produce miraculous results.

The Earth Bodhisattva Sect had relied solely on the orb to push them into the ranks of the top sects in the ancient times. The orb had even been enough to shove the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect aside, a sect famous for its ingenuity in formations.

With the Earth Bodhisattva Orb, Jiang Chen now had all five elements at his disposal. For metal, he had his magnetic golden mountain; wood, his Taiyi Jade Vine; water and fire, his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice; and now earth, his Earth Bodhisattva Orb.

When Jiang Chen had broken through to spirit realm all those years ago, he'd laid the foundation for this step by refining and consuming the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill. This meant that his long-run potential far surpassed his peers'.

The Earth Bodhisattva Orb had been ownerless for countless years since time immemorial. This made Jiang Chen's refining process comparatively easier. He finished before long, claiming the orb as yet another one of his exclusive treasures. This now meant that Jiang Chen had finished every preparation for attuning his meridians to the five elements, thereby ascending them.

It was time for him to formally break through to emperor realm! Given Jiang Chen's amount of cultivation, he had been eligible for emperor realm for at least several years now. Thus, this was more of a very natural upwards move.

All five elements rising within, Jiang Chen felt the streams of inner energy become a transformational cycle, radically reconstructing his spirit ocean with each pass. The binds of sage realm were easily ripped asunder, and checks and blocks broken effortlessly. The path of his entrance into emperor realm was clear.

For the average half-step emperor realm cultivator, the process of breaking through to emperor realm was intimidatingly arduous. However, Jiang Chen's own had no obstacles whatsoever. The brevity and ease with which he broke through was like a simple increase in power.

It was more dangerous to break through, the more advanced one was in cultivation. Often, heavenly wrath would be visited on someone who attempted to step from one realm into another. Most cultivators feared this wrath as a ferocious beast. Yet nothing of the sort had been visited upon the young man.

Rather, the final moment in Jiang Chen's breakthrough was accompanied by countless visions and marveling natural phenomena. Back when he broke through to origin realm, he had caused a similar display to occur at the Precious Tree Sect. The show was no less grand this time around, but it was muted to a certain extent by the Pagoda around it.

"It's been so many years... but, I'm emperor realm now!" Jiang Chen opened his eyes, shining with happiness. It couldn't be called a long-awaited development, exactly, but it was an important step on his martial dao journey.

It meant that he was almost at the pinnacle of the martial dao world of the Divine Abyss Continent! Any emperor realm cultivator was a force to be reckoned with here, and he had a wealth of tricks up his sleeves to back his cultivation up. Plus, he was only twenty-something. He had a lot of room to grow.

Jiang Chen was in high spirits. He'd suffered a great deal after coming to this world, braving ordeal after ordeal. But he considered everything he'd been through worthwhile. Better to live a fulfilling life than to be unable to cultivate for eternity.

"Congratulations, Sect Head! You've managed to break through at such a remarkably young age. I've no doubt at all that you'll become a great emperor before you're sixty." The venerable master was just as pleased as his newfound peer.

Jiang Chen flashed him a smile. It had been a one-of-a-kind experience to break through inside the otherworldly Crimson Heavens Palace. He had found things both astonishing and intriguing. He spent another fortnight to solidify his progress and foundations.

"My level of cultivation is stable now, Venerated Skysoarer. Starting today, I'd like to put my all into challenging the palace's three trials."

"Good, good. Now that you are in emperor realm, Sect Head, the possibility of you passing is over ninety percent!" The venerable master replied, overjoyed.

Jiang Chen never did things carelessly. Though he knew ahead of time that he had taken the three trials before in another form, he didn't underestimate the coming task. He studied the materials in the Crimson Heavens Palace very carefully. Only after every potential problem and knowledge point was internalized did he actually begin the trials.

As the higher level versions of the formations in the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's tower of heritage, the trial formations shared many of the same principles of their lower level selves. Passing the trials turned out to be child's play. Jiang Chen perfectly completed all three in the span of two hours.



“Genius, a true genius!” The venerable master had nothing but praise to offer. “The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect is fortunate indeed to have gained such a genius sect head. A renaissance for our sect is at hand!”

Venerated Skysoarer was utterly convinced by the young man’s skill. Despite knowing that Jiang Chen had tried these formations before, the flawlessness and ease with which the young sect head passed astonished him nevertheless.

#### Chapter 1170: Rewards of the Second Palace

Though the three tests were reasonably difficult, Jiang Chen completed them perfectly and effortlessly. Venerated Skysoarer found it hard to describe, but he felt that Jiang Chen had a confidence that belied his age. Not a blind assurance, but true, reliable confidence that was backed up by something substantial.

