

## Three Realms 1171

### Chapter 1171: The Only Hope Of The Human Race

The Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement? Venerated Skysoarer was taken aback. "Sect Head, why do you ask? How did you come by the name of the formation?"

"Does this mean that the formation is real?" Jiang Chen frowned slightly. He'd first heard about the formation from Mang Qi when he trained in the Eastern Kingdom's Boundless Catacombs many years ago. After traveling to the sealed grounds in the desolate wildlands, he made another trip to the Boundless Catacombs for confirmation from Mang Qi. And now he wanted to see from the venerable master if Mang Qi's words held any water.

"The formation..." The Venerated Skysoarer gave a long sigh. His tone became exceedingly complicated. "Sect Head, the story behind that formation is long and complicated."

Jiang Chen didn't care how long the tale might be. He needed to know.

"Venerated master, my fate is deeply entwined with the formation. Perhaps you can share the story with me?"

"I'll gladly impart everything the sect head wishes to know." The venerated master didn't hide anything from Jiang Chen. He heaved a long sigh. "Actually, our sect was involved in the construction of the formation. Back then, a total of eight sects worked hand-in-hand to construct the formation. As one of the frontrunners, we were in charge of thirty percent of it."

Jiang Chen wasn't surprised that the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect had a hand in the creation of the formation. It was only natural that one of the strongest sects of the ancient age would participate in such a grand undertaking.

"However, the eight sects weren't the only ones who participated in this. Every single ancient great sect contributed to this grand endeavor. They provided us with the required spirit stones, tools, and many other resources. Everyone was united in our intention to make this formation the sole weapon to suppress the demons."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen raised a brow. He didn't expect there to be so much history behind the formation.

"I'm not exaggerating. Back then, the human race was one of the strongest throughout the Divine Abyss Continent. Resources were abundant. The demons would have never invaded human territory if otherwise. Because of that, we had to pay a great price during the invasion. The construction of the formation alone caused dozens of formation masters to die of exhaustion."

"Was it really that terrible?" Jiang Chen was taken aback. How would a single formation require so much?

"It was." Venerated Skysoarer was extremely solemn. "The Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement is the strongest and highest level formation throughout the Divine Abyss Continent. No sect could possibly construct it on their own, nor could they afford the resources needed to support it. Nobody would've died if given a decade to complete it, but three months was all we had."

Time was an extremely precious commodity during the invasion. A decade was simply too long. Every second wasted was a life lost and every single day was worth fighting for. One day was all it took for the war to shift sides.

Jiang Chen came to understand why so many formation masters had died of exhaustion. They'd taken only three months to complete a formation that would normally take ten years. Such urgency was unheard of in modern times. They'd traded their lives for its completion. He was struck by awe.

"Nine elders from our sect had lost their lives during the construction of the formation, including my own younger brother." Venerated Skysoarer lamented.

"The Earth Bodhisattva Sect, arguably the leading sect in formations at that time, had to sacrifice almost a dozen of their own as well. Many other sects were the same..." The venerated elder grew increasingly downcast as he spoke. "It's a pity we underestimated how cunning the demons were in the end..."

"After all the effort in setting up the formation, we waged what was supposed to be the decisive fight with the demons, but somehow, they saw through our plans. Contrary to our predictions, they didn't send their main force into battle. Instead, they sent an army of puppets to fight us. They were mere slaves that the demons had acquired from other planes. They were forced into battle and didn't put up a fight. They were nothing but scapegoats meant to be sent to their deaths in the stead of the demons!"

Skysoarer gritted his teeth. His hatred for the demons ran so deep that he wanted to rip them apart with his teeth. The story seemed to match with Mang Qi's rendition. It seems Mang Qi wasn't lying after all. Jiang Chen sighed deeply.

"Sect Head, the formation is one of the deepest scars in our hearts. We put in so much effort and paid such a great price, only to see it all go down the drain. We let down our brethren who sacrificed their lives for the formation. If the main forces of the demon race had been caught in it, our sacrifices in the following battles would've been much lighter. Because the formation failed to serve its purpose, a large majority of cultivation experts died in the gruesome battles that followed. Many powerful factions sacrificed everything for the sake of the greater good. Many great lives and treasures were lost."

The Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement had been constructed as a weapon against the demons, yet it'd been used on nothing but scapegoats. If the main force of the demons had been captured by the formation, then the human race's fortunes might not have declined so dramatically. The fates were incredibly cruel.

"Venerated master. Since the formation seized the wrong target, perhaps we can reactivate it and release the scapegoats to bolster our own army?" Jiang Chen probed.

"We considered the same thing back then, but the invasion was already in full swing. We couldn't spare any manpower to reactivate the formation. Moreover, there was no guarantee that the scapegoats would willingly join forces with us to fight against the demons if we freed them. They were under the demon's control after all." Venerated Skysoarer had made a good point.

Jiang Chen nodded. "I understand. Doing so would be a big risk back then. However, I wonder if there is still a chance that we could reactivate the formation?"

He was an all-knowing expert in the art of formations, but he didn't have a good grasp of the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement because he hadn't encountered it in his previous life. Therefore, he wanted to learn more about it from the venerable master himself.

"The ancient age was almost two hundred thousand years ago. I can't possibly know what state the formation is currently in without seeing it for myself. However, with what resources we have left in the human domain, it's unlikely that we'd succeed in reactivating the formation. In terms of material resources, we might be able to gather enough to meet the requirement if we tried hard enough, but there simply isn't enough manpower. Dozens of empyrean cultivators died of exhaustion during the construction of the formation, yet the human domain might not even have a single empyrean expert now! Reactivating it is clearly an empty dream!"

The venerable master's conjecture was very reasonable, but Jiang Chen didn't believe that it was an insurmountable problem.

"Venerated master, no matter how difficult it may seem, every possible path is worth exploring. If we somehow reactivate the formation, we could blockade the demon army at the desolate wildlands and hinder their march into the human domain." Jiang Chen had done some research regarding human domain terrain.

The Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement was constructed with geography in mind and was located between demon territory and human domain as an invisible barrier. The demons would have no choice but to march around it. The vastness of the world meant that they'd have to travel up to ten times the distance to enter the human domain. This made their invasion significantly harder.

The longer the distance they had to cover, the more likely their army would be spread too thin. This too served as an advantage for the humans. The human leaders of the ancient times had been very meticulous in the placement of the formation. If Jiang Chen could somehow reactivate the formation, it would serve as the perfect barrier to keep the demons out. Unfortunately, the formation was simply too complex and high level. Reactivating it would be extremely difficult even for someone like him. The material and human resources needed was simply too colossal.

Fortunately, time was on his side. The demons were still rather dormant and their invasion likely a few decades away. The ancients had needed ten years to construct the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement at a sustainable pace. Perhaps taking five times as much time would be a sustainable pace for modern humans? After all, the ancients had to construct it from scratch, but all modern humans had to do was reactivate it.

The foundations of the formation were already laid. Reactivating it was significantly easier than constructing it from scratch. So although the task was incredibly daunting, it was still achievable

"Sect Head, do you really intend to reactivate the formation?" Venerated Skysoarer asked involuntarily when he saw how resolute Jiang Chen seemed.

"Venerated master, based on the current state of the human race, if a demonic cataclysm occurred, what are the chances that we'd win?"

"None." The venerable master answered bluntly.

“What if we were to reactivate the formation?” Jiang Chen asked again.

“If you reactivate it...” The venerable master began to ponder deeply. “If you reactivate it, you’d block off the demons’ path. The difficulty of their invasion would grow by several multitudes. If that happened, they might actually change their targets and invade another race instead.”

Jiang Chen nodded. “In conclusion, the formation is the human race’s only hope.”

The venerable master sighed deeply. “Sect Head, I must remind you that it’ll be a lot harder than you can imagine. The amount of resources needed is simply mind boggling. Moreover, the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect has only contributed thirty percent to its construction. The parts handled by the other sects are not recorded in our history. How will you reactivate the formation if you have no information about the other parts?”

Chapter 1172: Leaving Veluriyam Pagoda

There were a lot of issues on the table, including the ones listed by Venerated Skysoarer. If Jiang Chen wished to reactivate the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement, he would have to resolve them first.

“Venerable master, how many sects were involved in setting up the formation back then? Do you know their names?”

Venerated Skysoarer thought for a moment. “It’s probably impossible for you to find out anything about the sects now. However, there may be another way for you to proceed, Sect Head, one probably more workable than searching for needles in a haystack.”

“What is it?” Jiang Chen asked in a low tone.

“The arrangement of the formation involved a couple great human leaders, but the meetings were held in the Earth Bodhisattva Sect. Therefore, there very well may be records of the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement stored somewhere in the Earth Bodhisattva Sect.”

“The Earth Bodhisattva Sect?” Jiang Chen immediately thought of the Earth Bodhisattva Orb he’d acquired recently. Was Great Scarlet Mid Region under Earth Bodhisattva Sect rule back then?

He’d obtained the Earth Bodhisattva Orb from Cloudshatter Mountain, but the place didn’t look like an ancient sect ruin, not to mention that the demon race had chosen to build their base there. They wouldn’t be foolish enough to risk building a base right beneath the sect’s noses, and the sect wouldn’t be so friendly as to allow it.

“Venerable master, did the Earth Bodhisattva Sect... managed to preserve their legacy?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“Hmph.” Venerated Skysoarer’s tone suddenly took a strange turn. It was a thoroughly disdainful sneer.

“Sect Head, I’ll admit that the Earth Bodhisattva Sect offered a lot of effort, resources and manpower to arrange the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement. You could even say that they were the main organizers. However...”

“Hmm?” Jiang Chen’s eyebrows furrowed. Was there another story behind this?

“Heh, in the end, the Earth Bodhisattva Sect was nothing but an upstart with no real foundation. After the demon race used scapegoats to trigger the formation early, that sect immediately gave up because they felt like their efforts had been wasted. Their members grew depressed and passive, believing that the human race’s fortunes were at an end. Panic, anxiety, fear reigned. In the end, the Earth Bodhisattva Sect decided to seal their doors and go into hiding.”

“What? How ludicrous! The entire sect decided to hide while the war was still ongoing?”

It wasn’t improbable that some experts had decided to silently sneak away to other places due to fear of impending death and the demons. But an entire sect? That seemed unimaginable.

“Incredible, isn’t it? But the Earth Bodhisattva Sect did just that. They ignored the rebukes of the human leaders and stuck to their plan. They sealed off their sect and vanished from the eyes of the world in the name of survival, making the best possible choice from their point of view.”

