

Three Realms 1231

Chapter 1231: Displaying Various Arts

The strength of the Shura Rain of Blood lay not just within its brute power, but also its lethal aura and ability to erode the consciousness. Emperor Shura had reached great perfection with the technique, and it was the first time he was showing it in front of so many. The connoisseur could recognize the artistry within, while the layman simply enjoyed the show.

Emperor Pillzenith's impression of Emperor Shura improved greatly after the blade technique was performed. It seems Emperor Shura isn't a good-for-nothing after all. He may lack charisma and wit, but he makes up for it with his cultivation. Even I would have a hard time fighting against this technique. Emperor Pillzenith simulated the fight multiple times in his mind, but realized he didn't have a good answer to Emperor Shura's blade technique.

Emperor Pillzenith was one of the strongest great emperors in the Upper Eight Regions. Like Emperor Peafowl, he was at the very top of the hierarchy. But even though the technique had startled Emperor Pillzenith, it failed to break through the youth's defenses.

Emperor Pillzenith was even more shocked. Young lord Zhen isn't even thirty yet! When did he become such a monster? Countless thoughts flooded into the great emperor's head.

As time marched on, Emperor Shura gradually brought the technique to its limits. His inability to break Jiang Chen's defenses increasingly irked. How could someone like young Lord Zhen possibly exist?? Other than Emperor Peafowl, his technique was capable of dominating everyone in Veluriyam Capital. And yet, he was having trouble against the defenses of a brat who was still wet behind his ears? Impossible!

Time was being wasted. It didn't matter how well he manipulated his sword once the limit was up. He clearly had the advantage, yet couldn't harm a single hair on his opponent. If this were to continue, the duel would end in a draw.

A draw? Emperor Shura nearly burst a blood vessel when the idea crossed his mind. Eyes red with fury, he glared at the young lord within the formation. Veins on his neck bulged as red rimmed his eyes. "Brat! I don't care where you learned your detestable trickery! I will slice your defenses in half! All obstacles before me will be pulverized!"

His voice was filled with madness. The purple-red glow surrounding him suddenly spiked in intensity. Pop! Pop! Pop! His joints cracked in quick succession. Emperor Shura's body grew larger and larger as the glow surrounding him intensified. This continued until he was nine meters tall.

His body was covered with purple-red plate armor, only his arms exposed. Explosive muscles glistened like they'd been carved out of bronze and metal. His eyes were the size of bells and a bloodthirsty red. His features were sharply chiseled with distinction, shocking and aweing with their terrible might.

Hmm? Emperor Shura has a body refining technique similar to my golden body?

Gao Zhan had summoned an image of a demon god during his fight with Jiang Chen, but the image had easily been defeated with the help of the Lord of the Golden Seal. However, Jiang Chen didn't dare to

take the great emperor's body refining technique lightly. This was most certainly Emperor Shura's trump card.

Without any hesitation, he brought forth the golden magnetic mountain and muttered an incantation, enlarging the mountain by thirty meters. The Lord of the Golden Seal charged out from within the golden brilliance, revealing his imposing body.

"Lord of the Golden Seal, that man is a berserker great emperor. Spar with him."

The Lord's strength was determined by the golden magnetic mountain, which was in turn affected by how much potential Jiang Chen could unearth. Its potential was almost limitless, but Jiang Chen was too young to make use of it.

The Lord was clearly no match for Emperor Shura's berserker form, but he had nothing to fear as his home was right behind him. That was his greatest advantage. He transformed into a streak of golden light and charged madly at Emperor Shura without any hesitation. A blade and a sword of energy materialized along the way and hacked towards Emperor Shura's waist.

The Lord was much larger than Emperor Shura. The great emperor snorted coldly when he saw a new enemy launching at him.

"Scram!" The emperor growled as he swung his sword nonchalantly. A sharp light sliced through the air and struck the Lord of the Golden Seal.

The purple light pierced through the Lord's body, slicing him in half. He faded into weak golden brilliance and was absorbed back into the magnetic golden mountain.

The Lord's body was different from a human's as he was made up of an amalgamation of metallic essences. Even though he'd been sliced in half, it was just his materialization that'd been destroyed. He could simply just re-form. He would never be killed as long as the magnetic golden mountain wasn't destroyed. It was the greatest advantage that spirits like him had.

"Brat, why did you provoke such a fearsome opponent? I'll need at least seventy percent of my total strength back to have a chance against him!" The Lord complained when recalled back into the mountain.

Jiang Chen had only wanted to check how powerful a berserk Emperor Shura was in his berserker state. Unfortunately, his trump card had been sliced in half with just one strike. Even though the Lord wouldn't die from something like this, it would take some time before he could materialize again.

He was immune from death, but that didn't mean that he was unsusceptible to injury. It wouldn't be possible for him to recover in such a short time. Even if he materialized again, he'd be nowhere near his previous state.

When the Lord of the Golden Seal went silent, Jiang Chen knew this was a lost cause. Instead of giving up, he left the golden magnetic mountain hovering high in the air while quickly shuffling through hand seals.

One... two... three... Beams of golden light shot out from the mountain, revealing themselves as the weapon-shaped golden monsters.

Jiang Chen was showing his hand. These golden monsters were also an amalgamation of metallic essences. They would continue to spawn and materialize as long as the mountain still existed. They were weeds that grew after a wildfire, tenacious and relentless.

These monsters didn't even possess a hundredth of the Lord of the Golden Seal's strength, but their strength was in numbers. They attacked like an ant swarm, overwhelming their enemies and were extremely annoying to fight against.

There was simply no end to them. No matter how many Emperor Shura killed, Jiang Chen only needed to make a few hand signs to summon a few dozen more. Even an elephant could be taken down by a horde of ants.

Jiang Chen didn't expect them to kill Emperor Shura, but by summoning them in the dozens, he hoped that they could at least stall for time and hinder the great emperor's movements.

It was a very shameless tactic, but desperate times called for desperate measures. Whenever Emperor Shura cleared a wave of the monsters and tried to commit to an all-out attack on Jiang Chen, another huge swarm would lay siege on him. One or two of these monsters couldn't possibly harm the great emperor. But that was no longer the case when their numbers were in the hundreds. Emperor Shura abhorred Jiang Chen's battle tactics greatly, but he had no choice but to deal with them.

Jiang Chen also understood that the tactic wouldn't work forever. These monsters would lose their effectiveness once Emperor Shura grasped how to deal with them. Emperor Shura's berserk attack power is truly alarming. If the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation hadn't been bolstered by the Earth Bodhisattva Orb, the amount of energy I've infused into them via the spirit stones would probably be insufficient to take the full brunt of his attacks.

Jiang Chen was incredibly glad that he'd somehow gotten his hands on the earth attribute treasure. Without it, the formation would only have one third of its current power. With that defense, he might be able to take on Emperor Shura in his normal state, but against a berserk Emperor Shura? Not in a million years.

Jiang Chen meticulously scoured through his list of trump cards. He did possess something that could kill Emperor Shura, the abode heritage he'd inherited from mid rank empyrean cultivator Guo Ran in the Paramount Realm. There were two more uses to the restrictions within. Once triggered, even a great emperor would instantly perish.

However, it wasn't something that Jiang Chen could use in broad daylight. If he killed Emperor Shura, the situation in Veluriyam Capital would turn sour very quickly. He wanted to kill the great emperor more than anyone else and put an end to things once and for all, but this wasn't the right time or place.

If the abode was ever revealed, the entire Upper Eight Regions would set their sights on him like a pig for slaughter. But other than the abode's restriction, Jiang Chen didn't possess any trump card that could possibly kill Emperor Shura.

Chapter 1232: The Violet Rings

Jiang Chen wasn't someone easily dealt with, but Emperor Shura likewise wasn't about to resign himself to fate halfway through. After a while of golden monster harrassment, Emperor Shura finally understood

Jiang Chen's strategic intent. In his fury, he completely ignored them and poured all of his energy in crazed offense against the formation instead.

Emperor Shura knew that Jiang Chen wanted to maintain this impasse. To end up in a draw was in itself a victory for Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Conversely, it would mean that all of his effort over the few years was for nothing.

The great emperor was absolutely unwilling to accept such an outcome. He needed to attack and break the formation apart. Howling in anger, he spurred himself to new heights. His offensive power flared in strength once more. Bloody aura crept out menacingly from the demon blade; it roiled crazily towards the formation to reap the living. Once the formation was done, so was his opponent!

"I must break apart this stupid formation. I must kill that kid! I must become the ruler of Veluriyam Capital! Anyone who stands in my way will fall by my blade! Die, die, DIE!" The ambitious emperor was drunk with bloodlust.

But Jiang Chen fought with the same recklessness. Emperor Shura may have gone berserk to enhance his body and offensive strength, but the young lord of Veluriyam had no qualms about tapping into every reserve of strength he had to counter. He drained all he could from the Earth Bodhisattva Orb in order to reinforce his Eight Trigram Boulder Formation and his eight statues.

Both sides having increased their power, the battle's scales remained rather balanced.

"How is this possible?" Emperor Shura wanted to cough up blood. The prospect of his opponent increasing the defense's effectiveness had been wholly unexpected. How could he win if things went on like this? "Does that kid have no limit?"

Frankly, the emperor didn't believe it. He redoubled his efforts with grit teeth. Each saber swing was quicker and more furious than the last. The statues were assailed with with a tempestuous storm of increasing ferocity. He knew that as long as just one statue was shattered, he would have a way past the outer layer of the formation. Such a breach would enable him to exploit the weakness in a much more important way.

A formation was one entity. Damaging part of it typically meant that the rest would also follow. Emperor Shura knew very well that a single crack was enough for his blade to sneak in and find his target. Given that his opponent was a young cultivator, he was unlikely to be able to dodge the attack. The astoundingly potent formation was the entire basis for young lord Zhen's gambit against him. The young man would be worthless without it!

But though he had a plan in mind, it wasn't one easy to accomplish. No matter how fiercely he attacked, the regenerative powers of the eight stone statues far surpassed his understanding. A forceful strike that had left a deep scar a while ago was now only a faint mark.

Actually, were the eight statues becoming stronger?

What's going here? Such a strange situation was incomprehensible for Emperor Shura. It was one thing if the statues were made of an exceptionally durable material. But how could unliving things intelligently improve themselves like this? Were they sentient somehow and adapting to his attacks?

Emperor Shura didn't want to go on. He felt that any further consideration would push him over the brink into insanity. He could not continue such a fruitless attack. His mind ran at top speed. Much of the time limit had already elapsed. Perhaps an hour or so remained, but that was still a reasonable duration to get something done in.