He seemed to have everything that he did planned out beforehand. It was an odd feeling. The young man was collected, certain, and in absolute control. Traits that, in all honesty, were completely inappropriate for someone of his age.

The venerable master mused that if he were to venture into the three formations himself, he wouldn’t have been able to do a better job. In fact, he would probably lack in the treatment of certain details.

“Congratulations, Sect Head. You pass the three trials of the Crimson Heavens Palace!” Ever since entering the Veluriyam Pagoda as one of its guardians, Venerated Skysoarer had never been so happy as he was today.

His heart had been nothing short of bleak for the past hundred thousand years or so, but he now felt that everything had been worth it! The gloom in his heart was clear. With a sect head like this, how could the Crimson Heavens Sect not flourish? What was there to worry about regarding the sect’s heritage?

Jiang Chen wasn’t uncomfortable with the fact that the venerable master called him ‘sect head’. He knew that as soon as he’d received the Crimson Heavens Medallion, he had a responsibility to act as the de facto leader of the sect. He had a responsibility, moreover, of sustaining the sect’s lineage. This was one of his life principles.

“I was a bit lucky this time. If I hadn’t obtained the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s heritage, then this palace would’ve been significantly more difficult.” On this point, Jiang Chen was self-aware. Compared to the first palace, the second was unreasonably easy.

“It is your blessing and fortune alone, Sect Head.” The venerable master disagreed. “Any other genius would have much more trouble passing this palace’s test. I have a feeling that you’ll really be able to conquer all six of the palaces and become the new master of the Veluriyam Pagoda.”

“Ah, perhaps.” Jiang Chen sighed thoughtfully. “I hear that the six palaces sequentially increase in difficulty?”

Venerated Skysoarer nodded. “The first and second palace are about the same, though the latter is probably slightly harder than the former.”

“Starting from the third palace, the difficulty ramps up significantly. I don’t advise you to rush into it blindly until you’re advanced level emperor realm. Of course, you have the one chance at failure allotted to you for every palace. The fourth, like the second, is not much different from the third... but the fifth palace marks yet another harsh increase, as does the sixth. If you conquer the sixth palace, that means you’ve claimed complete mastery of the entire Six Palaces of Heritage. You’ll have a pretty good chance of becoming the new master of the Veluriyam Pagoda, and then receive all of the inheritances.”

The venerable master paused here a moment, sighing himself in turn. “In ancient times, the master of the Veluriyam Pagoda was one of the leaders of the human race. He possessed great knowledge and skill, and gave up all he had to preserve the human race in the wake of the demonic invasion. He burned away his lifespan to peer into the river of time, and built the Veluriyam Pagoda for the sole purpose of passing on the torch of humanity to a future generation. The greatness of the Pagoda master surpasses eras and years, but few know of his greatness. His noble intentions? Fewer still.”

Jiang Chen found this amazing. He had heard of the Pagoda master’s great deeds from the mouths of both Masters P’eng and Skysoarer. Neither master seemed particularly willing in their custodial duties here, but they hadn’t a single complaint against the Pagoda master.

Though Jiang Chen didn’t know who the Pagoda master was yet or where the master was from, from what he knew so far, the mysterious man was someone he could hold a great deal of respect for. If a man could leave his enemies silent about his shortcomings, then he was truly great beyond compare. The more Jiang Chen heard, the more the Veluriyam Pagoda and its master garnered his interest.

“The Six Palaces of Heritage and the Veluriyam Pagoda.” His eyes shone with a keen radiance. “I’ll conquer the palaces step by step. There is none other worthy of being the Pagoda’s new master!”

Jiang Chen had a feeling that amazing opportunity lay within. There was no greater on the Divine Abyss Continent, and it could easily match anything that Myriad Abyss Island had to offer. He was here already. Who else could rule the Pagoda better?

“Venerated Skysoarer.” His expression became serious and honest. “I don’t know who the Veluriyam Pagoda’s master is yet, but the remarks from Master P’eng and yourself have decidedly piqued my interest in both him and his Pagoda. I will master the Pagoda and make it my own. You can count on it!”

“Hahaha, wonderful. A genius like you would shine brighter than the brightest of stars, Sect Head, even in ancient times. Furthermore, you have fortune on your side. I think you have more than a fair chance at taking the Pagoda as your own.”