Jiang Chen was speechless. He had no doubt that the farce committed by what was essentially the number one formation sect at the time had dealt a huge blow to the morale of the human race. It was no wonder Venerated Skysoarer scorned the Earth Bodhisattva Sect. This was the root of it all.

While the Earth Bodhisattva Sect had made numerous contributions in the war, they were deserters in the end. Naturally, this act earned the scorn of a righteous sect like the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.

“Did the ancient leaders let them leave, just like that?” Jiang Chen found this incredulous.

“Hmph. What was the point of keeping them around if their hearts weren’t here anymore?” Venerated Skysoarer sounded extremely resentful. “Luckily for us, the human leaders took action before they ran off. They held a meeting and decided that while they couldn’t force the Earth Bodhisattva Sect to stay, they could confiscate the sect’s symbolic treasure, the Earth Bodhisattva Orb, as a punitive measure.

“This was the Earth Bodhisattva Sect’s punishment for deserting, and how you came into possession of the Earth Bodhisattva Orb, Sect Head.”

Jiang Chen had finally understood how it all had come to be. If the Orb had still been in the Earth Bodhisattva Sect’s possession, then he would’ve never gotten his ‘turn’.

“So, where did the Earth Bodhisattva Sect go after that?”

“No one knows. However, many angry human cultivators went to their headquarters and utterly trashed it, so it’s impossible for any of their sect ruins to exist in this world. If you want to find them, you must find where they went to first. Assuming that my deduction is right, I would say that they’ve probably left the human domain.”

“Could they have gone to Myriad Abyss Island?” Jiang Chen frowned. If the Earth Bodhisattva Sect wished to flee from the war, then Myriad Abyss Island was definitely the best destination.

“That’s highly probable.” Venerated Skysoarer sighed. “There were plenty of experts who chose to slink away with their tail between their legs, but to think that an entire sect would... In a sense, you can say that they made history with their cowardice.”

Jiang Chen felt contempt for the Earth Bodhisattva Sect as well, but currently he was more concerned if they truly possessed any records regarding the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement besides the ones owned by the Ancient Crimson Heaven Sect.

“Wait. I don’t remember any such... records in the scriptures of our sect.” This suddenly occurred to Jiang Chen.

“Hehe, the records in our possession are those of memorization instead of the written word. Allow me to recite them for you.” It had been hundred thousands of years since Venerated Skysoarer had become the protector of Veluriyam Pagoda, but the information was so important that it remained firmly etched in his mind.

Jiang Chen didn’t put on an aloof act and listened attentively. Truly, Venerated Skysoarer possessed both a great memory and great narration skills. A day later, Jiang Chen finally absorbed all of the essence of the formation held by the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.

“Sect Head, I can see that you’re determined to reactivate the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement. This is as far as I can help you. If you are able to control the entire Pagoda one day, you won’t have to worry about the resources necessary to fuel the reactivation. The master built the place out of consideration for the preservation of legacies and inheritances. Therefore, he must’ve prepared many treasures you can’t even imagine. If you can inherit the Veluriyam Pagoda, you’ll become the indisputable leader of the human race!”

Jiang Chen didn’t really care if he became the leader of the human race or not. His eyes were set at horizons beyond Divine Abyss Continent.

However, he also knew better than anyone that he couldn’t remain uninvolved in the upcoming war against the demon race. Even if he didn’t want to be embroiled, the world didn’t care for the wishes of a mere man. If he was eventually going to be dragged in, he might as well take the initiative and make preparations in advance. He had been human in his previous life too. He had absolutely no reason to ignore the human race in their time of great danger.

“Don’t worry, venerable master. I will conquer the Veluriyam Pagoda.” Jiang Chen promised with absolute certainty.

“Hahaha, I too am certain that you will, Sect Head! When that happens, all six protectors of the Six Palaces of Heritage will acknowledge you as our master and serve you for at least ten thousand years. Who knows, maybe the master of the Veluriyam Pagoda has prepared other pleasant surprises besides the Six Palaces of Heritage!”

The Veluriyam Pagoda was constructed on the basis of a long-term vision. It was a great feat of acute foresight by the maste. The human race had done all they could to fight against the demon race at the time, but it was also their responsibility to pave the way for the generations to come as well. Perhaps the Pagoda was the greatest thing they’d left behind for the future generations.

“Alright, while I would like very much to chat with you further, I’m sure that you have a lot of other things to do, Sect Head. Since you’ve conquered the Crimson Heavens Palace, would you like to leave first or challenge the third palace?” Venerated Skysoarer asked.

A challenger had two chances for every palace they challenged. It might not be a bad idea for Jiang Chen to challenge the third palace to get a feel of its difficulty, but he didn't want to waste his chance so easily. He had just ascended into emperor realm, and it was mentioned that the recommended cultivation level to challenge the third palace was advanced emperor realm. Although Jiang Chen wasn't inferior to an advanced emperor realm cultivator, he felt that he might as well wait until he reached mid emperor realm before he challenged the third palace.

"Venerable master, it's not possible to conquer the Six Palaces of Heritage in one go, so I'll be heading out for now. As you say, the situation out there is complicated, and there are plenty of things waiting for my attention."

"Alright. Please make sure to keep the spacetime seal safe, sect head."

Every palace had its own corresponding spacetime seal. That was the only item that allowed Jiang Chen to enter the Six Palaces of Heritage from the outside world without having to go through the front gate of Veluriyam Pagoda and the nine Veluriyam Obelisks.

Jiang Chen was always reluctant to leave the palaces. Be it Honored Master P'eng or Venerated Skysoarer, he viewed them all as friends, despite their difference in age. He thought them as seniors whom he could confess many things to.

Still, he had to go when it was time to leave. The teleportation formation sent Jiang Chen straight to the perimeter. When the young man stepped out of the main pagoda, he discovered that Veluriyam Pagoda was wrapped in silence.

No one was allowed to approach this sacred land without permission, unless during the gathering. That was why Veluriyam Pagoda appeared quiet and unsullied at the moment

Jiang Chen didn't linger around because he didn't want anyone to notice his presence. He vanished after he walking out.

The streets of Veluriyam Capital was as bustling and lively as ever. Jiang Chen had disguised himself as another person, so no one noticed that he was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He hadn't left Veluriyam Capital for too long, but he could clearly sense an increased weight in the atmosphere after his return.

The oppressive gloom that had been gathering a while ago now felt so thick that it almost manifested as black clouds. An ordinary person might not be able to sense this, but someone as acute as Jiang Chen felt that he was literally suffocating.

"Is something really about to befall Veluriyam Capital?" Naturally, Jiang Chen hadn't forgotten what Emperor Coiling Dragon had told him when he returned from Tilted Moon Region. At that time, the emperor had said that he could sense the undercurrents of a conspiracy within the walls of Veluriyam Capital. He was even afraid for Emperor Peafowl's safety.

Jiang Chen had felt then that no one would dare attack someone as powerful as Emperor Peafowl. Even the few with some other thoughts wouldn't dare make a move, much less incite a rebellion. However, judging from this oppressive atmosphere, it would seem that Emperor Coiling Dragon's worries weren't entirely unfounded.

## Chapter 1173: A Great Hubbub In Front of Taiyuan Tower

Jiang Chen soon arrived at Taiyuan Tower on Vermillion Bird Avenue. Taiyuan Tower was co-owned by Jiang Chen and House Wei, where Taiyuan Lodge had been won off the Majestic Clan in a bet.

Taiyuan Lodge was now occupied by the disciples of the Regal Pill Palace and a few of Jiang Chen's old brothers, such as Liu Wencai and Fatty Lu. Jiang Chen had set up Mu Gaoqi in the young lord residence instead of Taiyuan Lodge. Taiyuan Lodge was now managed by Elder Yun Nie, even though Shen Trifire was in charge in name.

Jiang Chen noticed an abnormality before he even arrived at Taiyuan Tower. Two incredibly lavish pill shops had been erected right beside it. Their signboards were magnificently huge, overshadowing Taiyuan Tower's. This development was startling. What on earth was going on? Which clueless bastard had erected two pill shops right beside Taiyuan Tower? Were they trying to court trouble?

It was widely held that Taiyuan Tower was the best pill shop in Veluriyam Capital. Shops within a 500 meter radius of it had seen a sharp decrease in customers ever since it opened. Opening another pill shop next to Taiyuan Tower was clearly suicide. But it was quite obvious that the owners of these shops weren't suicidal, just here to cause trouble. The shops flanked Taiyuan Tower, seeking to encircle the establishment. However, that wasn't all.

These shops were openly challenging Taiyuan Tower's authority. A pill dao master was giving a lecture on a stage in front of one of the shops, and an enormous audience standing around to listen.

Even though the crowd wasn't as large as the ones for Jiang Chen's lectures, the number of people present was still incredibly significant. Taiyuan Tower's limelight was completely eclipsed by the large crowd. In fact, Taiyuan Tower seemed a little abandoned, especially when compared to the hustle and bustle of yesteryear.

Jiang Chen frowned slightly as he took this in from afar. He was extremely sensitive to such things and instinctively felt that something was amiss. By right, such a scene shouldn't be occurring with Taiyuan Tower's standing in the capital. Everyone knew that this establishment was backed by Pill King Zhen, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain, and even Emperor Peafowl. But these newcomers didn't hold back despite knowing Taiyuan Tower's background, which meant that they had powerful backers of their own as well.

Jiang Chen was infuriated. Taiyuan Tower had seen its fair share of troubles ever since it opened. He'd thought that the defeat of the Majestic Clan would bring an end to all of the troubles. It would seem that wasn't the case. But Jiang Chen wasn't someone who'd let anyone take a dump on his head. Though he was furious, he didn't allow rage to consume him. Instead, he walked up to the shop expressionlessly and listened to the lecture.

After a while, he noticed something peculiar about the contents of the lecture. Even though he didn't know the Capital's pill kings very well, he had a rough understanding of their proficiency in pill dao. The lecturer's foundation in pill dao far exceeded many old pill dao masters in the capital, but he was middle-aged at most. Yet despite his relatively young age, he was giving a pill dao lecture that contained incredibly advanced concepts.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brows. Where is this pill king from? His pill dao knowledge seems to be at the same level as Pill King Bu and Pill King Lu Feng, but he's clearly much younger than both of them.



He was very eloquent and wielded his silver tongue well. His lecture touched on a wide range of topics, yet was also incredibly profound and interesting. From time to time, the audience would ask him questions and he would answer without breaking a sweat.

Jiang Chen was somewhat skeptical about the lecture's authenticity. The questions from the audience was very masterful and profound, yet the lecturer was able to answer them without any pause or hesitation. A great deal of knowledge was needed to do such a thing.