Still, there was no time to waste. If Emperor Shura expended much more energy without seeing returns, he would lose too much momentum. Four hours of continuous strenuous battle was too much even for the hardest of men. More importantly, much of it had also gone to waste. Great emperor cultivators had limits to their strength, just like everyone else. No mortal expert could possibly have infinite energy.

However, there was a despondency that tugged at his heartstrings. I'm tired after attacking so long. Shouldn't that kid be tired too? His defense should cost him more force of will and vigor, shouldn't it? Is he an actual machine?

Emperor Shura had many questions. Presumably, such a potent defense was as taxing to the defender as it was on the attacker. But then... why did it seem like the kid wasn't tired at all? The emperor absolutely couldn't understand it. Those from the Shura Retreat were just as perplexed.

"How can this be? What monstrosity is that kid, really? Does his accursed formation truly not have a weakness? Daoist Shura's Rain of Blood didn't manage much of a scratch." Emperor Vastsea was the most dissatisfied among the rest. If he had to deal with that technique in an arena, he would have a very hard time. Why then could Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord answer it with such ease?

Li Jiancheng's eyes were full of hate. "Master, you have to kill that kid. You just have to! You can't let him rule Veluriyam Capital! Once he does, will there be any room for us to survive?"

Shura Retreat's young lord was a proud man. There was a common saying that two tigers couldn't share the same hunting ground. Li Jiancheng had observed firsthand his master's helplessness against Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord.

Such stalwart fortitude from a potential rival drove him to despair. He was a peak that Li Jiancheng could not possibly hope to cross, regardless of the size of his ego. He would not suffer someone like that to remain at Veluriyam Capital. He desperately wanted to avoid having to live with such a nightmarish situation for the rest of his life.

Finally, Emperor Shura stopped his barrage and calmed down. Leaning on his blade, he looked seriously into the distance. His eyes regarded the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation and the eight stone statues with a pondering look. His furious expression faded away, giving way to thoughtfulness. The emperor had regained his composure at last.

The limited amount of remaining time forced him to reconsider his situation. He knew that a berserk status could increase his will to fight and give him additional energy, but he would have to trade away his rationality in exchange. Against someone as clever as young lord Zhen, doing so was extremely unwise.

If he could not break through the defense system by brute force, then he had to apply his mind to the task instead. Emperor Shura wasn't a complete fool. After calming down, he immediately began to brew up ideas.

“That kid’s defense system is composed of interlocking rings and layers. The eight statues are only the vanguard. If I can destroy one of them, then the outside would be imperfect, creating a flaw in the formation. Thus, I must start with those eight statues. But my strength isn’t enough right now, hmm...”

If I can’t do it with raw strength, why not do something to occupy them or shift them aside? If destroying them was too hard, he could temporarily control them, couldn’t he?

A flash of inspiration struck Emperor Shura’s mind.

“Yes, let’s try that!” The ambitious emperor was cheered up for the first time in three hours. He finally had a potential path to a solution. Leaning on his blade, he drew across the air with his other hand. Violet rings appeared out of that nothingness, wrapping themselves around Emperor Shura’s arm.

“Are those... the Shura Rings of Life and Death?”

On Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s side, Emperor Void couldn’t help but call out with an ashen face, “This is bad! It seems that Shura has found a way to deal with young lord Zhen.”

Emperor Shura snarled without much decorum, sweeping his ringed arm forward. The violet circles flew into the air, forming trails of light behind them. A number of colorful, magical comets tore across the sky.

The rings began to grow and grow, each becoming three meters wide. They headed straight for the eight stone statues.

“Hmm? What’s he planning to do?” Jiang Chen was unsettled by this strange sight. Was Emperor Shura attempting to hold his statues in place?

The Eight Trigram Boulder Formation was formidable on its own, but without the statues’ deterrence of the majority of incoming attacks, it wasn’t going to be enough to stop a berserk Emperor Shura.

The violet rings had a terrifying restrictiveness imbued. If they were allowed to latch onto the statues, any amount of restriction on the statues’ mobility would break the link between them and formation. The statues would no longer be able to draw power from the Earth Bodhisattva Orb then.

Without the formation and the Orb’s spirit energy to support them, the statues would be significantly weaker. Emperor Shura would very likely be able to destroy them. But it was even more likely that the emperor wouldn’t have any interest in them whatsoever. Instead, he would attack the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation directly. As soon as his formation fell, he would be vulnerable to a direct assault.

Despite knowing all of this, Jiang Chen didn’t have a solution. He felt only anxiety at his inability to come up with an imminent strategy. The violet rings pulsed with increasing magnitude of restraint. It wouldn’t be long now before the statues were taken from his control. Gritting his teeth, Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s young lord executed a series of hand seals that recalled the eight statues back into his formation disk.

Having removed a significant obstacle, Emperor Shura beamed delightedly.

Chapter 1233: The Final Trump Card

There wasn't much time left. The violet rings Emperor Shura had deployed were his final trump card. If he still couldn't destroy the eight stone sculptures with this technique, then he really would be scraping the bottom of the barrel.

Thus, he was seized with joy when Jiang Chen recalled the eight stone sculptures. He had finally broken through the first line of defense! Sneering inwardly, the great emperor charged Jiang Chen's formation and swung his demonic blade. He could attack the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation now given the absence of the eight stone sculptures running interference.

Jiang Chen's heart sank. He urged the Earth Bodhisattva Orb to channel energy into the formation with everything he had. Now that the eight stone sculptures were gone, this was his only defense against Emperor Shura's attacks.

The situation was critically disadvantageous to Jiang Chen. He inspected the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman without hesitation. Luckily, the talisman hadn't been consumed much because Jiang Chen hadn't been fighting all this time. It would be able to hold out until the end of the fight.

He knew that he should expect the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation to be destroyed at any moment. Once the formation was gone, he would have to engage Emperor Shura in hand-to-hand combat. But he wasn't completely helpless, thanks to the talisman. Though it temporarily increased his defenses to that of a great emperor, he had plenty of other means that could help him hold out for a short while.

But that was his last resort. Jiang Chen didn't want to fight Emperor Shura head-on unless absolutely necessary. Emperor Shura had been a great emperor for three thousand years, and Jiang Chen was just initial emperor realm. Fighting his opponent directly was the worst thing he could do. The light flaring from the blade seemed to be a reverse Milky Way, slamming viciously into the formation.

The edges of the formation shook in response.

The Eight Trigram Boulder Formation was indeed very impressive. If Jiang Chen had been able to establish it with proper foundations and formation flags, delaying Emperor Shura long enough until the round ended wouldn't be impossible. However, he had no choice but to manifest the formation with a disk. A disk allowed a cultivator to manifest a formation very quickly without fuss, but the downside was that the manifested formation's foundations and power were severely lacking. Emperor Shura had first thought that breaking the formation would be a piece of cake after the eight stone sculptures were gone. However, the error of his thinking was quickly discovered. His powerful strokes cut through the etchings and made the formation shudder and shake, but they recovered before his next stroke could arrive. Such self-healing speed was utterly shocking. "How is this possible? There are a lot of formations in this world, but there shouldn't be one that can heal itself so quickly after being breached! It should be the other way around!" Emperor Shura was highly perplexed. Pill King Zhen oozed bizarre strangeness.

Meanwhile, Jiang Chen was doing everything he could to maintain the formation. The Eight Trigram Boulder Formation was recovering so swiftly because of the Earth Bodhisattva Orb. Spirit stones couldn't have reformed the formation so quickly, and the formation would've immediately collapsed after an opening was made. No wonder the ancient Earth Bodhisattva Sect made the Orb their sect treasure. Jiang Chen finally realized just how powerful the Orb truly was after witnessing the sheer amount of power within. Even better was that this were just scratching the surface. Once he made the Earth

Bodhisattva Orb completely his own and excavated all of its potential, Jiang Chen was certain that it could reach unimaginable heights of power.

It looks like I accidentally came across an ultimate treasure! The power of the orb made Jiang Chen more confident. The formation should be able to hold out for some time even without the eight stone sculptures running interference.

As time passed, the round entered the final, most critical stage.

The members of Shura Retreat were on their feet as they watched sand trickling down the hourglass. They looked worriedly at the battle happening on the arena. No one had anticipated that Emperor Shura would still fail to breach young lord Zhen's defenses despite deploying all kinds of methods and trump cards. No one could define young lord Zhen's limits. Is his defense truly indestructible? It was a tormenting battle to spectate.

Emperor Shura himself knew that there wasn't much time left. He was discouraged to see the formation reform itself again and again despite his many attacks. It was like scaling a mountain peak, only to find a higher one in front of him.

"Zhen, you brat! I'll break through your cowardly, scummy defenses!" Emperor Shura roared madly when his frustration reached its peak.

The bulky body crashed into the formation again and again. His bloodshot eyes spoke to his maddened bloodlust. Emperor Shura murmured a few incantations that covered his body with a surging purplish-red halo. It looked like a ball of angry hellfire wanted to consume the great emperor's body. "This is bad!" Emperor Void's heart sank as his face turned ugly. "Emperor Shura... he's willing to go this far? Has he gone insane?"

Emperor Coiling Dragon's heart also skipped a beat. Shock and fear marred his face as he exclaimed, "Is... is he burning his own bloodline power?"

"Precisely." Emperor Void responded quickly, looking like he'd heard the most terrible of tidings. "Crazy, he's gone completely crazy! The demonic slaughter dao's most terrifying technique is the summoning of hellfire and activating of Shura fire in one's body. The terrifying hell energy makes a cultivator several times stronger than before, but they have to pay a huge price in return as well!"

Emperor Peerless didn't know Emperor Shura that well, but his expression also turned ugly when he heard that Shura's power would increase several magnitudes over.

"This fellow sure is willing to sacrifice anything to seize power. Does he really think that his methods and ruthlessness will impress even if he does win the round?" Emperor Peerless frowned.

"Hmph, to go this far for an internal conflict! Emperor Shura is a failure indeed. No wonder Daoist Peafowl didn't pass the throne to him back then. He doesn't have the heart or composure to carry Veluriyam Capital on his back at all." Emperor Void agreed. "Even if he does win the round, Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Shura Retreat are still evenly matched. Who will support him after doing something like this?"

Emperor Void's words weren't unreasonable. Emperor Shura was an important figure in the capital, second to only Emperor Peafowl. However, he was bringing out questionable methods to defeat a young

genius. No matter how he tried to justify it later, it left a dreadful impression. It was the desperation of a cornered animal, not the bearing and performance a great emperor with three thousand years of experience should possess.

Emperor Coiling Dragon cursed hatefully, "He's destroying his own reputation. I'll gather every righteous man and woman there is and object to his ascension if he wins this!"