Having appreciated Jiang Chen from the start, the old master’s impression was improved by the fact that Jiang Chen was also his sect head. These two points combined made Venerated Skysoarer more hopeful than ever that Jiang Chen would one day become the Pagoda’s master. It was normal for a man to have his biases. The venerable master was no different.

“You are granted two rewards for conquering the Crimson Heavens Palace, Sect Head. Naturally, both are formation schematics. One is for the Great Dream of Spring and Autumn Formation, and the other, for the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation.”

Jiang Chen was no stranger to the former. It was a terrifyingly murderous formation, and anyone who couldn't pierce its mysteries was stuck in a deathtrap. However, this was his first time hearing of a Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation.

"Sect Head, I'm sure you know of the Great Dream formation already. I should remark, however, that if you have wood from the Divine Tree of Dreams, then the formation will be ten times as effective as it is normally."

"The Divine Tree of Dreams?" Jiang Chen remembered the first trial he had gone through in the sixteen kingdom alliance. It was during the trial of fortune that he'd seen a Divine Tree of Dreams.

"Yes. Aside from the formation itself, you will receive a set of flags fashioned from that kind of tree's wood. If you use the flags, even a great emperor realm cultivator will find it exceedingly troublesome to be ensnared by your formation. You'll have about a fifty percent chance of victory over them. If you are a great emperor yourself, you can kill fellow great emperors outright."

As an ancient formation sect, the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect had a tremendous amount of knowledge. The only reason for the Earth Bodhisattva Sect's dominance over it all those years ago was the Earth Bodhisattva Orb's power. In terms of formation-related skill alone, the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect reigned supreme.

"The Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation is a bitingly sharp formation in its lethality. If used together with the Great Dream formation, the duo becomes a fearsome combination. However, usage of this excessively powerful formation is rather taxing on the consciousness. Moreover, it requires eighty-one flying swords forged from very specific materials. Compared to the Great Dream of Spring and Autumn Formation, this one is much harder to cultivate. Alas, neither do we have a set of flying swords for you."

Though the master of the Pagoda was fabulously wealthy and owned countless treasures, he didn't quite have everything on demand. In particular, the matching swords for this formation required several types of high-grade materials, as well as one of the very best blacksmiths at the pinnacle of his craft. It was impossible to get a full set in a short amount of time.

Jiang Chen found this a little lamentable, but wasn't overly disappointed. After all, his Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique did pretty well on double duty as a sword formation. The thunder and lightning in its blades was a veritable formation itself.

"Sect Head, the necessary materials for the matching swords should be at the back of the book. If you're lucky enough to get all of them one day to forge the swords, then you must practice the formation. Since the founding of our sect, not a single one of us has succeeded in cultivating the formation perfectly. However, there was once a noteworthy senior who used a simplified version of the formation to kill three cultivators the same level as him in a single stroke. It is optimistic to say that he managed to harness even a fifth of the formation's true strength."

"A fifth? Multiple cultivators the same level as him, you said?" Jiang Chen was mildly astonished. He noticed that the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation was a powerful one, but he didn't expect it to be quite so effective.

After all, if a formation only had a fifth of its power, then it wouldn't do very much against real experts. That this formation could kill three cultivators of the same level at twenty percent of its full

effectiveness was incredibly staggering. Despite the wealth of experience from his previous life, Jiang Chen had very rarely heard of this kind of thing.

Looking over the sword formation's book of diagrams, Jiang Chen pondered it quite a while before putting it away.

"If I have the chance to, I'll definitely study the sword formation," he promised to the venerable master.

"Excellent." The venerable master was fired up by his commitment. "I'm looking forward to it."

After finishing the second palace, Jiang Chen had no intention of proceeding directly to the third. Just as Venerated Skysoarer had said, it was better to wait until advanced level emperor realm to try his luck there. Having entered the realm only a short while ago, he had a long way to go and so was in no hurry at all.

Knowing that Jiang Chen was about to depart soon, the venerable master was a bit sad. "Good luck and stay safe, Sect Head. Here is the spacetime seal for your safekeeping. When you next come into the Pagoda through the seal, you will be transported directly to the third palace. If we meet again, it will be when you've fully mastered the entire Veluriyam Pagoda."

The Veluriyam Pagoda had very strict rules. Jiang Chen could only return its guardians' freedom after he gained full control. This was the law laid down on the day the Pagoda had been built. No matter how badly Jiang Chen wanted to take out the two masters he'd met so far, it was unrealistic.

As Jiang Chen prepared to leave, a stray question suddenly came to mind. "Venerated Skysoarer, there's a formation called the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement. Do you know of it?"