He quickly saw through their ruse. The audience asking the questions were definitely accomplices. They would exchanged glances with each other before asking a well-timed question.

A bystander often had a clearer view of the situation. From his point of view, Jiang Chen could immediately tell that the lecturer was working together with the questioners. The latter was nothing but hired muscle. The questions seemed incredibly profound and high level, but the answers had already been prepared beforehand. The answers were still incredibly detailed and comprehensive, but being prepared beforehand made everything meaningless.

As Jiang Chen continued to observe, he was even more certain of his findings. He grew increasingly disgusted as the pill king went on with his lecture. There seemed to be no end to his eloquent speeches.

Suddenly, he burst into a loud peal of laughter. This interruption was very jarring, as if thunder rumbling on a sunny day. It immediately disrupted the atmosphere around the shop. The guards standing on both sides of the stage immediately rushed towards Jiang Chen to maintain order.

"Where did this scumbag come from? How dare he disrupt the blessed lecture by laughing out loud? Is he looking for a beating?"

"Don't bother with words. Just kick him out!" These guards pounced at Jiang Chen like a pack of ferocious beasts.

Jiang Chen casually brandished his sleeves. A powerful emperor domain exploded forward and swept them off their feet. He smiled coldly and looked sharply at the pill king. "Where did a fame-seeking troublemaker like you come from? Since when did we have someone like you in the capital?"

Jiang Chen wasn't dense or slow. How could he not tell that the pill king and the pill shops were trying to oppose Taiyuan Tower, him, and Sacred Peafowl Mountain? He wasn't going to be courteous to an enemy.

Likewise, the person on the stage wasn't ignorant like a newly hatched bird. When he noticed that someone had come to provoke him, all he did was laugh coldly. "Men! There's a troublemaker! Kick him off our premises!"

Jiang Chen cracked a cold and ruthless smile. Kick me out? With a flash of his figure, he leaped onto the stage and took a stance roughly four meters away from the pill king. Equipped with an emperor level Evil Golden Eye, he stared straight at the pill king and pinned him down.

"Kick me out? Pray tell, how are you going to do that?"

The pill king didn't think that Jiang Chen would possess such incredible speed. The latter had appeared in front him in a blink of an eye! He was so dumbstruck that he could no longer form discernible words.

“Y-you... who are you? Why are you disrupting my lecture?”

“First of all, when did a pill king like you suddenly appear in Veluriyam Capital? I have no issues with your lecture, but you’re clearly answering questions that you and your accomplices have prepared beforehand! You’re playing the crowd to gain game! I’ll not stand by idly after noticing such a thing!” Jiang Chen answered coldly.

“T-that’s a pack of lies!” Color immediately drained from that man’s face. Anxious and against a wall, he hurled abuse at Jiang Chen. “You slandering brat! You’re trying to ruin my reputation! You must’ve be a hired grunt sent here by those that are afraid of my influence!”

He looked pointedly at Taiyuan Tower, clearly insinuating that Jiang Chen was sent by the competition to cause trouble.

“Everyone, this person with an unknown background has disrupted our lecture! What do you think we should do with this evil-doer?” The man suddenly yelled at the crowd. It was the best way to quickly raise controversy. The audience immediately began to raise a fuss.

“Brat! Who are you? How dare you stir up trouble?”

“How dare you interrupt our lecture? He’s just trying to ruin everything on purpose!”

“Go away! Stop disrupting our lecture!”

“Yeah! Nobody cares who you are! If you truly possess skill and knowledge, you can conduct lectures of your own! We’ll attend if you’re good! Otherwise, scram! Stop monkeying around!”

The crowd was foaming at the teeth. Jiang Chen’s sudden interruption was clearly unpopular. They genuinely believed that Jiang Chen was trying to disrupt their lecture and learning.

Humans were truly forgetful creatures. Many of the audience had attended Jiang Chen’s lectures in front of Taiyuan Tower before. Like grass easily swayed by the breeze, they now attended a lecture from a pill shop clearly competing with Taiyuan Tower. It was as though the lectures they’d received from Taiyuan Tower had never even existed in the first place. They didn’t seem to possess even an ounce of gratitude.

Jiang Chen sighed gently when he saw many familiar faces. He considered revealing his identity as Pill King Zhen, but it would be a little too self-deprecating. He was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain after all. His social standing was leagues above anyone present. The pill shop might even use his identity to turn the argument in their favor. If he won the argument, the crowd would find that it was a natural conclusion. However, the pill shop might use this fact to further promote their influence.

A pill battle with the world-famous Pill King Zhen was free marketing. Winning or losing would no longer matter. Therefore, Jiang Chen didn’t lose his rational even though he was angry. He wasn’t going to reveal his identity so that the other side could use it against him.

Jiang Chen was jeered from all directions. Ignoring the crowd, he glared at the pill king coldly and suddenly smiled bizarrely. “Fine. Since you claim that they’re not your accomplices, let me dish out three questions. I’ll admit defeat if you can answer even one. I’ll offer you my sincerest apologies, compensation, and take myself out of your sight!”

## Chapter 1174: Jiang Chen Prepares to Slap Face

The angrier Jiang Chen got, the calmer his heart became. His expression now was entirely impassive. The look with which he affixed the stranger pill king was filled with intimidating force, making the other man's eyes evasive.

"And who the hell are you? What right do you have to ask me questions?" The other man became restless and angry himself, raising his volume. "Come, someone, anyone! Throw this man out!"

The cultivators downstage all felt compelled to charge up, but a casual wave from Jiang Chen swept them aside. His emperor domain rippled outwards, repelling his would-be assailants.

Like a god amongst men, Jiang Chen stood with head held high on the stage, his eyes almost physically piercing into the other man's heart.

"Don't ask me who I am. If you really have the courage to answer questions from your audience, then there's no reason you should make an exception with me. If you don't, then what gives you the boldness to preach here in Vermilion Bird Avenue? Do you have an answer to that, hmm?" Jiang Chen's tone suddenly became serious.

The man wasn't entirely a quack. Quite the opposite, he had some talent in terms of pills. There was no reason that he'd be lecturing here otherwise. He had indeed arranged for specific questions beforehand. That was why he'd been able to answer them so smoothly and brilliantly.

But that didn't mean he wasn't a real expert. He had only done so in order to emphasize the mythology around him. He wanted to gain more fame than he truly deserved.

It was obvious that the tricks used here were old-hat. He had brought up a three-question round because he was confident that he knew much more than his adversary. He had plenty of ways to make the other guy look bad. The unfamiliar pill king recovered himself after a few moments of stupor. Jiang Chen's remarkable martial prowess made him think twice.

It's extremely likely that Taiyuan Tower sent this man. He is quite skilled in martial dao, so he can't be a pill dao expert as well. He's only here to stir up trouble. Is he demanding three questions to try to shock me into submission?

The lack of a response elicited a faint smile from Jiang Chen. He gave the audience a cupped fist salute. "Friends, I know that many of you are here to listen to pill dao lectures. But is it really good to listen to a fellow as fame-hungry as the one over there? How much knowledge and expertise does he really have? Do you want to listen to the words of a mere pretender?"

Most present were honest lecture-goers, but Jiang Chen's interruption brought a convincing argument to the front of their minds. The pill king's lectures were reasonably exciting to listen to, but if he didn't have the courage to answer some questions from a stray troublemaker, then the latter's claims might ring true after all. Were the questions rigged or not? The possibility that they were was a disappointing one indeed.

Whether in the martial or pill dao world, people were admired for having real talent and expertise. Faking beyond one's means made for a bad impression, even if one did have a modicum of skill to back it up.

Pill King Zhen had attracted so many people to his lectures because of his surpassing skill, tested time and again in the fire. His mastery of pill dao had been proven through countless endeavors. Alas, that pill king made appearances no longer in recent years. He was sorely missed by the public at large.

The two new pill stores opened near Taiyuan Tower hadn't been taken seriously at first, but the pill stores invited two pill kings day after day to come lecture. In the beginning, everyone was there for only the spectacle.

Very few were actually interested in the lectures themselves. But after watching the spectacle for a few days, the audience discovered that the two stranger pill kings talked about some pretty interesting things. Rumor spread of this, attracting more and more people to the daily event.

Though most supported Taiyuan Tower in the face of the obvious provocation from these two other pill stores, not everyone loved Jiang Chen's store. Because of differences in faction, a portion of people disliked Taiyuan Tower from the start. It could even be said that they had a lukewarm hatred for it.

No one from this group would oppose the two stores simply because of their provocation towards Taiyuan Tower. Out of the people in attendance from this group, many had also heard Jiang Chen's lectures years prior. However, they had zero loyalty to Taiyuan Tower. In fact, some privately wished that it would shut down.

Others had a more neutral stance. They were interested in purely the lectures. There was no reason for them to openly support either Taiyuan Tower or the two new stores. They were more than happy to reap much benefit as they could get out of the conflict.

The new lectures they had listened to just a few moments ago was a good example of that. Though the pill king's question and answer session had been staged, the lecture had included some quality content.

If the lectures were vapid and boring, they wouldn't have been able to attract nearly as many people. Though these pill kings' lectures were not as technical as Jiang Chen's had been, the latter hadn't lectured here for some time. The neutral lecture-goers didn't exactly have an option.

Many people began to raise their voices after hearing Jiang Chen's words.

"Pill King Hong, even if that guy is just here to cause trouble, isn't it normal for there to be discussions among pill dao peers? If he wants to ask you three questions, why not hear him out? If they're well-asked, we'll be happy to hear them too. This kind of contest is what pill dao is all about! Perhaps it'll even become the talk of the town."

"That's right, Pill King Hong. Someone of your level shouldn't be scared of three little questions. You wouldn't have a problem with thirty of them! Isn't that right, guys?"

"Exactly! Pill King Hong has showed us his richness of knowledge these past few days. His fame is not at all undeserved."

"Pill King Hong, since this brazen troublemaker is here already, why not answer his three questions? Then you can make him kneel and beg for forgiveness before kicking him off stage. You'll show us your skill in the process!"

No spectacle was too big for those who wanted a good show. The people here didn't necessarily support the two new stores. They just saw nothing wrong with stoking the flames and watching the ensuing conflagration. Plus, if it really was a battle between two pill experts, then some pretty exciting sparks could fly. It would really be a worthy spectacle, then.

Did Taiyuan Tower send him? This was the question in everyone's mind. Taiyuan Tower had ridden a heady tailwind for quite a few years now. Though Pill King Zhen wasn't in the city presently, they still had other pill experts holding down the fort. Pill Kings Bu, Lu Feng, and Lin were all worthy contenders residing in the store.