Emperor Shura truly did lose a lot of supporters because of his current actions. Even Emperor Petalpluck's forehead were creased with deep dissatisfaction when he saw this.

Back in the arena, Jiang Chen felt as calm as still water. He could clearly see every move Emperor Shura was making. He knew that his opponent would do everything in his power to win at this stage. He too was likewise prepared for the final showdown. The Earth Bodhisattva Orb still fully powering the formation, Jiang Chen called upon the Ancient Crimson Heavens formation disk once more and deployed a new formation, inside the currently operating one.

The Major Artifice Formation!

Jiang Chen wasn't expecting the illusory formation to actually do anything against Emperor Shura. Its only purpose was to buy him a bit of time after his opponent broke through the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation.

At the same time, Jiang Chen activated his tempered body, heralded by an explosion of golden light. The magnetic mountain floated over his head and shone rays of metallic light towards Jiang Chen, forming a magnetic armor. The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was also hiding nearby, ready to ambush and restrain with Emperor Shura on a moment's notice. He was activating every trump card that might be useful.

Jiang Chen didn't care anymore if his identity was exposed to the Eternal Celestial Capital emperor watching from the guest area. His only objective in this fight was to hold out until it was over. It wouldn't be long now. A bit longer, and Sacred Peafowl Mountain would become the ultimate victor of this match.

Shura hellfire burned wildly on Emperor Shura's body. Many strange and savage-looking patterns were crawling across his skin.

"Break!" Emperor Shura swung crazily at the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation. A horrific cracking noise later, the etchings of the formation was finally destroyed by the unprecedented attack.

Chapter 1234: A Bottomless Bag of Tricks

Emperor Shura put everything he had into that feverish strike. He'd cut through the lines of the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation, utterly destroying its framework. It was time to attack at last! There was no way that Jiang Chen could instantly restore his defenses. The formation disk needed to be set up once more.

The emperor's murderous gaze locked onto the youth in front of him. He was through. He was through! Coming face to face with one's mortal enemy was an occasion to be red-eyed. Snorting derisively, Emperor Shura rushed in close and delivered a horizontal slice. A flash of steel was drawn across Jiang Chen's torso. The audience collectively screamed in horror.

There was a burst of radiance. In the next moment, Jiang Chen's body flew into the air, cleanly sliced in half. The halves thudded onto the ground, severed with a neat, forceful stroke.

The shocked cries of the audience grew louder. Some closed or averted their eyes in revulsion. They couldn't bear to look at such a gruesome sight. Emperors Void and Coiling Dragon both made for the arena, but Emperor Peerless stopped them.

"Control yourselves." The wandering cultivator emperor shook his head, frowning.

All four monarchs were pale in the face. Their bodies shivered uncontrollably. The grisly scene shattered their nerves and destroyed their mindsets.

Young lord Zhen... dead??

Had Emperor Shura just... cleave the amazing genius into two?

In the vassals' section, Sacred Peafowl Mountain's supporters began to agitate. "Outrageous. A great emperor displaying such cruelty to a young genius!"

"How can a man as violent and tyrannical as him rule over Veluriyam Capital?"

The great emperors in the guest section were just as surprised as anyone else. Emperor Pillzenith's Adam's apple bobbed, but he seemed rather suspicious of what had just taken place.

The Han brothers from the Great Yu Skysword Sect scrutinized the arena with ferocious gazes.

Though her body trembled for a moment as well, Su Huanzhen was the first to see through the ruse. "Impossible. Young lord Zhen is too clever to die like that." She shook her head. "It's just an illusion!"

Hearing those words helped Emperor Pillzenith pick up on something. His eyes were fixated on the arena once more, interested on what would happen next. Truthfully, he didn't want young lord Zhen to die like this, either. He didn't have the Pinecrane Pill yet. If the young lord fell here, how was he going to get his hands on that mythical pill?

He didn't believe that young lord Zhen would teach it to Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill masters. Even if he had, Emperor Pillzenith would have a very hard time getting his hands on it nevertheless.

However, there was an eruption of cheering from Shura Retreat's side. Li Jiancheng waved a hand with particular vehemence; all his pent-up grief and fury was released in that slice.

Emperor Shura was pleased by the turn of events, but he quickly noticed that something was off. No blood had spurted from either half of the body left behind. That didn't make any sense.

Closer examination revealed no crimson liquid on the ground. The body that had been sliced in half was also gone. Replacing it was an indistinct gray mist, as if he had been dropped into an unformed world.

"Hmm? What is it this time?" The swings in mood that the emperor was feeling perplexed him. Calming down just a little, he suddenly discovered that he was trapped in yet another formation.

"A formation? Again?" Emperor Shura laughed despite his anger. He was at his wit's end. Formations upon formations upon formations... where were they going to end? How many tricks did this kid have up his sleeve, really?

“Let all be reduced to nothingness. Die! I’ll cut through everything you throw at me!” Roaring loudly and repetitively, the emperor swung his blade about like a madman.

The gray mist dispersed to make way for a brightened world once more. However, Emperor Shura found the young lord that he’d cleaved earlier standing on the other side of the arena once more, a sneer upon his face. The ambitious emperor felt that he’d been played for a fool.

With a sweep of his sleeves, Jiang Chen produced a few more odd-looking plants.

“Shura, your exasperation and frustration only causes harm to yourself. You can’t accomplish anything like this. I’ve set up another formation for your enjoyment. Are you man enough to brave it?”

Golden light flared all over Jiang Chen’s body. Plates of armor formed from magnetic energy glittered all about him, almost blinding in their brilliance. His tempered body grew to more than nine meters tall, in direct comparison to the emperor’s own.

It now looked as if two giants were competing in the arena. Thankfully, arenas for competitions at this level were built to be extremely large. Despite both combatants’ bodies expanding several times, there was still room available for their bout.

The strange plants were formed from tendrils of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Jiang Chen’s control over them had improved with maturity. The ‘Bewitching’ part in the Lotus’s name referred to their transformative properties. They could simulate various different forms via mimicry.

The Lotus was one of his fail-safes. He wouldn’t have brought it out without the situation being truly dire. Though the Lotus was strong, it would last only an instant against an opponent at Emperor Shura’s level. It was a momentary hindrance at best.

Jiang Chen couldn’t rely on the Bewitching Lotus because his own cultivation wasn’t at an appropriate level. In actuality, they were a distraction for what would come next. Jiang Chen secretly activated another formation through his disk.

The Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven!

This formation had three ranks. He was naturally using the highest. The formation was more than sufficient to handle half-step great emperors at its current level of strength. It could also hold up great emperors to a certain extent.

Hand seals at the ready, Jiang Chen waited for Emperor Shura’s approach. As long as he could delay Shura a single moment, he would be able to execute the next step in his plan. His goal wasn’t to defeat Emperor Shura, but to waste the remainder of the time limit. The battle looked deceptively grim, but everything was completely safe and proceeding according to plan.

But what did Emperor Shura care about the formations before him? His red-eyed murderous rampage left him with only one thought: he wanted to kill Jiang Chen.

“Just die!” he roared angrily. The motion with which he swung his blade had a momentum that threatened to rend the heavens and split the earth.

Smiling easily, Jiang Chen disappeared into thin air. As if on cue, the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven whirled into motion, entrapping the emperor within. The formation could simulate seven situations of mortal danger.

The particular one that Jiang Chen was using was death by lightning. Lesser elements would simply not do. Perhaps lightning was the only thing that could postpone him temporarily.

The amount of electricity snaking through the air made it a sight to behold. Lightning rained down upon Emperor Shura relentlessly. All attacks in the world of martial dao were unique in some way, according to their characteristics or attribute. Lightning in particular was an extremely potent kind.

Inside the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven, a storm of bolts raged. Most emperor realm cultivators wouldn't hope to make it out alive under such conditions. The density and potency of the attacks meant that they couldn't possibly weather such strikes.

Fortunately for Emperor Shura, the formation was only simulated. If it had been set up properly with flags, even the likes of him would have a lot of trouble emerging unscathed.

A defensive glowing aura flared up around Emperor Shura. Whenever a lightning snake came close, the aura swallowed it up. The emperor had no intention of being trapped for long here. He looked upward with a keen gaze.

"Break!" he shouted, flourishing his blade.

When one reached the pinnacle of martial dao, it was possible to break through formations with pure strength. There was no impenetrable defense in the world. Of course, there was no all-conquering attack either.

There was only relative comparison when power and power clashed. Whichever won in the end would be the superior. In this case, Emperor Shura's blade swing surpassed the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven. The formation was destroyed in one fell swoop.

"Let's see how many more formations you've got, kid!" The emperor strode out from the formation's remnants, ready to cut down Jiang Chen with his next slash. However, something was awry when he came out of the formation. He saw countless streaks of golden light heading for his face. They heralded sword-images, violently launching themselves at him.

"The Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique?" Emperor Shura felt faint. He raised his head to catch the onslaught of swords coming at him with an uncountable number of sword auras, flooding in his direction in a deluge of steel.

"What kind of sword technique is this?" Though he'd seen it be used a few times before, he only noticed now that it bore no resemblance to any of Emperor Peafowl's techniques.

Emperor Shura was no stranger to Emperor Peafowl's methods. He had studied all of Peafowl's martial techniques thoroughly, including sword related ones. Emperor Peafowl's sword techniques were elegant and refined. This technique, on the other hand, was grander and more torrential. It had a rather different feeling from Peafowl's usual techniques.

The Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords was an attack that even Emperor Shura didn't dare treat lightly. He furiously glared at the tempestuous sword storm before him with gritted teeth.

"Peafowl! You're doubling down hard. You've given the kid an Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman, too?" Emperor Shura was filled with hatred. He knew that a young genius who was at the initial stages of emperor realm wouldn't be able to unleash such a terrifying attack. The young lord had been using the Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman. Such an increase to great emperor-level offensive power made the force behind the blow more plausible.

"Is his body made of iron or something? He's using two Imperial talismans at the same time. How can he endure such a thing?" The emperor reacted with shocked outrage.

Chapter 1235: Times Up

Emperor Shura had once been a young man himself. At the time, his sect had gifted him protective treasures like the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman because his development was still incomplete.

Although he'd used such treasures before, his body had always felt overburdened every time the talismans were in use. Generally speaking, a cultivator's physical body was pushed to their limits during use. One seemed to teeter between the boundary of life and death, or having their body threaten to fall to utter pieces at every second. That was why Emperor Shura was puzzled to see Jiang Chen using both the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman and Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman at the same time, but still cackled sinisterly. "Brat, you're truly suicidal. But do you really think that two talismans are enough to stop me?"