All three were also Pill King Zhen's disciples. Could they really tolerate an open challenge in front of the Tower? It damaged both the store's face and reputation. Seeing someone come forward so diametrically opposed to the newcomers piqued the audience's interest.

The lecturing pill king was precisely the 'Pill King Hong' that had been spoken of just now.

The commotion from the audience had stirred his heart. He gathered up all the strength in his entire body, tossing a thoughtful glance at Jiang Chen. Taking in a deep breath, he tried to rally his self-confidence. That person's eyes carries an unknown aura. He clearly has extraordinary origins. But I'm not scared of many in the realm of pill dao. I don't know where he's from, but I don't think it'll be easy for him to beat me with pill dao alone. If it's a battle of knowledge and foundations, I'll gladly engage him!

Having thought it out, the pill king cleared his throat. "Friends, the art of pill dao is recorded in innumerable texts and volumes. It is very difficult for someone to call themselves a master of all. I hope everyone understands this simple fact. If this person is intent on making some trouble for me, I can't help it if he simply picks three of the most difficult questions to ask me. If he wants me to answer three of his questions, that's perfectly fine. I'd like to make a reciprocal request as well. He has to answer three of mine first. My lecture time is valuable, and not everyone who comes onstage is qualified to ask me questions. If everyone does it, then what time will I have left for the actual lecture? If he answers my three questions, that proves he is worthy of asking me questions. If he can't, well, what's the point of wasting time on him then, right?"

Pill King Hong was a quick-witted man. His declaration was grounded in truth, and effectively defended himself as well as restoring some face. Even Jiang Chen found the response somewhat admirable. However, he had an easy counter for it.

"Are you looking for excuses for your inevitable failure? Someone of your caliber isn't worth my time to intentionally harass. So, I have to answer three of your questions, is it? Your mimicry isn't bad. Well then, let's make it fairer. You can ask me a question, then I'll ask you one. We can take turns doing this for as long as you want. How does that sound?"

Pill King Hong had thought that his maneuver would easily get rid of the troublemaker. That his young opponent had taken it a step further had been entirely unexpected. He began to have doubts about the situation.

Who is this guy, and where is he from? Is he truly skilled in pill dao as well? He wouldn't dare to make that demand otherwise. A variety of thoughts and possibilities entered his mind. In his current spot, he couldn't afford to lose, so he had to pick his moves very carefully.

It was a perfect window for Jiang Chen to push his advantage: his opponent had fallen silent with uncertainty. There was every reason to strike while the iron was red-hot. "Let's avoid any appearance of impropriety, alright? I won't pick a subject that you can say you don't know much about. We'll talk about pill runes, the topic of your lecture. How does that sound?"

Runes that appeared on pills during the refining process were essentially miniature formations embedded within them. Formations that took on unique form as runes both consolidated the pill's medicinal properties and evoked the materials' potency to their fullest extent.

Ordinarily, etching runes into pills was a complicated matter. Ordinary pill masters could do no such thing. For example, Elder Yun Nie had been helpless before the Hexarune Black Dragon Pill all those years ago. Refining that pill only required the most fundamental of runic concepts, and was actually just a stepping-stone pill to others of the same type.

Though the elder hadn't quite reached pill king level, he was at least most of the way there. Given that even he found a rudimentary pill rune difficult to handle, it was easy to see that pill runes were much harder than one would expect.

Pill runes, incidentally, had also been the subject of the lecture just now. The fact that Jiang Chen had instantly offered this concession made him a gentlemen in the eyes of others.

That was the subject of your lecture, right? You must be an expert in it, then. How can you slip out of answering questions on a supposedly mastered subject?

#### Chapter 1175: The Level of Jiang Chens Questions

Pill runes? Pill King Hong's eyes lit up. He was somewhat of an expert and definitely no slouch when it came to pill dao. Pill runes was actually a subject that he'd devoted the biggest chunk of his time and effort towards. It could be viewed as his home territory. There was nothing to be scared of here for the pill king.

"Pill runes? Are you sure?" Greatly emboldened by this turn of events, Pill King Hong finally began to calm down with confidence.

"Are you man enough? On with it." Jiang Chen snorted.

His irreverent attitude made Pill King Hong all the more incensed. "Fine, as you wish. We will each ask each other three questions on pill runes. However... if you lose, you have to tell everyone who sent you!"

"Who sent me?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "What, you're not worried that I'll just make something up?"

"Hmph, you'll have to back it up with an oath on your inner demons, of course. How would we guarantee your honesty otherwise?" Having home field advantage gave Pill King Hong more and more courage. He was supremely confident in his specialty.

“Alright. Let’s take the oath, then.” Jiang Chen was unmoved. “If I lose, I’ll clearly and truthfully state who sent me. If I speak one word of falsehood, may my inner demons consume me on the spot.” Having done his part, he looked to his opponent. “Now you.”

Pill King Hong harrumphed, but followed suit. “if I lose, I will also...” He cut himself off, having remembered something suddenly.

“What? Cat got your tongue?” Jiang Chen snickered. “Guilty as charged, I guess. You want me to make an oath, but you aren’t brave enough to do the same yourself? You must come from pretty low origins, then. Can it be that you had certain ambitions in mind by coming here? If you aren’t brave enough to make the oath, then we’ll call the bet off. A craven snake like you should get out of this city as soon as possible!”

Veluriyam’s young lord spoke with hostility. It was patently obvious that these people were here solely to sow discord. Lecturing in front of Taiyuan Tower’s doors was a slap to the store’s face, with the more sinister goal of replacing it in the public perception.

Though Taiyuan Tower occupied a reasonably lofty place in Veluriyam Capital, Jiang Chen didn’t believe that it was important enough to become public enemy number one. He suspected that the plot against Taiyuan Tower was only the first step of the villain behind the curtain. A testing of the waters. Jiang Chen coolly locked eyes with Pill King Hong, not allowing the man another moment of evasiveness.

The pill king’s face darkened. “What do I have to be scared of?”

“Good, good!” Jiang Chen roared with laughter. “Don’t be so wishy-washy about it, then. Take the oath.”

The onlookers were stirred up by the young man’s words. Pill King Hong’s lectures were quite nice, but if he was from an outside faction that had come to make trouble, then many here would think twice about supporting him.

If it was an internal struggle, they would remain neutral. But if was he a foreigner here to purposely throw them into turmoil? That was something that could not be accepted. His vague and faltering attitude made everyone all the more distrustful of him.

“Pill King Hong, if you’re not a wuss, make your oath now!”

“That’s right. No matter what, Veluriyam Capital isn’t interested in having pot-stirring foreigners on our soil.”

“If you don’t swear that oath, then you’re a coward who’s already confessed your guilt!”

Pill King Hong sneered. “I swear,” he proclaimed loudly, “that if I lose, I’ll definitely say who sent me. And if I don’t deliver, let my inner demons consume me on the spot!”

Now that the oaths had been made, Jiang Chen returned to an easy smile. “Since you were so worried, I’ll let you have the first question.”

The pill king had expected to get into another red-faced argument about question priority. His opponent was being unexpectedly generous. Ordinarily, Pill King Hong wouldn’t have cared less for this right. But the situation was somewhat strange, and though his opponent seemed rough around the edges, the pill king couldn’t actually see through him. There was no reason for him to decline.

“Alright,” he nodded emotionlessly. “I’ll ask the first question.”

There was a wave of booing from the crowd. The disappointment at Pill King Hong’s lack of courtesy was evident. As a lecturing pill king, he should have been more gracious towards his challenger. What kind of behavior was accepting such a straightforwardly polite offer?

Pill King Hong didn’t react to the heckling from the audience. Instead, he glanced coolly at Jiang Chen. “First question. There is a kind of pill named the Scarletrune Heartseal Pill. How many main materials are there and how many supplemental ingredients?”

“Is that one question or two?” Jiang Chen snickered.

“This is one kind of pill. The two are part of the same question. You can ask me in the same way, if you like.” The young man’s reaction assured Pill King Hong that he likely didn’t know the answer. Plus, the pill king had many more questions of the same kind. If he pulled out a few more of the same kind of question, his opponent was sure to fumble one.

The amount of knowledge involved in pill dao was immense. No mortal man could possibly fully grasp all of its intricacies. The worst result he could imagine was going even. That was, if both sides failed to answer the other’s questions. As long as that happened, he had plenty of room to maneuver.

Jiang Chen nodded slightly, still aloof. He looked at Pill King Hong meaningfully. “The Scarletrune Heartseal Pill has no main or auxiliary ingredients. It has three ingredients only, all of them equally important.”

With regards to pills, it was likely that all the pill masters in the world combined couldn’t beat Jiang Chen’s knowledge. After all, the level of pill dao research he had been exposed to in his previous life was far too many levels above their understanding.

Pill King Hong was astounded by the answer. His entire body shook with incomprehension and he couldn’t speak for a long time. His expression belied his thoughts.

“So, what do you think? Are you satisfied with my answer?” Jiang Chen didn’t allow his opponent to play dead.

Pill dao battles could not be fudged. Either the answer was true, or it was not. If Jiang Chen had the correct answer, Pill King Hong could not deny it despite any wishes to the contrary. If he did, and news of it got out, he would lose all credibility.

“I suppose that’s good enough.” The pill king tasted bitterness in his mouth. He looked defiantly at the youth. “Ask your question!”

The fact that his question had failed in stumping his opponent made Pill King Hong feel a bit uneasy. If he couldn’t answer any of the questions he was about to be asked, then he would decisively be declared the loser. He had banked on his own questions being unanswerable as well, but that didn’t seem to be working out.

Therefore, he no longer had the initiative. Even the possibility of getting a tie looked murkier by the minute. He could only desperately hope that he was able to answer the question about to be thrown at him.



His face full of smiles, Jiang Chen spoke with an indifferent tone. "My question is: there's a pill called the Azure rune Brightmoon Pill. I'm not going to imitate you. In fact, let's make this simple. What color is its main material? I can clearly tell you that it only has one. As long as you manage to guess its color, you'll pass."

To an outsider, the question almost sounded like a freebie. Right off the bat, it was made clear that there was only one main material, and the only answer needed was the color. Compared to the stringency and pitfalls with which Pill King Hong had crafted his question, this was a lot more straightforward and aboveboard.

The onlookers all clapped at the question's announcement. Despite their bias against the guy who'd so disruptively interrupted their lecture midway, the proceeding events had changed their mind about him. In terms of gallantry, the new person far surpassed the pill king lecturer. Unlike his opponent's, his question was sensible, possibly even benign.

Everyone looked at Pill King Hong interestedly, curious if he could pass the ball back by answering the question correctly. Beneath the veneer of simplicity was an elementary truth: it was impossible to answer if one hadn't heard of the pill in the first place. This question tested one's breadth of knowledge.