Emperor Shura raised his arm and sent the Shura Rings into dance again. They spun rapidly around him like dazzling stars, completely nullifying the Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords with the rapid oscillation of their defense. Jiang Chen wasn't surprised by the scene. He hadn't expected the Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords to kill Emperor Shura because of the power gap between the two of them. Jiang Chen's golden body glowed brightly once more as a powerful jet of air rose into the sky and transformed into an enormous fire bird.

"Is that the divine vermillion bird?" Spectators were greatly excited by the vermillion bird image. A fireball from heaven itself was blotting out the skies.

"It has to be!"

"Young lord Zhen is so extraordinary! We saw him unleashing the true dragon image earlier, but now he's unleashing the vermillion bird image as well! Just how many terrifying images does he have in his body?"

The members of Sacred Peafowl Mountain were also surprised. They all knew that young lord Zhen was powerful and a genius. However, it was only now that they realized that they'd underestimated him still.

The image shrieked piercingly before swooping down on Emperor Shura. The great emperor was caught off guard as he hadn't expected young lord Zhen to attack him successively. The young lord had always been on defense, so the sudden initiative was surprising indeed.

Still, he was a veteran great emperor. The vermillion bird image might look like fierce and deadly, but it was a threat to his life. As he thought about this, Emperor Shura jumped into the air to face the image

head-on. He raised his blade with both hands with an angry roar and threw a fearsome slash forwards with all his strength.

The strong attack slammed into the image and sheared it in half. As the image crumbled, strong air currents scattered in all directions in a fiery imitation of a furnace. Luckily for the spectators, the explosion had taken place quite far away from them, or there would've been many accidental casualties.

"What else do you have, Brat Zhen? Show me everything you've got!" Emperor Shura cackling sinisterly. He was feeling pretty good after successfully destroying the image. He leapt into the air again and once more charged towards Jiang Chen with blade upraised.

Jiang Chen raised both hands and summoned turbulence in the air in front of him. Strong air currents surged to push a true dragon image into the sky. It brandished claws and leered threateningly as it rushed Emperor Shura.

The great emperor snorted coldly. "Well met!"

He swung his weapon. Although the dragon image was extraordinarily impressive, the edge of the blade was even keener. The dragon image was torn apart just like the vermilion bird image had been.

Emperor Shura was about to threaten closer when an ominous feeling suddenly arose. A hunch compelled him to raise and protect his vitals.

Sparks scattered and energy dispersed.

A claw had stretched out of thin air and crashed into Emperor Shura's weapon. A dragon soared into the skies in the next second. It was naturally Long Xiaoxuan. The dragon image moments earlier had just been a distraction so that he would have time to sneak in an attack from his position cloaked, high up in the sky. Even a momentary lapse of concentration would result in injury for the great emperor. Long Xiaoxuan didn't try to attack Emperor Shura after his ambush had failed. Instead, he disappeared into the clouds. Invisibility was one of the talents of the true dragons.

Emperor Shura narrowed his eyes, expanding his consciousness to the utmost with a tight grip on his longsword. He was trying to sense Long Xiaoxuan's position. Jiang Chen's attacks might be negligible, but he dared not underestimate a true dragon. This particular dragon was peak emperor realm. Though the great emperor didn't fear direct combat, hidden ambushes were much more difficult to defend against. "Are you running out of tricks, Brat Zhen? You think an immature dragon is enough to impede my steps?" Emperor Shura sneered before light flashed again from the blade, hurtling towards Jiang Chen. He was going to slaughter Jiang Chen even at the risk of being ambushed!

Jiang Chen smiled and moved like lightning, vanishing an instant later into the distance. Emperor Shura's attack hit nothing but an afterimage. Jiang Chen was fast enough to outrun his attacks!

The great emperor's heart sank. "He's really fast!"

Refusing to believe that he couldn't keep up with Jiang Chen, Emperor Shura thrust forward in another attempt. Jiang Chen instantly activated his escape art and vanished into thin air yet again. Emperor Shura's attacks couldn't keep up at all.

One stroke was followed by another, and another... until more than a dozen attacks were fired off in short order. Although the great emperor's attacks were speedy, Jiang Chen was always just a bit faster and remained elusively out of reach. "How can this be?" Emperor Shura's fighting spirit took a severe hit when his ultimate attacks weren't hitting his enemy at all.

He'd called upon Shura hellfire to forcefully bring out his potential. This was his strongest form, and it was one that hurt him just as much as it threatened his enemy. It wasn't a situation that could drag on.

Although he'd definitely made some sacrifices, he'd failed to touch even a hair on Jiang Chen's body. The tremendous failure further widened the crack in Emperor Shura's dao heart.

Jiang Chen's speed had already rivaled Emperor Peerless' when the young man was mere sage realm. Speed was the attribute that the great emperor was most proud of. After Jiang Chen had ascended to emperor realm, his understanding of the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape deepened further and made him even faster than before.

As expected, Emperor Shura was completely caught off guard by the unbelievable speed. The great emperor couldn't think of any way to stop him. No matter how angry or powerful he was, he couldn't land a hit onto Jiang Chen.

"Do you only know how to run, brat?" Emperor Shura roared angrily. He'd completely lost the dignity of a great emperor and the genteel demeanor of the second greatest man in Veluriyam Capital. He seemed more like an infuriated, vulgar commoner who was a disappointment to even the vassals spectating this fight.

Their shock at young lord Zhen's extraordinary performance was proportional to their disappointment at Emperor Shura's poor performance. Emperor Peafowl wasn't around, so Emperor Shura was technically the greatest man in Veluriyam Capital. However, he looked nothing like the great leader he should be.

It was already bad enough that Emperor Shura wasn't able to take down young lord Zhen immediately. Young lord Zhen simply had too many trump cards and was performing too well. However, the great emperor's inability to let go only disappointed them further.

If Emperor Shura gave up the round and admitted defeat at an opportune time, he would've appeared magnanimous at the very least. There was nothing wrong with giving up if a matter couldn't be forced. In fact, it would be a wise decision to do so.

But instead, he'd completely lost his cool and was chasing after young lord Zhen like some gangster on the street. Worse, he was doing everything he could, but still unable to touch young lord Zhen. Now, he couldn't even catch up to the young lord's shadow. How could this sorry-looking man possibly be their great emperor?

Even Emperor Skysplitter was silently sighing sadly. He too knew that Emperor Shura had already lost.

Meanwhile, everyone in the Sacred Peafowl Mountain camp was staring intently at the battle. As Jiang Chen deftly avoided Emperor Shura's attacks again and again, they saw the rise of immense hope and the light of victory dawn before their eyes.

"Unbelievable, unbelievable... to think that young lord Zhen's martial dao talent is this impressive. I've truly underestimated him." Wildfox Monarch sighed quietly.

"Fate is with Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Young lord Zhen is without a doubt the best successor Emperor Peafowl could have! He's won me over completely today." Chronobalance Monarch exclaimed.

"Me too," Cloudsoar Monarch stated simply.

"I'm in full agreement. From hereon, anyone who disagrees with young lord Zhen will have to go through me first." Plumscore Monarch voiced her thoughts as well.

The battle on the arena didn't continue for too long. When all the sand had trickled to the bottom part of the hourglass, the fight that'd run for four hours long was finally over.

A loud gong strike signalled the end of the round and the utter destruction of Emperor Shura's fighting spirit. Wearing a cool smile on his face, Jiang Chen abruptly stopped his motions and landed on the opposite side of the arena.

"Time is up. This round is a draw." Emperor Petalpluck declared expressionlessly.

A tidal wave of cheers crescendoed from Sacred Peafowl Mountain's side. A draw meant that they had taken the overall victory! The competition that'd lasted a whole thirteen rounds was finally over. Everyone had thought that defeat was inevitable before the final two rounds. But in the end, their side had held fast and claimed the final victory.

A murderous gleam exploded in Emperor Shura's eyes. He abruptly raised his weapon and, without forewarning, flung a mighty slash towards Jiang Chen on the other side.

Chapter 1236: Withdrawing From Veluriyam Capital

Emperor Shura's sudden move overturned everyone's expectations. No one had thought that the likes of a titled emperor would sneak attack young lord Zhen after the battle was over.

"Careful!"

"Young lord Zhen, watch out!"

"That shameless bastard!"

There was instant chaos in the crowd. Everyone cried out in warning and astonishment, absolutely appalled at the newfound development.

Emperor Peerless shot out as a streak of light from his seat with the rest of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Emperors Void and Coiling Dragon followed.

Emperors Petalpluck and Mountaincrush headed right for the stage as well. All five of the emperors wanted to block the attack for the young man. But they were too far. The lethal blade was already at Jiang Chen's throat before they could reach the edge of the arena.

The swing seemed unblockable.

In that crucial moment, the earth before Jiang Chen split open. Numerous vines burst forth, each one thick as a muscled arm. They headed for Emperor Shura without delay.

As if he'd foreseen such a move from Emperor Shura, Jiang Chen produced several dozen duplicate images of himself in the blink of an eye. Each one was identical. It was impossible to tell which one was the real one.

The vines that'd erupted belonged to the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Though they couldn't bind Emperor Shura for long, they did succeed in hindering his advance. After he struggled free, he was faced with countless mirrored forms of the young lord. Emperor Shura looked agape at the sight before him.

In the next moment, the five emperors reached the stage.

"Daoist Shura, you mustn't be rash!" Emperor Petalpluck called out.

Emperor Peerless, on the other hand, had only a cold eye for Veluriyam's third-in-command. He released his great emperor aura in a show of open opposition.

"I've always heard there was a notable character in Veluriyam Capital called Emperor Shura. I didn't expect someone like that to be you. You disappoint me, Shura." Emperor Peerless sounded positively frosty. "Young lord Zhen isn't even thirty. Fighting with him already puts you in an ignoble position. If you like to fight so much, why not fight with me?"

Emperor Shura's expression was dark, but his heart bled red. He didn't want to accept this outcome! His long-term schemes had utterly failed at the last minute. It couldn't be true! He couldn't bear to think about it. But no matter how arrogant he was in private, he didn't want to risk drawing the collective ire of five great emperors at once.

"Everyone, Daoist Shura must have lost himself in the heat of the moment. Please forgive his unfortunate actions." Emperor Vastsea interjected, having caught up with the group.