Pill King Hong looked grave. The Azure rune Brightmoon Pill? He searched his mental recesses for an answer, digging for a hint or trace of information about the pill. Alas, no matter how hard he wrung his brain out, there was nothing that came up about it whatsoever. He had never heard of the pill before today.

Though he hadn't uttered a word yet, his cornered expression was enough to tell all. He couldn't answer the question. There was no need for Jiang Chen to tell the pill king to hurry up. Veluriyam's young lord only needed look nonchalantly, posturing that his opponent could have all the time in the world.

Seconds crept into minutes. The watchful gaze of countless eyes put a mountain of pressure upon Pill King Hong. He knew that wordplay wouldn't solve the problem, but he was yet hoping for one of his well-hidden colleagues to sneak him a potential answer.

But though they were present in every corner, none of them did so in the end. They couldn't tell him something that they didn't know, either. The brusque challenger had mentioned nothing of the sort relating to any of his conspirators, apparently comfortable with the possibility of their assistance.

As time went on, it was the audience members who first lost their cool.

"Oi, can you answer the question or not? If not, then what's the point of playing silent? It's not exactly a complicated question that needs a long speech. You just have to name a color. Whether you can or cannot, there's no need for hesitation. Are you trying to stall for time?"

"Isn't that right? Wasting our time is the worst!" Condemnations were heard all around.

#### Chapter 1176: The Chasm Of Strength

The atmosphere had shifted before anyone realized. Jiang Chen's initial showing and disturbance had elicited general dislike because he'd interrupted the lecture. However, he was able to slowly change the crowd's opinion of him. His performance, bearing, and presence far exceeded Pill King Hong's. Moreover, Jiang Chen's statements were extremely inflammatory. It didn't take long before everyone

started thinking that Pill King Hong was an agent of a foreign power here to cause trouble in Veluriyam Capital. As a result, even those who had a favorable impression of Pill King Hong couldn't curb the beginnings of doubt.

The strong performance that the pill king had projected was being ever whittled away in the face of Jiang Chen's domineering presence. The lofty image he had strived to build in the people's hearts slowly crumbled. Folks were more afraid of comparisons than running into someone who knew their true worth. Not only did Jiang Chen's success made him look utterly wretched, he wasn't able to answer the young man's question despite delaying for a long time. It lowered the public's favorable impression of him even more.

Pill King Hong was stuck between a rock and a hard place. The question sounded simple, but it didn't matter because he had no idea what the pill was. Do I really have to make a blind guess? After being urged to answer by countless voices, Pill King Hong gritted his teeth and stared at Jiang Chen. "The color of the Azurerune Brightmoon Pill is azure!"

Jiang Chen broke out in peals of laughter. "Did you say that just because the word 'azure' is in its name?"

"Just tell us if azure is the answer." Pill King Hong didn't want to debate.

Jiang Chen shook his head and smiled leisurely. "You'll never get it right if you guess blindly. At any rate, allow me to reveal the answer. The color of the Azurerune Brightmoon Pill is pink because its main ingredient is the Brightmoon Flower. The 'azure rune' in its name refers to a particular pill rune, not its color."

Pill King Hong nearly collapsed on the ground when he heard this. It was all just a misdirection! The term "azurerune" had nothing to do with color at all. Loud cheers broke out from all around them. The crowd felt that they had learned something new.

Surprisingly, Pill King Hong didn't doubt Jiang Chen's claims. Instead, he glared angrily before declaring, "Just you wait. The second question I'm going to ask is a lot more difficult. There's no way you can get the correct answer. I will even the points with this next round!"

The young man chuckled. "Even if you manage to best me this round, you still have to answer my questions correctly in order to turn the situation around. Otherwise, you'll always be a point behind me."

Jiang Chen had already won the first round, so Pill King Hong would definitely bring out his most difficult questions. Still, Jiang Chen feared no one when it came to pill dao.

"Hmph, don't get too full of yourself. I'll win the next round." Pill King Hong sounded incredibly certain, but also sounded like he was encouraging himself.

"Shoot." Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered to waste further breath on him.

"Listen well to this next question. Legends speak of a pill called the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill. How many runes are contained within this pill?"

The Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill? Jiang Chen was slightly surprised. This was a heavenly level pill! He didn't think that there was anyone in the Divine Abyss Continent who'd ever heard of this pill.

Back when Regal Pill Palace still existed, Elder Yun Nie had spent countless effort to refine the Hexarune Black Dragon Pill. It was a pill that increased one's chances of breaking through to the sage realm. Jiang Chen had handled the bottleneck the elder was stuck in.

The source of inspiration for the Hexarune Black Dragon Pill was in fact the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill. However, the Hexarune Black Dragon Pill was a lot simpler to refine. It was a simpler version that required a tenth or less skill. Still, the Hexarune Black Dragon Pill was a very attractive pill to a sage realm cultivator.

When it came to the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill, Jiang Chen didn't think that a pill of that level was common in the Divine Abyss Continent, even during the ancient times. Therefore, he was quite surprised when Pill King Hong brought it up in a question. While he himself was extremely familiar with the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill, he hadn't thought that anyone else on the Divine Abyss Continent would know of it.

Jiang Chen smiled. "The Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill is a legendary pill. The Hexarune Black Dragon Pill that exists in the pill market right now is in fact a simplified, low-end version of the pill. So I must ask: do you actually know the answer yourself? What if your knowledge is some random information you acquired from unofficial records?"

Pill King Hong actually felt encouraged when he heard Jiang Chen seemingly refusing to answer his question. The young man must be dilly dallying so much because he didn't have an answer! He wouldn't have wasted so much breath on such useless words otherwise.

"Hmph, I learned of the pill from an ancient scripture. The scripture is of very authentic origin, so the pill wouldn't have been recorded if it wasn't real. Why wouldn't I know about it?"

Jiang Chen nodded as he examined Pill King Hong calmly. He smiled. "The Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill is a priceless pill. Some pill masters have never even heard about its name. Your wealth of experience surprises me. To think that you've heard of the pill!"

"Hmph! Are you going to answer the question or not?" Pill King Hong was displeased.

"The Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill has eighty one horizontal runes, eighty one vertical runes, and six thousand, five hundred and sixty one intersecting runes in total," Jiang Chen answered smilingly. "My answer is absolutely correct. If it's identical to your answer, then I congratulate you for reading it from a correct source. If not, I must ask you this instead: what kind of trash pill did you mistake as the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill?"

Pill King Hong was completely stunned. He never thought that his opponent would be able to answer such an unusual question. The Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill was something he'd seen by chance from a one and only existing copy of an ancient scripture. He never expected to run into an opponent who also knew the ingredients of the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill. How would Jiang Chen be as informed as he was otherwise?

For a time, Pill King Hong was terribly worried and anxious. His expression betrayed his inner thoughts entirely.

Jiang Chen immediately knew that the pill king knew of the real thing, given the latter's expression. That being said, knowing and refining it were two different things. Even if the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill was recorded and introduced in the ancient scripture, its refinement method likely wasn't mentioned anywhere.

Therefore, Pill King Hong knew that the pill existed, but that was as far as the extent of his knowledge went. He wouldn't have a clue on how to refine the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill and didn't have the skills to either.

Jiang Chen asked leisurely, "I wonder if your answer is identical to mine?"

Pill King Hong was ashen-faced. He wanted to deny it, but couldn't because it was part of the gamble. If he lied, the oath he swore would take effect.

"Hmph, lucky bastard. Your blind guess is correct, I suppose!" Although the pill king was almost shell-shocked to the point where he wanted to retreat, he still put on a mask of false bravado.

Jiang Chen didn't try to explain himself after his opponent refused to give ground. He smiled instead. "Even if it was a blind guess, it's still my luck. I easily 'guessed' the answer to your question correctly, but you failed to guess the answer to mine. What does this mean? It means that you are lacking in both skill and luck."

His words caused Pill King Hong's complexion to flush red and white.

Jiang Chen spoke indifferently. "Alright, my second question. If you still can't answer this, then there's no need to move on to the third question."

He had already won the first round, so of course there was no need for another round if he won again.

Pill King Hong couldn't stop his heart from pounding faster. He wasn't a man who couldn't take a loss, but the consequences of losing this round were larger than he could handle. He might actually be in grave trouble this time. Still, he had no choice but to see things through. He snorted coldly. "Shoot. I don't believe you'll have another question that I can't answer!"

Jiang Chen smiled coolly in response. "My second question isn't complicated either. How many pill runes are there in the Connation Fireflow Pill."

The Connation Fireflow Pill was also a pill that Jiang Chen had learned of in his past life. Although the pill didn't have the word "rune" in its name, it was still one of the many formation style pills out there.

Pill King Hong's brain buzzed with panic. He'd never heard the name before! He would've remembered such a uniquely named pill if he had read it somewhere. Sweat beaded the pill king's forehead. The Connation Fireflow Pill? What was with this weird name?

The pill king couldn't help but ask, "Are you really sure this pill has to do with pill runes? How can it be when it doesn't have the word "rune" in its name? Are you really sure it belongs to this faction?"

Jiang Chen showed a hint of playfulness on his face and started jeering in earnest.

“Now your ignorance is completely exposed. It’s true that “rune” isn’t part of its name, but it still has to do with pill runes. If you’re looking for something to blame for your loss, look to your shallow knowledge, experience, and foundation. I’ll give you one last chance to answer my question? If you don’t, it means that you’ve lost twice in a row and consequently the bet as well.”

Pill King Hong instantly turned deathly pale and morose. Was he going to give up just like this? Was he going to admit defeat and surrender the name of the mastermind who’d sent him?

He didn’t want to!

Chapter 1177: Sudden Changes

The audience was extremely disappointed with Pill King Hong. He was fumbling for words and no longer showing the same charisma he had during the lecture. The discrepancy between then and now was simply too big. The small group that defended him previously finally began to waver.

Jiang Chen flashed a piercing glare at Pill King Hong. “You’re making the audience wait. Can’t you be a little more straightforward?”

His aura was incredibly domineering, making Pill King Hong cower in defeat. The audience grew more and more disappointed with the pill king as time went on.

“Either you know or you don’t! Why are you stalling for time?”

“He probably doesn’t know the answer! If he did, he would’ve answered already!”

“Hmph! It seems he’s really just a fame seeker!”

“Does he really think that he’s qualified to give us lectures? Piss off!”

The audience was easily swayed. Most of them began to side with Jiang Chen and booed Pill King Hong after seeing the great contrast between the two.

Color had drained from the pill king’s face, making him as as white as a ghost. How was he supposed to answer when he hadn’t even heard of the pill? Guess blindly again? The odds for the previous question was much higher because it was related to color, but this one really would be a shot in the dark.

Jiang Chen suddenly turned when the pill king was incapable of producing an answer. “You lose by default if you don’t answer my question. Stop wasting time and tell me who’s the perpetrator behind all of this.”

Pill King Hong made one last desperate attempt. “Who says that I’m going to lose by default? The pill has seventy two runes in total!”

A mocking look appeared on Jiang Chen’s face. “As expected, you’re guessing blindly again. Brat, the Connation Fireflow Pill has eight hundred runes in total! How can it be a mere seventy two runes?”

Pill King Hong was aghast. He knew that he’d lost.

“I’m not going to force you. You may choose to lie or hold your tongue. That is, if you don’t mind being consumed by your inner demons.” Jiang Chen was calm and composed. Everything was going according to his calculations.

“Tell us! Tell us!”

“Don’t be a sore loser!”

“You must be hesitating because you have a guilty conscience!”

Cultivators in the martial dao world were blind followers of the strong. Many of them had stood on Pill King Hong’s side just moments ago. They were so impressed by the contents of his lecture and believed that Taiyuan Tower was afraid to confront him even though he was conducting a lecture right in front of their doorstep.

This gave rise to a misunderstanding that Pill King Hong was superior to Taiyuan Tower. But now, reality dawned when Jiang Chen confronted Pill King Hong. The pill king was nothing but a fluke/ Their respect and admiration for the pill king instantly turned into rage and anger. It felt that they’d been betrayed.

“Liar!”

“An outside faction must’ve sent him!”

“Hmph! Taiyuan Tower isn’t afraid of them! They just can’t be bothered to deal with these clowns!”

“That’s what I believe too! Taiyuan Tower is Pill King Zhen’s legacy! A man of his noble stature would never stoop to confront a minor character like this pill king!”

“He must’ve gone overboard with his arrogance, so much so that Taiyuan Tower could no longer stand it and randomly chose a pill dao expert to confront him!”

Pill King Hong was awash with regret. He’d always been a careful and meticulous person, but he caved and fallen prey to Jiang Chen’s provocation. Since he’d lost the bet, his inner demons would consume him whole if he didn’t disclose his background and the person giving him orders.

He was aware that he was merely a chess piece. If he erred, the entire plan would come tumbling down and he’d be condemned. Even if he escaped his inner demons, nothing good could possibly await him in the future. He was stuck in between a rock and a hard place. He wanted to run away, but his inner demons could consume him at any moment if he escaped without saying anything.

Jiang Chen seemed to have read Pill King Hong’s mind. He stared at the pill king deeply, as though he was scouring the pill king’s very soul.

“Regardless of your choice, I’ll find out the truth in the end. If you choose not to speak, your inner demons will surely consume you whole. If you tell me everything, you’ll at least have some breathing room for now.” Jiang Chen urged the pill king on patiently. He knew exactly what the latter was worried about.

“If I say anything, I’ll surely die...” the pill king murmured.

“Hmph! The choice is in your hands. If you reveal everything, Veluriyam Capital might actually protect you. After all, we have so much more intelligence to extract from you.”

The pill king began to waver. His struggle was written all over his face. Jiang Chen's suggestion had truly struck him in the heart. With the capital's protection, revealing the truth might not actually be a bad idea after all.

"Speak. I guarantee, as long as you speak the tru-..." Halfway through his sentence, Jiang Chen suddenly felt an indescribable sense of danger and instinctively executed the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape. He turned into a beam of light and flung himself away from the stage.

In the next instant, a hail of arrows descended like a swarm of locusts on the stage from all four directions. These were no ordinary arrows. The barrage of arrows had a strong piercing ability covered every inch of air in the surroundings. An explosion was accompanied by a blood-curdling scream.

Countless arrows pierced through the pill king's flesh, instantly pulverizing his body into bloody mist. Not a single piece of his body remained after the attack ceased. He'd been erased in a gory mist.

Dead man tell no tales!

The audience was in a frenzy. Nobody knew where the arrows had come from, but all of them instantly realized that the pill king had been silenced! There was no other explanation. Since the pill king was about to reveal everything, the assassin had no choice but to unleash a frightening attack on him before the damage was done. He didn't just plan on killing Pill King Hong. He was aiming for Jiang Chen too.

Fortunately, Jiang Chen's reaction was almost instant. He was extremely sensitive to danger after cultivating the Psychic's Head. Despite his lightning quick reaction, he barely evaded the barrage of arrows in time. There had been simply no way he could take Pill King Hong with him.

Landing at a corner of the street, Jiang Chen immediately brought his consciousness and Kunpeng Meteoric Escape to bear and searched the area for the sign of the assassin.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard he searched, he couldn't locate the source of the attack.

It seemed like it'd appeared out of thin air and immediately disappeared without a trace after a singular hit.

It was a frighteningly powerful assassination method. The assassin was extremely skilled and blended into the crowd immediately afterward. The audience numbered in the tens of thousands, so any one of them could be the culprit. In fact, the assassin may not even be present anymore.

No ordinary person could launch such a powerful attack in such a short time. It wasn't just incredibly powerful, but stealthy as well.

Jiang Chen couldn't find any leads after scouring the area. He returned to the stage and stared at the bloody stains with furrowed his brows. He'd returned to the scene of the death to find some clues, but there was nothing there. Pill King Hong hadn't even left behind a storage ring. The enemy had been incredibly meticulous.

"Damn it!" Having acquired nothing after the search, Jiang Chen realized that he'd gotten entangled with a frighteningly powerful enemy.

Pill King Hong's background was still unknown, but his abilities and knowledge weren't faked. Even though he couldn't possibly compete with Jiang Chen, his pill dao knowledge definitely rivalled Pill King Lu Feng and Pill King Bu's.

With his talent, he should be a very highly regarded individual, or he would never have been chosen as the lecturer to rival Taiyuan Tower. However, even a character like him was sacrificed without second thought!

The enemy was extremely ruthless, which made Jiang Chen very wary. Enemies that remain hidden in the shadows were incredibly frightening. This one was very well hidden and was incredibly ruthless as well. They didn't even hesitate before killing someone as great as a pill king. They were willing to sacrifice any chess piece if the situation called for it.

Jiang Chen swept his gaze across the audience. He was sure that Pill King Hong's accomplices were amongst them. Unfortunately, no matter how astute his vision was, he couldn't immediately identify them under such conditions.

The dead couldn't speak.

The pill king's death had left him at a dead end.

He leapt off the stage and immediately headed to the pill shop that was erected beside Taiyuan Tower. No matter what, the pill king represented this pill shop. In order to learn more about his enemy, confronting the shop directly wasn't exactly a bad idea. Since he hadn't reverted to his original identity yet, he had no reason to hesitate.

"Get your boss out here! I want to see him!" He yelled as soon as he marched into the shop.

He had no reason to be courteous. If he was Pill King Zhen, he probably couldn't act as brazenly as this. But since he was currently disguised, nobody knew who he was. If that was the case, he might as well over do it. He could be as brazen as he wished!

Chapter 1178: Might As Well Fight My Way In

"Who do you think you are, how dare you..." A guard cultivator rushed over and attempted to grab Jiang Chen's collar.

Jiang Chen narrowed his eyes, drew his arm back, and swung forward with a fierce slap.

"Out of my way!"

The slap was so violent that the peak sage realm cultivator flew backwards, like a child who'd just learned how to walk.

"Someone's causing trouble!"

"An enemy's attacking!"

"Notify the supervisor immediately! An enemy's attacking us!"

Jiang Chen had steeled his heart to raise an enormous ruckus, so he wasn't holding back at all. He fought his way in like he was possessed by a demon god. He didn't use any other attack. Every time a foolish



cultivator made their way towards him, he simply slapped them into oblivion and moved onto the next target. Although his slaps appeared casual and simple, it was an attack that combined both his knowledge and power to make them very difficult to dodge.

Jiang Chen literally slapped his way into the shop. None of the guards could take more than a single slap. It almost seemed that his palm was imbued with some sort of magic that ensured he never missed.

That being said, it didn't take long before some real resistance showed up. A few emperor realm cultivators flew out from the inner courtyard and surrounded him tightly. An advanced emperor realm old man seemed to be the leader of the group.

"What are you doing, sir? We just opened our humble shop not long ago and you've arrived to cause trouble already? Don't you think you're a little too hasty?"

"Yes, Elder Mo is right. Our shop is new and we haven't made enemies with everyone. You're obviously here to cause trouble, so are you bold enough to tell us your name?"

"Yeah, or are you so cowardly that you won't even reveal your identity after attacking us? We know that you're the one who tricked Pill King Hong into a bet and forced him to his death!"

Jiang Chen wasn't sure how to react to this. Pill King Hong had obviously been killed by his own people, but now they were shifting all of the blame onto him instead. This barbaric logic both incited and amused him.

"Hah! You guys know better than anyone how and why Pill King Hong was killed." Jiang Chen thought it beneath him to rise to the provocation. "Tell your boss to come out right now. Pill King Hong is your man and he died without honoring his bet. Naturally, I've come to seek answers from you lot."

"Enough is enough, boy!" The advanced emperor realm old man uttered angrily. "Pill King Hong may be a member of our shop, but he is just a wandering cultivator we hired as a guest pill king. You already forced him to his death, so what else do you want with us?"

Thorough disassociation of responsibility! These people were obviously very familiar with twisting things around.

"Wandering cultivator? Guest pill king?"

Jiang Chen sneered. "If he really is just a wandering cultivator, why was he afraid to reveal the power behind him? Don't tell me that there's nothing else going on around here!"

"You can take it or leave it. Not only did you force our guest pill king to his death, but you even came to make trouble. I don't care who you are, but you absolutely must stay and explain yourself!"

The old man's suddenly turned forceful and determined, as if he'd just received an order. It was so obvious that even Jiang Chen could sense it. Smiling coldly, the young man brandished his sleeves and charged straight towards the old man.

The old man grew angry when he saw Jiang Chen act so impudently, as if they were nothing but decoration. "Rein in your arrogance, boy!"

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. "I'm just this arrogant!"

Since he was now emperor realm, he was absolutely confident in his abilities to fight advanced emperor realm cultivators head on. Moreover, his wealth of trump cards gave him further assurance since he could escape any time he wished.

As fists and legs clashed against one another, turbulent shockwaves knocked over the surrounding cabinets. Luckily for the shop, the internal structures were all protected with formations, or the terrifying shockwaves would've turned them to dust. Still, it didn't matter if there were protective formations all over the shop because Jiang Chen was planning to wreak complete havoc. That was why his attacks were big, wide, and extremely destructive.