Shura's ally was a slippery eel. As soon as he understood the original plan had failed, he immediately switched to seeking a diplomatic conclusion to things. Since Emperors Petalpluck and Mountaincrush had stepped up, they were undoubtedly leaning towards Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

The Shura coalition no longer had any advantage in Veluriyam Capital. Though Emperor Skysplitter had agreed beforehand to support them, Shura Retreat hadn't lived up to any expectations. Losing hadn't been an option, but it had slowly become one over the course of the gauntlet. His absence onstage revealed his attitude perfectly. He wasn't interested in associating himself any further with this mess.

With Emperors Shura and Vastsea alone, the plan was all but sunk. Emperor Vastsea was no fool. He was going to cut his losses when he could.

However, Coiling Dragon wouldn't let up. "Hmph. If we're looking at this from a serious perspective, Shura Retreat has just failed at both usurping the throne and attempted murder. If he behaves like his openly, who knows what he'll be up to behind closed doors?"

Emperor Shura affixed a malevolent glare upon his newest peer. "And what are you going to do about it?"

This exacerbated Emperor Coiling Dragon's displeasure. "You're the one misbehaving and you don't want others to talk about it? Do you want to laugh all of this off? Do you really think that you're invincible in Daoist Peafowl's absence?"

Emperor Shura roared with laughter. "History is written by the winners. What else is there to talk about? Coiling Dragon, you have no room to talk. You're just Sacred Peafowl Mountain's dog. Act like their pet all you like, but I tolerated it for three thousand years. I've waited three millennia for this! And what did I get?! The throne is Emperor Peafowl's to do as he wishes. He doesn't care about what I think. Is Veluriyam Capital always going to belong to Sacred Peafowl Mountain?"

Emperor Vastsea was agitated by this. "Fellow daoist," he urged, "please, say no more. We're all family here. There's no need to get so worked up about internal disagreements."

Emperor Shura slammed Vastsea's arm aside. "I'm not getting worked up at all. Since I lost today, I'm not going to stay here any more. I'm formally announcing my departure from Veluriyam Capital. From today onwards, I will always be an enemy to this city!"

Emperor Vastsea was completely poleaxed. He couldn't begin to imagine the words that had been just uttered. Wasn't he being forced into making a stand? Given their close relationship, there was no way Vastsea could stay after Shura left.

Sneering, Jiang Chen looked intently at Emperor Shura. "Seems that you've found your next home already."

The person whom Emperor Shura hated the most right now wasn't Emperor Peafowl, but Jiang Chen.

"Don't get too full of yourself, kid. Without the four-hour limit on the rounds, your puny methods would've amounted to nothing. I would've kill you like any other common dog." Now that they were officially on bad relations, Emperor Shura had nothing to lose.

Jiang Chen took a deep breath. His face revealed no emotions whatsoever as he gazed at Emperor Shura pensively. "You're right. In fact, if I hadn't been prepared just now, your backstabbing attack would have worked. But that was the last chance you had to kill me. You won't have that opportunity ever again. I have one last question for you: is Emperor Peafowl's disappearance related to you or not?"

Before the emperor had chance to answer, the young lord quickly added, "There's no need to try to cover it up. I have a good hunch even if you deny it outright. This debt will be on your head."

Everyone paled at those words.

Naturally, Emperor Shura was never going to admit to such a thing. "You know where to find me. I'll be waiting anytime," he snorted. "I'm more concerned that you're too scared to come. Still, I'd advise you to refrain from running your mouth about me in the future."

"As I thought," snickered Jiang Chen, "you have the guts to do the deed, but none to admit to it. No wonder Emperor Peafowl always told me that ambition is the only thing you have. What an irresponsible man. Even if you lay low for ten thousand years, you'll remain a rat in the shadows. You won't have the chance to make anything of yourself. If you leave Veluriyam Capital, your next step will no doubt be joining up with some faction. Remember what I'm saying today: at least you were second-best here. Once you leave, you're just someone's dog. That's what you're fit to be, for the rest of your days."

He glanced thoughtfully at the guest area as he said this, and Emperor Pillzenith in particular.

The leader of Pillfire City was quite upset. He hadn't expected Emperor Shura to be so useless. Losing was one thing, but a sneak attack?! Doing so completely ruined any chance of a future here in the city!

Pillzenith had wanted Emperor Shura to stay in Veluriyam Capital as an undercover informant. Unfortunately, that plan had gone down the drain rather quickly.

"Daoist Shura. I suppose this will be the last time I call you 'fellow daoist'." Emperor Void sighed softly. "You've made a grave mistake today. Go, take your followers with you. Leave now. All who remain in the city after three days will be branded traitors!"

"What about you?" Emperor Coiling Dragon glared at Vastsea coldly.

Emperor Vastsea was ashen. All eyes were on him, pressuring him to proclaim his allegiance. At last, he sighed with dejection. "I will go wherever Daoist Shura goes."

Vastsea knew that as the Shura Retreat's vanguard, he had made too many enemies in Veluriyam Capital. It was highly doubtful that he would meet a pleasant end if he didn't abscond when he still could.

Emperor Void saluted Emperor Petalpluck with cupped fist. "Daoist Petalpluck, my faction and I are willing to support young lord Zhen as the future lord of Veluriyam Capital. What say you?"

"As am I and mine," concurred Emperor Coiling Dragon.

"I, too, agree that young lord Zhen is the best choice," remarked Emperor Mountaincrush.

Emperor Petalpluck nodded. "Young lord Zhen is a genius gifted to us by heaven. A blessing not only upon Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but upon our entire city. A brilliant youth like him will surely turn our fortunes for the better, given some time. I would be going against heaven's will by not supporting him."

Four great emperors had made their stances known. Since Shura and Vastsea no longer belonged to Veluriyam Capital, only Emperor Skysplitter remained.

Emperor Void peered at his silent peer nonchalantly. He knew that although Skysplitter had supported Emperor Shura, Skysplitter was fundamentally different from Emperor Vastsea. Perhaps he had only done so out of forced necessity. Someone like him was worth convincing. There was no wisdom in demanding Skysplitter to leave, too. It would be too great of a hit to Veluriyam Capital's overall strength.

Emperor Skysplitter bowed when he saw the rest of the emperors speak. "Since my fellow daoists have all expressed their support for young lord Zhen, how can I not follow your graceful lead? Moreover, I will not toss aside your charitable tolerance so easily."

"Emperor Skysplitter," Jiang Chen cut in. "When Emperor Peafowl and Emperor Shura left the city, I recall you did as well. If I may, did you or did you not participate in Emperor Peafowl's disappearance?"

A flash of dissatisfaction flickered across Emperor Skysplitter's face. However, his expression remained honest and forthright. "I'm not trying to give any excuses here. Still, I feel that someone played me regarding that affair."

"How so?"

“During the period of Emperor Peafowl’s absence,” said Emperor Skysplitter, “I received news that a treasure had appeared very recently somewhere. Of course I went to investigate, but found out in the end that it was fake news. By the time I returned, rumors about Emperor Peafowl’s disappearances had already spread. My guess is that someone planted that piece of news especially for me, forcing my participation in the ensuing matters.”

Although Emperor Skysplitter didn’t directly name Emperor Shura, his meaning was more than clear. He was hinting that the ambitious emperor had fabricated the news, creating the false perception that Skysplitter and Shura were on the same side. All eyes involuntarily focused on Emperor Shura once more.

Chapter 1237: Roping In Peoples Hearts

Emperor Shura smiled apathetically. “The fence-sitter is truly easily swayed. History is written by the victors. Say whatever you want, I’ll not participate in your nonsense.” He brandished his sleeves and headed back to his own camp.

“I am cutting ties with Veluriyam Capital from henceforth! Those who wish to follow me are free to do so. As for those who are unwilling... heh. Let’s just say that Veluriyam Capital will not take your betrayal kindly.” Emperor Shura was extremely persuasive.

The factions directly under Shura Retreat were quick to show their loyalty. “Your Majesty, we shall follow you!”

“We will remain loyal unto death!”

The unwavering loyalists consisted of mostly factions directly under Shura Retreat and a few clans and vassals that had close relationships. The vassals that’d recently been persuaded to side with Emperor Shura were desperately trying to draw a clear line between them and the emperor. They naturally weren’t going to leave.

Emperor Petalpluck frowned when he saw how influential Emperor Shura was. Emperor Coiling Dragon immediately warned Jiang Chen. “Young lord Zhen, Veluriyam Capital will be torn apart if this continues!”

Jiang Chen smiled nonchalantly. “Those who decide to follow him are either loyalists or people who can’t think clearly. Veluriyam Capital has little use for them. I’d rather have them leave.”

Emperor Void nodded in agreement. “Young lord Zhen makes a good point. If their hearts are not with Veluriyam Capital, their departure might actually benefit both sides. It’s a good opportunity for us to clean house.”

Emperor Petalpluck was about to voice his concerns, but ultimately chose not to as Jiang Chen already seemed to have his own plans. In the end, Emperor Shura convinced roughly twenty vassals to leave with him.

While twenty might seem like a lot, but there were a total of nine hundred vassals in Veluriyam Capital. This number wasn’t really something to write home about. But though they’d made their decision to follow Emperor Shura, they were worried that a certain someone wouldn’t let them go.

"I won't stop anyone who wishes to leave with Emperor Shura. However, once you step out of the capital gates, you will be a traitor who has cut all ties with the capital! You are not allowed to use Veluriyam Capital's name from this day forth, nor will you ever be allowed back into these walls!" Jiang Chen announced sternly after a majority of them had made up their minds. "We will also launch a thorough investigation into Emperor Peafowl's disappearance. If we find out that any of you are withholding any information, you'll be marked a public enemy and hunted down!"

Other than Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea, it was unlikely that anyone else would know about the details of Emperor Peafowl's disappearance. Jiang Chen's words instilled some fear into them, but it was too late for any hesitation. They'd always maintained a close relationship with Emperor Shura and were practically sworn to Shura Retreat. There would be no future for them if they stayed at Veluriyam Capital.

Jiang Chen glared menacingly at Emperor Shura. "You may take your people and leave. Mark my words, if I ever find out that you had something to do with Emperor Peafowl's disappearance, you'll not be able to escape my wrath even if you hide nine thousand meters underground."

He spoke with sway and dominance, his influence multitudes greater than Emperor Shura's after he'd gained the public's trust.

Emperor Shura was proud and arrogant, but even he dared not fire anything back. He snickered coldly and gestured. "Let's go!"

Emperor Shura's loyalists followed and disappeared into the horizon in a blink of an eye.

"Young lord Zhen, you're letting them go just like that?" Emperor Coiling Dragon was a little dissatisfied.

Jiang Chen responded with a faint smile. "No matter. One day, I'll make them pay for all that they've done."

He hadn't let them off willingly. It was just that Veluriyam Capital simply couldn't handle any conflict right now. An enormous internal conflict would be detrimental to the well-being of the capital. There'd be a huge price to pay if Emperors Shura and Vastsea joined hands during a brawl.