The old man was the only cultivator who could fight Jiang Chen head on. The remaining four initial emperor realm cultivators who tried to support their colleague found themselves extremely pressured by the youth's formidable combat abilities.

Jiang Chen pushed his palms forwards and fired out a modified version of the Vermillion Bird image like he was a volcano. Although the image wasn't as strong as it would be with the Vermillion Bird's bloodline, Jiang Chen's image was made up of prehistoric flames and contained the essence of prehistoric fire.

As the burning heat waves rolled towards the enemy, the cultivators were greeted with heat beyond belief. They felt as if every bit of water inside their body was being absorbed or evaporated at an incredible pace. Color drained from their faces. They felt that they would be turned into dried husks at any second.

"Something's not right with that fire. Retreat!" Although the old man didn't know what that attack was, he could sense the terrific fire spirit energy radiating from it. Naturally, he was aware of just how deadly it was. This flame had to be a heavenly flame, or was very close to being one.

An expert who possessed a heavenly flame would be very welcome in the martial dao world no matter where they went. There were very, very few lucky stars out there who could tame a heavenly flame.

By the time they noticed something amiss and tried to retreat, Jiang Chen had thrown yet another modified Vermillion Bird image their way. Made of prehistoric flame essence, the image made everyone turn white in fear. They'd never thought that there would be someone who'd dare attack them in their own territory, completely unafraid of retribution.

Just how confident and powerful must he be to do this?

Jiang Chen's killing intent rose sharply as he manipulated the image to corner and reduce the amount of space his enemies had available. Besides that, he also secretly sent Long Xiaoxuan out to aid him at an opportune moment. The Goldbiter Rats had been sent out a long while ago and were furiously digging beneath the shop. The Rat King had left to escort Hu Xing'er, but the Goldbiter Rats were so numerous right now that a group of talented rats had been chosen to lead during his absence. This group had been chosen after a careful selection process, and had further evolved their bloodlines some time ago thanks to receiving the wood spirit spring from Jiang Chen. This had earned great respect for Jiang Chen from the leaders of the younger rat generation. Just like the Rat King, they all executed his orders faithfully.

Suddenly, the group of cultivators felt the ground beneath them give in. A big hole appeared beneath someone's feet, the precursor to more and more holes appearing. The holes reached down to the water line, with air bubbles rising to their surface. Jiang Chen knew that it was the work of the Goldbiter Rats.

The young man had always been an expert in chaotic battles. He immediately urged the Vermillion Bird images to swallow the three initial emperor realm cultivators before they could recover from their surprise and establish a firm footing.

A series of bloodcurdling screams later, there was nothing left of the three cultivators but ash.

Jiang Chen was destructive, but the Goldbiter Rats didn't lag behind either. They chewed the entire shop into a hollow shell in a short amount of time, collapsing everything like they were made of paper. "Brother Long, work with me!" Jiang Chen suddenly cried out, prompting Long Xiaoxuan to activate his dragon domain and press down on the old man. A dragon domain was extremely frightening. It was a real dragon forcefield, far, far stronger than an emperor domain.

If Long Xiaoxuan had reached proper heights in his cultivation, his domain could paralyze the old man and turn him as weak as a baby. But even so, it was still enough to make the old man panic when he suddenly sensed the pressure bearing down from behind him.

Naturally, Jiang Chen wasn't going to pass up such a golden opportunity. He activated a trap formation to confine the old man inside. At this point, the young man had more than fulfilled his kill quota. He needed a live captive, and the old man looked like an authoritative figure in this shop. He had to be important personnel even if he wasn't the mastermind. By taking him captive, Jiang Chen might be able to pry out some useful information.

Jiang Chen knew that there was a devious plot going on around, one that might very well be targeted at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It was so obvious that he could've figured it out with his toes.

It was blatantly apparent that the establishment of these shops and the daily lectures of the pill kings was their first move to sound out Veluriyam Capital's reaction. One might say that the enemy had been too successful in their attempt. They'd met no resistance whatsoever, and everything went by so smoothly that they grew careless in the end. Jiang Chen's sudden appearance completely disrupted their tempo. He had destroyed a link in the enemy's chain of plans.

The old man held back against the two domains for a moment, but soon realized with despair that his resistance was completely futile. The realization terrified him beyond words because he'd initially thought that the task of capturing Jiang Chen would be a piece of cake. He truly regretted his earlier decision and underestimating his enemy now.

The two domains working in parallel quickly destroyed the old man's last bit of resistance. Jiang Chen tapped every vital spot on the old man's body and to completely seal off his movements. The young man's motions were so practiced that they stunned the old man beyond words. Now that Jiang Chen had a captive, there was no reason for him to stay here any longer. He summoned the Golbiter Rats and Long Xiaoxuan to his side before vanishing in a flash of light.

Chapter 1179: Emperor Peafowl is Dead?

Jiang Chen activated the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape and disappeared after a flash. The pill shop had brazenly opened business at that location because they were backed by someone very powerful. Had he lingered, he would've been swarmed by even more powerful reinforcements. Since he was alone, he couldn't afford to wait for their backup to arrive. He knew his limits and decided to call it quits after abducting one of their men.

After such a huge ruckus, the enemy's morale would definitely be affected.

It didn't take long before Jiang Chen arrived at the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He didn't need to worry about any pursuers because of the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape's unparalleled speed. After entering the faction's territory, he kept an extremely low profile and returned to his residence.

The atmosphere in Sacred Peafowl Mountain was also a little tense. Huang'er was elated when she learned of Jiang Chen's return, but he didn't want to alert the others about his return.

"Huang'er, don't tell anyone that I've returned."

She nodded and didn't ask why.

"Brother Chen, how was your trip to Great Scarlet? Did you rescue Miss Wei?" Huang'er had also been there when Jiang Chen had previously travelled to the region. It was how she'd gotten to know Wei Xing'er. In fact, rescuing Wei Xing'er was her idea.

Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't hide anything from her. "Wei Xing'er's rescue was a success. Hasn't she arrived at the capital yet?"

The Goldbiter Rat King had been told to bring her back to the capital. It'd been some time and they should've arrived by now.

Huang'er shook her head. "The situation in Veluriyam Capital has been rather grim lately. The borders are tightly locked down. Chances are, Wei Xing'er is also held up at the border. Brother Chen, how did you come back? Don't you know about the ongoing situation in the capital?"

Jiang Chen felt a bit awkward. The method in which he returned was rather unusual.

"I entered the Veluriyam Pagoda and exited from there. The current situation in Veluriyam Capital is rather complicated? What's going on?" Jiang Chen frowned.

Huang'er seemed rather downcast. She threw a glance at Jiang Chen and sighed softly. "Right after you left, a rumor began to spread that Emperor Peafowl had been ambushed by demons and has passed away. So far, there has been no confirmation as to the authenticity of the rumor, but it quickly gained momentum. The situation in the capital has been extremely strange ever since the rumors began to spread."

An ugly expression flashed across Jiang Chen's face. Emperor Peafowl was ambushed by demons and has passed away?

Impossible. Jiang Chen found that very hard to believe. First of all, the emperor possessed various skills and arts that guaranteed his longevity. He also radiated an aura that couldn't be easily found in other great emperors. A person with such great fortune would never die that easily. However, there could be no smoke without fire. There must be some truth behind the rumors.

Huang'er gently held onto Jiang Chen's hands. "Brother Chen, stay calm. Emperor Peafowl isn't the sort of character to die so easily."

"You're right. The emperor possesses a large arsenal of skills and arts. The demons are powerful, but the cataclysm hasn't begun yet. The average, run-of-the-mill demons can't possibly do him any harm." Jiang Chen had also fought his fair share of demons. Even Demon Emperor Bloodmalva wouldn't be able to take down Emperor Peafowl. Unless the demon emperor was at peak condition, he'd eat a great loss at the hands of Emperor Peafowl. In fact, he might not even have the opportunity to escape.

Great emperors were aplenty, but there was a great discrepancy in strength amongst them. Emperor Peafowl was without doubt the strongest great emperor in the human domain. Jiang Chen didn't believe that the demons could easily defeat someone as powerful as him. Thus, the rumor was mostly likely a lie.

However, who exactly was spreading these false rumors? Why would they spread such a blatant lie without any solid proof? Emperor Peafowl would surely retaliate in kind when he came back.

"By the way, Emperor Void and Emperor Coiling Dragon both came to visit when you weren't around." Huang'er mentioned.

Emperor Void was Emperor Peafowl's sworn ally. Amongst the seven initial great emperors, he was the only one who'd sworn allegiance to Emperor Peafowl. The latter had single handedly propelled him to where he was today. And because of that, he was always viewed as Emperor Peafowl's right-hand man.

Emperor Coiling Dragon was also Emperor Peafowl's trusted subordinate. One could safely assume that they were both on the same boat as Emperor Peafowl and were on Sacred Peafowl Mountain's side. Their visit definitely had something to do with the rumors.

Emperor Peafowl was the holder of Veluriyam Capital's fate. They needed to get their heads around the issue no matter what. Regardless of whether he was dead or alive, they needed to come up with a plan to stifle the rumors, or something bad could actually happen.

Jiang Chen pondered for a moment. "Other than the rumors, has there been anything else significant in Veluriyam Capital lately?"

"Well, Emperor Shura has officially announced Li Jiancheng as his true heir and successor."

"Oh? Li Jiancheng?" Jiang Chen remembered the genius from the Martial Pagoda Battles.

Li Jiancheng stood head and shoulders above the other true disciples of the seven great emperors, save for young lord Fan, who was better than him in every single way. The others simply had no right to be mentioned under the same breath as Li Jiancheng. His martial dao path was extremely domineering and tyrannical.

After young lord Fan's passing, he was widely regarded as the strongest amongst the younger generation. However, ever since Jiang Chen had been declared heir to Sacred Peafowl Mountain, his status as number one genius was once again under siege.

During the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering, Jiang Chen had stopped at number eight in the Ranking of Young Lords due to his initial starting rank. Many outsiders believed that Jiang Chen was actually capable of challenging Li Jiancheng for the champion seat.

When Jiang Chen was declared young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain after the ranking battles, the outside world largely viewed it as a warning from Emperor Peafowl to Emperor Shura. Even though young lord Fan had fallen, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's rule over Veluriyam Capital wouldn't cease.

It wasn't an official declaration, but anyone with a pair of eyes could see that Emperor Peafowl's arrangement was a slap to Emperor Shura's face. Emperor Shura's faction could stop dreaming. The capital's future lord would still come from the Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

This angered Emperor Shura's faction greatly. The obstruction of the emperor's plans left a bitter taste in their mouths. The sudden appearance of young lord Zhen also incensed Li Jiancheng.

His anger had triggered a large advancement in his martial dao and helped him break through to second level emperor realm. It'd been a sensational topic in the capital when it happened.

Emperor Shura took advantage of the situation by officially declaring Li Jiancheng the sole heir of his faction and widely propagated the news throughout Veluriyam Capital. The emperor's influence over the capital kept growing ever since.

Due the ambiguity of Emperor Peerless' status, the four monarchs of Sacred Peafowl Mountain had lost much of their authority. The sacred mountain's rule was in jeopardy. The lack of a leader had cast the Sacred Peafowl Mountain into a very tricky situation.

Emperor Peafowl was nowhere to be found and young lord Zhen hadn't been showing his face either. Everyone couldn't help but wonder where the two had gone to. Were the rumors regarding the emperor's death true?

The factions in Veluriyam Capital were extremely conflicted. They hoped that Emperor Peafowl was fine, but in case something really had happened, they needed to elect a new ruler to take charge of the capital. A snake couldn't be without its head, and likewise, the capital can't be without a leader.

Slowly but surely, support for Emperor Shura began to grow. Over time, his influence had consolidated into something that could no longer be ignored.

Of course, there was no lack of wise people in the capital. Many suspected that the rumors of Emperor Peafowl's death was a lie meant to destabilize the capital and cause inner conflict. These wise men believed that stifling the rumors should come first, not supporting Emperor Shura's rise to power. Some even believed that this was all a ruse by Emperor Shura and his allies, that they'd conjured lies and spread rumors to legitimately consolidate Emperor Shura's rule.

Many had grown used to being under Emperor Peafowl's rule and trusted only Emperor Peafowl. They believed that he was the only one with the ability to rule the capital. Emperor Shura was a good substitute in terms of strength and might, but he lacked the charisma and presence needed to grasp the hearts of the people.

There were many who stood by this view, but Emperor Shura's supporters grew louder and louder with every passing day. The citizens were afraid. They needed a powerful ruler to reassure them and calm

their nerves. If Emperor Peafowl was really no longer alive, the next best choice would be Emperor Shura.

#### Chapter 1180: Deeply Rooted Conflict

Huang'er was a meticulously-minded girl. Though she'd exclusive remained within the young lord's residence, she had an acute grasp on all the goings-on within Veluriyam Capital. Her analysis was clear to every detail. Her systematic overview of the city's specifics revealed everything to Jiang Chen. The young man's brows furrowed after hearing his female companion's retelling of recent events.

"That explains why other pill stores have opened up near Taiyuan Tower. This is obviously a pointed attempt at inciting a response from us." It was as if Jiang Chen's eyes had been opened.

Even if the pill stores had not been set up by Emperor Shura's direct instructions, they were definitely related to that particular emperor.

"Brother Chen, I have to take partial responsibility for it having gotten so out of hand. Taiyuan Tower asked us for help many times. Pill King Bu, Pill King Lu Feng, Lin Yanyu, and Mu Gaoqi all requested to be sent to the store's aid. I made the decision to force them to stay."

Though she appeared gentle and quiet, Huang'er had a certain presence when conducting affairs that made it hard for people to question her decisions. Pill Kings Lu Feng and Bu were both relatively unruly men, but even they dared not misbehave in front of the girl.

Huang'er's unwillingness to let them out translated to their staying put here, despite a bellyful of complaints. Jiang Chen knew that Huang'er had to have a reason for doing what she did.

"Huang'er, are you worried that there's a conspiracy involved?"

Huang'er nodded. "Brother Chen, things have become much more muddled here in Veluriyam Capital after rumor of Emperor Peafowl's fall got out. Many ensuing events seem to be closely related to this. That's why I think Taiyuan Tower's plea for help and the unwarranted appearances of those new pill stores were both tentative measures. They seem to want a reaction out of us so that they can string us along. That's why I thought staying put was the best course of action."

The girl had incredible composure despite her youth. She could easily keep her cool in the heat of the moment, unlike Pill King Lu Feng and the rest. No amount of blood rushing to her head could sway her. If their unknown adversaries were brave enough to open pill stores right beside Taiyuan Tower, then they had something strong enough to back them up.

Jiang Chen had first-hand experience of Pill King Hong's expertise. In terms of pure skill, the pill king was not at all inferior to Pill King Lu Feng and the rest. Though Mu Gaoqi and Lin Yanyu were remarkably talented, they were still young. Given enough time, they would definitely surpass Pill King Hong, but they were not currently able to compete with him.

Moreover, the pill king was probably the mastermind's first step. In that case, more powerful moves were almost certainly ready to ensue. After extended deliberation, Huang'er had settled on not sending anyone after all.

Even Emperor Peerless, Madame Yun, and the Geng brothers were asked to stay within the residence. They didn't take a single step out of it. As Jiang Chen's cultivation partner and a girl of exceptional talent and manners herself, Huang'er was trusted and respected by all. Her usual grace lent more than sufficient gravity to her claims. Therefore, the emperor himself was the staunchest supporter of her decision.

Given this fact, no one else had a word to speak on the matter. After all, none of them truly believed themselves smarter than Miss Huang'er. When the young lord had departed his residence, he'd entrusted every affair, great and small, to the girl. What did that mean?

It showed exactly how much the young lord valued her. She was the young lord's representative, and acted with the full force of his will and authority.

That she never used it to make any demands of anybody was already an extraneous kindness. Instead, she patiently spent the time to explain to everyone the external situation, possibilities, and outcomes. Her attempt at diplomatic resolution of the crisis had worked out in the end. Her conclusions were consented to by all. Huang'er had an inborn charisma that lent her significant advantage in this area.

The analysis he had heard just now impressed Jiang Chen as well. "Well done. Staying put was the best course of action. My heart is relieved by your presence, Huang'er."

The girl smiled gently. Acknowledgement from her beloved was what made her painstaking care and effort worthwhile. She considered his recognition to be a hundred times more important than any praise.

"I can only do a few trifling things for you, Brother Chen. The situation in Veluriyam Capital is very delicate right now, and any move slightly off could cause a huge shakeup of things. There needs to be a decisive breakthrough somehow, or this will never clear up."

"A decisive breakthrough?" Jiang Chen sounded a bit conflicted. "Can Veluriyam Capital not avoid infighting after all?"

Though he was depressed, he knew that great strife had lied in wait beneath the city's surface for a long time now. It could even be said that Emperor Peafowl had fostered it through overindulgence. The emperor had his own reasons for doing so. He'd wanted to tap into Emperor Shura's potential to help the other man grow to a level sufficient to rule the capital. If that had occurred, Emperor Peafowl would've been perfectly happy with handing over power.

But when test after test yielded similar results, he came to the conclusion that Emperor Shura lacked something at the end of the day, whether in terms of strength and resolution.

Jiang Chen's appearance was the other emperor's nail in the coffin. Unfortunately, though Emperor Shura's potential and charisma hadn't met Emperor Peafowl's expectations, his ambition and appetite for power now more than exceeded his station.

This was the source of the animosity between the Shura and Sacred Peafowl Mountain faction. The complicated stage currently within Veluriyam was merely an extension and eruption of this problem.



“Ah, Your Majesty...” Jiang Chen murmured, laughing with helplessness. “Did you leave this issue intentionally for me as a test, or... are you really in trouble elsewhere?” He knew Emperor Peafowl was a sage who sometimes did inexplicable and enigmatic things. Perhaps he had set this stage himself.

Of course, there was another possible alternative. Perhaps Emperor Peafowl really was in trouble. Maybe... Emperor Shura’s faction was even the culprit?

Emperor Coiling Dragon had mentioned this hypothetical when Jiang Chen had returned from the Tilted Moon Region. There was more. The emperor had mentioned that not long after Emperor Peafowl’s departure that Emperor Shura and Emperor Skysplitter had also taken trips away from the city.

Everything about these present conditions oozed strangeness. It was no wonder Emperor Coiling Dragon was being so paranoid.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. After mulling it over, he realized that he couldn’t do very much at the moment. Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s current level of strength didn’t allow for a sortie against Emperor Shura. Furthermore, infighting did not fit the city’s tradition. Emperor Peafowl, for one, would be extremely displeased to see such a thing.

If the emperor was the one who’d left things as they were now purposefully as a puzzle, Jiang Chen could readily admit that it was extremely difficult for him to solve it. If not, if the emperor had truly encountered trouble, or had even died, then Sacred Peafowl Mountain was in much direr straits.

If Emperor Shura had verification that Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s leader was no more, he would surely be impatient enough to move against the faction. If that was the case, then what Jiang Chen did as Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s young lord was key.

A single misstep could lead to his infamy or death. It was down to a struggle of raw power. Jiang Chen honestly believed that if given the chance, someone as wolfish as Emperor Shura wouldn’t hesitate to eliminate him.

Emperor Shura wasn’t like Emperor Peafowl. Once in power, he didn’t have the tolerance to allow any potential competitors to thrive and flourish. This was character that Emperor Peafowl alone possessed, partially because the emperor stood at a much, much higher place than his fellows.

“Miss Huang’er, the four monarchs are waiting for an audience outside.” A servant suddenly entered with a report.

Huang’er traded a look with her beloved. Jiang Chen nodded in permission. “Go ahead and meet them. See what their attitude is like.”

Though Jiang Chen was acquainted with the monarchs, he didn’t know the extent to which they supported his rule. From another perspective, his appearance indirectly restricted their own possibilities. Without him, they might perhaps have been able to rise higher. Jiang Chen’s ascendance into the inheritance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain meant that any possibility of one of them commanding the faction was once again out of the question.

Everyone in the world of martial dao had their own aspirations, and the four monarchs were no exception. They had been wholeheartedly loyal to Emperor Peafowl, but would they be the same way to a different, much younger master?

That was hard to say. Therefore, he wanted to take the opportunity to gauge Sacred Peafowl Mountain's internals as well.

Huang'er quickly invited the monarchs into the residence.

As the one who had interacted with Jiang Chen the most, Cloudsoar Monarch was the first to speak. "Miss Huang'er, where has young lord Zhen gone to again these days? Do you have news of him?"

"Young lord Zhen is behaving most inappropriately. His Majesty's absence from Sacred Peafowl Mountain means that the young lord should not be out and about so often. The mountain needs a master over its affairs." It was a female voice who uttered this complaint.

Having hidden himself, Jiang Chen nevertheless recognized that it was Plumscore Monarch, the only woman of the four. There had to be an important matter for the four of them to come together like this.