Even though Emperors Skysplitter, Petalpluck, and Mountaincrush had acknowledged his status as young lord Zhen, it was unknown how much they'd actually contribute to a fight. If they abstained, Sacred Peafowl Mountain would be the only ones to suffer tremendous losses in the fight.

So for sake of the greater good, Jiang Chen had no choice but to be patient. What Veluriyam Capital needed was stability, not slaughter. Moreover, he had no evidence to prove that Emperor Shura was behind Emperor Peafowl's disappearance. He was dead certain that Emperor Shura was guilty, but he couldn't convince the public with only a public interrogation.

The citizens were distraught. In order to calm the vassals and stifle speculations, he had to stabilize the situation first before he could proceed further.

Emperor Petalpluck nodded reassuringly when he saw how Jiang Chen had handled the matter. His opinion of the young lord grew even higher. It wasn't easy for a young man to not be consumed by victory.

Jiang Chen swept a tranquil, yet stern glance at the remaining vassals. "I don't care which faction you used to be with, nor do I care what plans you have in store. Since you've decided to stay, I only wish to remind you that as one of us, you must always focus on the betterment of our capital. I'll not forgive anyone who intends to betray or harm our capital! Our unity and trust in each other is the only reason why we have always been the strongest in the Upper Eight Regions!"

Emperor Petalpluck nodded. "Young lord Zhen has shown great magnanimity and chosen to leave matters in the past. You needn't worry about the consequences for your actions today. Your position will not be threatened if you set your mind on the correct path and show complete loyalty to our capital!"

"That's correct. Dear vassals, you'd best keep these words firmly in mind."

"Understood!" The vassals shouted in response.

Jiang Chen made a sweeping gesture. "It's not everyday that we assemble a Vassal Gathering. Since you've already come all the way the capital, do stay a few more days. I'll personally give some lectures to share some pill dao insights. Also, I've decided to establish a school in the capital to foster and train those highly talented in pill dao. If there are any such geniuses among your children, do consider signing up."

It was only natural to offer a carrot after a smack with the stick. After beating fear into the vassals, it was time to offer some incentives and rope them in. Indeed, everyone was elated to hear this. There was at least one pill dao genius in every vassal household.

"T-that's wonderful! Long live young lord Zhen!"

"As expected of young lord Zhen! From now on, I'll only support the young lord! I'll oppose anyone who tries to oppose him!"

"That's right! Young lord Zhen is truly a capable person. He may be young, but he's contributed so much to our capital already!"

"The pill dao school will be an enduring accomplishment that will benefit thousands of generations! Veluriyam Capital has some pill dao heritage, but there was never a systematic way to pass it down! The pill dao school will surely reignite the capital's passion for pill dao!"

"Mm! This is definitely something to look forward to!" The vassals were all smiles.

Emperor Petalpluck and Emperor Mountaincrush exchanged glances. Their admiration for the young lord was growing by the minute.

"As expected of young lord Zhen! You've gained the loyalty of the vassals just from one simple decision!" Emperor Void praised with a smile.

Emperor Coiling Dragon laughed heartily. "I've said it once and I'll say it again! Young lord Zhen is the bearer of great fortune! Why would Emperor Peafowl make him heir if otherwise?"

"Everyone, I trust that everyone has already seen how great young lord Zhen is in pill dao! I've travelled all over the world and met countless titans of the pill dao world, but I've yet to come across anyone as

talented in pill dao as him! I don't know who's the best pill dao master in the world, but young lord Zhen is definitely the best in my heart!" Emperor Peerless yelled.

"That's right! I can attest to the fact that young lord Zhen is number one in pill dao!" Emperor Coiling Dragon flashed a grin. "When I was still the clan lord of the Coiling Dragon faction, my lifespan had nearly reached its end. Almost everyone was certain of my death, me included. But why didn't I die?"

This was the second time that Emperor Coiling Dragon had brought up the matter. He'd previously only told the story to a small group of people and felt a need to reiterate the story now.

"I wasn't in a position to say this before, but now I can finally let the truth out! That's right, it's all thanks to young lord Zhen! If he hadn't extended my lifespan by a few more years and refined the Pinecrane Pill for me, there'd be no Emperor Coiling Dragon today!"

Emperor Coiling Dragon grew increasingly agitated, and his story was very persuasive since he was telling it himself.

"Remember when faction fought over the Longevity Pill, the pill that can extend lifespans for sage realm cultivators? The Pinecrane Pill can do the same for emperor realm cultivators! I'd like to ask you all, had any of you ever heard of life-extending pills before young lord Zhen appeared on the scene?"

"No!" came the unanimous answer.

"I had, but an increase of three to five years was the limit for these supposed miracle pills. One that could extend life by eight hundred to a thousand years was unheard of in the Divine Abyss continent! This is a milestone for pill dao! I am filled with conviction that young lord Zhen's appearance will cause great changes in pill dao. Veluriyam Capital will certainly be the hub of pill dao for the Upper Eight Regions in the future, a sanctuary for pill dao!"

Emperor Coiling Dragon's words weren't just to boost morale. They were also a pointed jab at Emperor Pillzenith in the guest section.

Chapter 1238: A New Official Works Hard to Show Efficiency

The world of martial dao was a wondrous place. When passion was kindled in people's hearts, they tended to be easily persuaded by others. That didn't mean they were brainless sheep without opinions of their own, but that the world was a place with the strongest at the top. When it came to pill dao, young lord Zhen's exploits over the past few years were nothing less than legendary.

After his exploits were dug up, many noticed that he was already a monument to others, despite his youth. The Longevity Pill and the Pinecrane Pill. These two alone were enough to immortalize his name. Moreover, young lord Zhen had also defeated the 'invincible' Pill King Ji Lan—and more than once, to boot.

Under the people's intentional embellishments, his stories spread in a frenzied wave, his exceptional performance at the Vassal Meeting naturally included. He'd faced Emperor Shura for five rounds and crushed his opponent utterly in pill dao, beast taming, and formations, with a draw in talismans and martial dao.

A decisive score of three wins and two losses against the arrogant Emperor Shura was very impressive indeed. Some said that it was blind luck, that the young lord had looked a bit frayed in the final round. But so what?

Young lord Zhen wasn't even thirty. He'd made a name for himself only in the last decade. It was amazing for a thirty-year-old youth to tie with a three-thousand-year great emperor, no matter how that result had come about. Anyone else in his situation wouldn't have been able to take one hit, much less survive four hours.

There were plenty of young geniuses in Veluriyam Capital, but none of them could say they could weather a punch from Emperor Shura at the peak of his powers. That was too preposterous a statement to make!

But young lord Zhen had accomplished the impossible. More impressively, he had come out unscathed! The battle itself was already legendary. There were plenty of examples on the Divine Abyss Continent of the weak defeating the strong, but doing so with such a large strength differential was absolutely unheard of. Young lord Zhen's achievement was more than stellar.

It would be the talk of the town for the next long while. Storytellers favored tales that bordered on the fabulous.

Even those who didn't like young lord Zhen were forced to admit that if he was allowed enough time to grow, he would rise to truly great heights. Emperor Peafowl had ruled essentially perfectly for the last three millennia, and his chosen successor displayed even greater potential!

Though Emperor Peafowl was no slouch in his youth, neither he nor Emperor Shura were competent enough to achieve the independence that Jiang Chen could boast of. Not all the vassals would turn and worship the young lord immediately, but his incentive provided at least a start.

He firmly believed that once the school was established, the relationship between ruler and vassal would be much improved. The sense of unity with Veluriyam Capital would be greatly enhanced.

It had been many years since Jiang Chen's arrival in the city. He'd pondered all this time why Veluriyam Capital was inferior to Pillfire City in pill dao. Lack of knowledge and resources was the most important reason, but there was another similarly key one—a deficiency with Emperor Peafowl.

In most respects, there was a negligible difference between Pillfire and Veluriyam's rulers. In terms of charisma, Emperor Peafowl could even be hailed the clear victor. The serene ruler of Veluriyam Capital adopted compassion in his rule most of the time. Emperor Pillzenith stood in harsh contrast, acting with ruthless ambition and imperiousness. But the latter's stance was much more effective at consolidating and controlling a faction.

Though Emperor Peafowl cared about his people and ruled wisely, he had certain moral quandaries. He and Emperor Pillzenith were complete opposites in this regard.

The atmosphere that Jiang Chen had experienced upon his visit to Pillfire City was that of absolute internal cohesion. Moreover, the satellite cities around it respected its absolute sovereignty. The system stuck out because of how natural it had been.

Pillfire City was rather attractive because of its advancement in pills. Most factions couldn't resist its allure, much less consider leaving. But Emperor Pillzenith's personal actions on the city's behalf also contributed to this. The foremost goal of Pillfire City has always been to increase its influence.

Emperor Peafowl had no desires to do such a thing with Veluriyam Capital. He had a tremendously large heart to accommodate countless more subjects, but not the nature to conquer them in the first place. Recently, he'd been largely focused on repelling the future demonic invasion. Meanwhile, expanding Pillfire constantly hovered at the front of Emperor Pillzenith's mind. That was the fundamental difference between the two.

From an objective point of view, Emperor Peafowl was the more respectable man. Subordinates, however, often preferred a more authoritarian and ambitious leader. Activities such as the Temple of Cleansing Fire's Bounty Arena were common in Pillfire City. Not so for Veluriyam Capital, at which similar events rarely took place.

Affairs of that variety were exceptionally attractive to the wider public. They created commotion and bustle, drawing experts from all over. Once the population base was there, the place naturally became a hub of activity.

It was precisely this perception that'd led Jiang Chen to institute a pill dao school. It was his first decision as the ruler of Veluriyam Capital. The excitement from the vassals told the young man that his decision was a wise one. Regardless of how much manpower and capital it required, it was a worthwhile investment for the long term.

Emperor Mountaincrush slapped his thigh admiringly. "Your boldness and resolution is remarkable, young lord Zhen, and not unwelcome. You have my unquestioned support! Whether you need men or money, I won't refuse whatever I can provide."

"It's a very charitable gesture," chuckled Emperor Petalpluck. "My faction and I cannot shirk our duties to it."

No one would oppose the foundation of a new pill dao school. Everyone had seen that young lord Zhen and his Sacred Peafowl Mountain were the best at the craft in the entire city. Generosity from the rising star was too benevolent to ignore. They couldn't oppose such unselfish sharing.

Over in the guest area, the Han brothers from the Great Yu Skysword Sect roared with laughter. "Congratulations, young lord Zhen. Congratulations! You turned the tides through your efforts alone, and the dust has finally settled. I think we can all look forward to Veluriyam Capital's bright future ahead. We admire the young lord's mastery over pill dao from the bottom of our hearts. After all, you are our guest pill emperor! We are willing to sponsor part of your pill dao school."

"Young lord Zhen, if we at the Celestial Cicada Court donate as well, will you open enrollment to us?" Su Huanzhen was not to be outdone.

"If I'm to open a pill dao school, it will recruit students from the entire human domain. Of course, we will show preference for our people to a certain extent" Jiang Chen smiled.

Both Su Huanzhen and the Han brothers were pleased by the declaration.

"You're a joy to work with, young lord Zhen. I'm pleased to call us friends," Han Qianzhan affirmed animatedly.

Su Huanzhen maintained her faint smile. "We at the Celestial Cicada Court have ever treated Veluriyam Capital as our own. Alas, your master had far less charisma than you, young lord Zhen."

The female sect head had loved Emperor Peafowl very dearly all those years ago. Unfortunately, much of the blame for a lack of a happy ending was on Veluriyam's usually-wise lord. She was still melancholic about it, though she hadn't allowed it to turn into hatred.

Emperor Pillzenith was in a pickle. If he didn't have other plans in mind, he likely would've left with Emperor Shura. Jiang Chen at least, was quite surprised that the ruler of Pillfire had the heart to stay.

Emperor Pillzenith barked a dry laugh. "I must congratulate you, young lord Zhen. You've done great things at such a young age. I don't think even Emperor Peafowl in his youth surpassed you."

This was excessive praise. Jiang Chen didn't take his words very seriously.

He looked back at Pillzenith, smiling faintly. "I didn't expect Emperor Pillzenith, the lord of Pillfire City, would grace humble Veluriyam Capital with your presence. But since you were invited here by Shura, and Shura no longer resides here in the city... I'm afraid I find no excuse to keep you here any longer."

Everyone found this statement amusing. Young lord Zhen was publicly showing Emperor Pillzenith the door!

Regardless of Emperor Pillzenith's dissimulation, he felt a surge of anger in his heart. What a despicable kid, to have not shown him the proper respect he deserved!

His instincts as a great city's ruler took over at the last second. He maintained a skin-deep smile despite his fury. "I hear that young lord Zhen is planning on founding a pill dao school. We at Pillfire City have some skill in the subject. Perhaps the titans of the north and south can cooperate as allies in this endeavor?"

Cooperate? The audience felt their faces color. Cooperate with Pillfire City? Wasn't that inviting a snake into one's bosom?

"Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City are not well-acquainted," Jiang Chen smiled coolly. "I don't think there's much of a need for us to cooperate. I don't think there's anything worthwhile in that."

If Emperor Pillzenith hadn't been mentally prepared for mockery, he would've coughed up blood on the spot. Judging from his tone, he thinks himself way superior to Pillfire City!

The false smile vanished from the emperor's face. His face became dark. "Young lord Zhen, I can understand your youthful pride. That said, is that disrespect toward Pillfire City I'm hearing in your tone?"

Chapter 1239: Escape

Emperor Pillzenith's tone was unkind. As an overlord of his time, he couldn't bear the spread of news that he'd been humiliated by a young man. It would damage both his dignity and Pillfire City's authority.

Emperor Peerless frowned. "We've given you face already, Pillzenith, not to mention you aren't welcome here in the first place. You're only humiliating yourself further with this nonsense."

While Shura had hated Jiang Chen the most out of those present, Emperor Peerless topped the list for Pillzenith. When his former love rival stood up to defend Jiang Chen, Emperor Pillzenith cackled strangely.

"You again. Do you live your life going backwards, Mo Wushuang? I still remember your pretentious tone when you turned down my offer to join Pillfire City and when you scrabbled against me for a woman. And look at you now, the more pathetic the older you get. How does it feel to be Veluriyam Capital's dog?"

If it'd been in the past, Emperor Peerless would've flown into a rage. But now, the great emperor merely looked back placidly as he responded, "I can only say that you're as naive as ever if you think you can provoke me with such words. We're both several thousand years old already, Pillzenith. I know what you want, where your ambition lies, but you may not know what I want now. We walk different paths. If you're smart, you'll leave and busy yourself with your own things. If you refuse, well, I'm sure the Upper Eight Regions will love to hear about your death in Veluriyam Capital."

Mo Wushuang spoke frostily, his tone tinged threateningly. The grudge between him and Emperor Pillzenith was insurmountable, and he wouldn't mind at all if he killed his rival here and now.

But at the same time, he was aware that his cultivation was still weaker than Emperor Pillzenith's. However, since almost all of Veluriyam Capital's great emperors were gathered at the moment, they might be able to eliminate Emperor Pillzenith if they attacked together. But that was a patently unrealistic daydream.

Emperor Pillzenith laughed heartily. "My death?"

He swept his glance over every great emperor present. "It's not that I'm boasting, but I doubt that the likes of Veluriyam Capital are able to kill me even if Peafowl was around. What do I have to fear from rabble like you lot, even if you come at me together?"

He really wasn't afraid of them. He might not be a match if all of them attacked at once, but he was confident that he could escape their clutches with flair.

Jiang Chen's forehead creased as he responded indifferently, "It sounds like you actually want to give it a try, Pillzenith. Shall I fulfill your wish then?"

The young man then pointed at the arena around them. "I knew that there'd be many complications during the Vassal Meeting, so I purposely set up a sky rank formation beforehand. Since you're so confident, why don't you give it a try?"

What? Emperor Pillzenith lost some of his bravado. A formation? A sky rank formation?

Emperor Pillzenith had witnessed the battle between Jiang Chen and Emperor Shura. Even he had to admit that the brat's foundation in formation dao paralleled the kid's mastery over pill dao. If Jiang Chen really had set up a sky rank formation in this arena, then his safety was precarious to say the least.

The more Emperor Pillzenith thought about it, the less confident he grew. Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City were practically on opposite sides of the Upper Eight Regions, and he was the one on foreign turf. As powerful as he might be, he couldn't truly unleash his full strength here. That was the reason behind 'the strong dragon cannot suppress the local snake'.

At this point, Emperor Pillzenith knew that it was impossible he could somehow get the Pinecrane Pill from Jiang Chen. Not today, at least. Chuckling, the great emperor abruptly vanished into a streak of black light. His voice reverberated in the air. "I won't forget you, young lord Zhen. I'll repay ten times over the matters of today!"

He'd bowed out.

Jiang Chen smiled as he eyed a particular spot in the sky with the God's Eye and Evil Golden Eye. "Why are you running away if you're as bold as you claim, Pillzenith? Cut the ten times, hundred times nonsense. It's not like I haven't been to your Pillfire City. It's no dragon's den or tiger's lair. Cut the boasting and stop talking as if Pillfire City is invincible."

He didn't like shooting his mouth, but this was exactly the kind of moment when it was necessary. Publicly, Emperor Pillzenith was a top rate great emperor as famous as Emperor Peafowl. Not only was he Emperor Peafowl's match in terms of cultivation, status, reputation and authority, he even appeared to be gaining momentum. Jiang Chen had no doubt that a threat from someone like him would leave a black mark on the hearts of Veluriyam Capital's people. As young lord, he had to forcefully and confidently respond to the threat. Young lord Zhen wasn't afraid of Emperor Pillzenith! Therefore, Veluriyam Capital shouldn't be afraid of Pillfire City either, even with Emperor Peafowl absent.

Jiang Chen's handling of the minutiae was very effective. The vassals felt quite vindicated. After all, if Emperor Pillzenith really was as scary as he pretended to be, why had he fled the moment he heard about a sky rank formation? He just wasn't invincible in the end!

Emperor Coiling Dragon chuckled before asking Jiang Chen in hushed tones, "Young lord, did you actually set up a sky rank formation?"

Jiang Chen broke out in laughter. "Of course not."

The setup of a sky rank formation wasn't nearly as easy as he made it out to be. It wasn't something that could be completed in a day, and the amount of spirit stones it would cost was astronomical. He wasn't nearly so rich that he could set up a sky rank formation anytime he wanted to, not to mention that he had better ways to spend his time.

"So, that was just a bluff?" Emperor Mountaincrush rubbed his nose with a wry smile.

"Not really. He's just one man and hasn't reached empyrean realm yet. He's also afraid that all of us will charge forward together. Ambitious folks like him are especially afraid of death, despite the invincible mask they wear." Jiang Chen kept tearing Emperor Pillzenith down so he decrease the shadows and level of wariness in everyone's hearts.

No matter how powerful Emperor Pillzenith was, he was still just a great emperor. He remained vulnerable as long as he hadn't reached empyrean realm. The power gap between Pillzenith and the

great emperors of Veluriyam Capital wasn't completely unbridgeable, either. Even if Pillzenith hadn't fallen for the bluff, Jiang Chen doubted that the great emperor would dare erupt in open hostility.

Veluriyam Capital might have lost Emperor Peafowl, Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea, there were still six great emperors present. If Jiang Chen, deploying strength close to great emperor, the Han brothers from Skysword Sect, Su Huanzhen and Sect Head Xia from Celestial Cicada Court were added to that count, then Emperor Pillzenith would be facing ten great emperors and one pseudo-great emperor. No matter how powerful Pillzenith might be, he wouldn't be able to face everyone on his own. It'd be committing suicide.

The Eternal Celestial Capital emperor chuckled drily when Emperor Pillzenith laughed. "Since the Vassal Meeting is over, I shall be taking my leave, young lord Zhen. Goodbye."

Then, he left without a backwards glance.

The emperor of the Eternal Celestial Capital! Jiang Chen leveled a cool, murderous glare at the departing figure. Neither of them had broken out in open hostilities just yet, but the emperor of the Eternal Celestial Capital had to be aware that young lord Zhen was Jiang Chen at this point.

Earlier, Jiang Chen had been forced to unleash the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice in his duel against Emperor Shura. That was a tremendous hint about his identity. The Eternal Celestial Capital had to have picked up on that. They had an irreconcilable grudge with Jiang Chen and was sure to have made a thorough study of the young man. Even before the Vassal Meeting took place, the Eternal Celestial Capital had already suspected that young lord Zhen was none other than Jiang Chen himself. After the faction leader saw the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice unleashed, he finally knew that their suspicions had been right all along. Assailed with emotions, he'd hoped that Emperor Shura would throw caution to the wind and openly attack Sacred Peafowl Mountain. When both sides were sufficiently injured, he would incite Emperor Pillzenith into eliminating the hidden threat that was young lord Zhen once and for all.

But things hadn't turned out that way. After Emperor Pillzenith escaped with his tail between his legs, the Eternal Celestial Capital emperor feared for his own life. He was weaker than Emperor Pillzenith, and there was nothing he could do if Jiang Chen decided to make use of the collective strength and kill him here and now.

The Eternal Celestial Capital wouldn't even be able to complain if blame for Emperor Peafowl's disappearance was given as the reason. The Upper Eight Regions wasn't a place of reason or sense to begin with. Who would stand up for him if he was killed? The Eternal Celestial Capital was inferior to Veluriyam Capital. The faction would fall into disarray if he died, so what use was any talk of revenge then? There was nothing he could do now but flee. The killing intent in Jiang Chen's eyes lasted only for an instant. Veluriyam Capital was finally safe after Emperor Pillzenith and the Eternal Celestial Capital's departure.

"The Vassal Meeting is concluded. Please return to your accommodations, everyone. Arrangements for the pill dao school must be discussed further before we can proceed, so please gather here tomorrow so we that may take in your suggestions. When it's time, please don't be shy and offer as many helpful suggestions as you can."

The Vassal Meeting was over, but the excitement in Veluriyam Capital hadn't abated. Details of the gathering quickly spread to every corner of Veluriyam Capital. Everyone was taken aback by Emperor Shura's departure, but young lord Zhen's legendary exploits came as an even greater shock.

They were first sad that Emperor Shura was gone, but when the young lord Zhen's miraculous feats were mentioned, the continued presence of the great emperor seemed negligent. Emperor Shura hadn't contributed much to Veluriyam Capital despite living there for several thousand years. On the contrary, young lord Zhen had achieved many great things just a few years after rising to prominence.

Chapter 1240: First, Be Loyal To Young Lord Zhen

Stability had tentatively returned to Veluriyam Capital, and the negative effects of the rumors about Emperor Peafowl's disappearance were brought to a temporary stop. However, there were still some dissenting pessimism inside Veluriyam Capital. The fact remained that Emperor Peafowl had gone missing, and Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea had left Veluriyam Capital. They'd lost three out of eight great emperors in the blink of an eye.

It was no wonder that some people were downcast. However, the melancholy was quickly drowned out by the opinions of the majority.

"So what if we lost Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea? What exactly have they done for us all these years? They were just a waste of air and space!"

"Yeah, Veluriyam Capital will be the same with or without them. Who knows, maybe young lord Zhen can lead us to greater heights now that these troublemakers are gone."

"We should support young lord Zhen. He's a successful and refreshing young man. It would be a true disaster if Veluriyam Capital fell into the hands of someone as selfish as Emperor Shura!"

"True enough, Emperor Shura has neither virtue nor ability. He simply can't rule Veluriyam Capital. Young lord Zhen is definitely the better pick of the two."

"Young lord Zhen is practically perfect aside his martial dao strength, you know? Even Emperor Peafowl isn't necessarily better than young lord Zhen in things other than martial dao. Or maybe his master of talismans is slightly better than young lord Zhen's?"

"It's only natural for the new to replace the old. I think Emperor Peafowl was paving the way for young lord Zhen. That's why he gradually withdrew over the past few years."

"You're probably right. Emperor Peafowl is still powerful, but he hasn't focused his attention on Veluriyam Capital for quite some time. He must be planning to pass power down to young lord Zhen as soon as possible."

"Emperor Peafowl is truly all seeing. I wonder how he managed to raise a genius like young lord Zhen. With him at our helm, Veluriyam Capital's fortunes will hold strong for another ten thousand years, at least!"

At the young lord residence, the eyes and ears of Sacred Peafowl Mountain continuously fed the voices of the people to Jiang Chen's ears.

“Young lord, there are still some who are in doubt regarding your abilities, but the vast majority supports you and believes you can lead them to greater glory.”

“Yes, the dissenting minority is drowned out by the majority.”

The four great monarchs were likely the happiest out of everyone. For one, Sacred Peafowl Mountain had defeated Shura Retreat and solidified its rule in Veluriyam Capital. Secondly, young lord Zhen was easily the equal of a young Emperor Peafowl in both skill and temperament. In fact, the young lord was more decisive and daring when solving matters, so one might say that he was even better. Jiang Chen nodded. “I’d like to hear your thoughts. If anyone has an opinion to offer about the formation of the pill dao academy, please voice them now. We’re all on the same side here. Let’s make sure we’re prepared when we discuss with the vassals later.”

“I have no objections, young lord. A pill dao academy is a good thing that will benefit generations to come. Naturally, I wholeheartedly support its construction. There’s just one thing that I’d like to emphasize. We must ensure that the students we enroll are absolutely supportive of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. They’ll grow up to become the foundation of your rule in the future, so we must ensure that they are loyal to you, young lord.” Cloudsoar Monarch gave his opinion.

Mo Wushuang also nodded. “Cloudsoar is right. You may have proposed the pill dao academy in consideration of Veluriyam Capital’s future, but there’s no harm solidifying your rule over your own subjects. They must learn, even if we brainwash them with this fact, that you’re the lord of Veluriyam Capital and the ruler they are to serve loyally.”

“What do you say, younger sister?” Emperor Peerless asked Huang’er with a smile.

Ever since Huang’er had defeated Li Jiancheng, everyone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain was seeing her in a new light. The fight made them realize that the amiable Miss Huang’er was actually an incredibly skilled cultivator and they respected her even more. Naturally, her opinion was a lot more important than before.

Huang’er smiled. “I agree with you, Brother Mo. Selfish motives aside, there’s definitely a need for young lord Zhen to establish his authority. Otherwise, a second or third Emperor Shura may attempt to challenge our young lord’s rule. We don’t need more than one authority in Veluriyam Capital.”

Jiang Chen laughed. “Won’t that make me a tyrant?”

“Please don’t joke around, young lord. I also think that they’re right,” Plumscore Monarch also expressed herself.

“I agree as well, young lord. Why had Emperor Shura dared challenge us this time? Because Emperor Peafowl gave him too much leeway back in the day. If His Majesty had put a stranglehold on the great emperor from the start, he would’ve never dared rise against us.” Wildfox Monarch added.

“Yes, please think this through, young lord. Everyone in Veluriyam Capital currently holds you up as their ruler. Not even Emperor Petalpluck and Emperor Mountaincrush have any objections. You should seize this golden opportunity to solidify your rule. Once your reputation takes root in everyone’s hearts, no one will be able to rebel against you.” Cloudsoar Monarch advised.

“Don’t worry, Emperor Peafowl entrusted this task to me, so there’s no way I’ll shirk my duties. However, please don’t misinterpret Emperor Peafowl’s intentions. He had a reason for indulging Emperor Shura. That being said, the past is in the past, so we should focus on the present. There are two things we must do for now. One, we need to form the pill dao academy. Two, we need to locate Emperor Peafowl. Though I don’t believe His Majesty is dead, I don’t think Emperor Shura would’ve dared rebel so brazenly if Emperor Peafowl was perfectly unharmed. He may very well have something to do with His Majesty’s disappearance. At the very least, Emperor Pillzenith and the Eternal Celestial Capital’s appearance during the Vassal Meeting was no coincidence.” Jiang Chen spoke frankly since they were all on the same side.

Cloudsoar Monarch’s forehead creased. “Do you mean to say that they’ve ambushed His Majesty?”

“Emperor Peafowl’s cultivation is unparalleled. Shura can’t possibly have the gall to harm His Majesty, right?” Everyone spoke their minds. Although all they thought that Jiang Chen’s suspicion was reasonable, their trust in Emperor Peafowl was so deep that it was almost zealotry. None of them believed that there was anyone who could truly harm Emperor Peafowl.

Jiang Chen sighed quietly. “I sure hope that I’m wrong in this regard. For now, please pay attention to your surroundings and avoid making trips out of the capital as much as you can. I’m worried that Emperor Shura may try something drastic in his desperation.”

“Yes, we should all watch our backs.”

Chronobalance Monarch looked a little puzzled. “Young lord, we had the upper hand back then, haven’t we? Why didn’t we tried to kill Emperor Shura and pull out the thorn in our side once and for all?”

Jiang Chen broke into a smile. “Our advantage wasn’t as great as you think. For example Emperor Pillzenith and the Eternal Celestial Capital may have interfered. Although we had the advantage of numbers, there’s no telling if Emperor Petalpluck and Emperor Mountaincrush would exert themselves to the utmost. It would’ve been a pyrrhic victory even if we won. That’s absolutely something I didn’t want to see. Our enemies would rise against us if we were wounded, and that may even lead to a complete collapse.”

“The young lord’s words make sense. A pyrrhic victory isn’t worth it.” Cloudsoar Monarch nodded.

“Alright, let’s turn our attention back to the academy. Where should it be built? How big should the scale be? Please speak your minds freely, everyone.”

“We should establish the academy in a more prestigious part of Veluriyam Capital. In this subordinate’s eyes, the Luojia Mountain Range is a good location. Large plains can be found at the foot of the mountain, and three rivers converge into a lake. It is a wonderful location with excellent fengshui, and it is very close to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. This makes it convenient for you to keep an eye on the academy, young lord.”

“I suggest that we erect a sculpture of the young lord in the academy. The students should always be reminded that young lord Zhen is the one who founded the academy.”

“You’re right, that’s a good idea.”

“As for the scale, well, it can’t be too small. I suppose we can split construction into several stages. For now, we’ll focus on enrolling the youths of Veluriyam Capital. We can consider pill dao geniuses from the surrounding regions after that.”

“Why must we accept geniuses from other regions?” Plumscore Monarch was a little reluctant.

Jiang Chen replied with a smile. “I suppose you all want an explanation. Very well, let me speak of when I visited Pillfire City. The biggest impression I walked away with was that Pillfire is a lot more active than Veluriyam. This activity is expressed in the exchange of all areas of study. In other words, Pillfire City is better at attracting surrounding experts because they offer a greater degree of freedom and attractive options. Do any of you know why that’s the case?”

“Please enlighten us, young lord.”

“The answer is very simple, really. Pillfire City is simply more open than Veluriyam Capital. True their pill dao foundation is deep, but no one power can grow strong on its own without outside help. That is why Pillfire puts great emphasis in expanding their influence in their territory, stretching out to the mid and southern regions of the Upper Eight Regions. Do any of you know why even areas closer to us prefer Pillfire City instead?”

Jiang Chen’s subordinates fell silent as they considered the young lord’s words. It wasn’t like they’d never thought about this when Emperor Peafowl was still in power. They just hadn’t thought about that deeply until today.

Mo Wushuang also sighed. “As you all know, I loathe Emperor Pillzenith. You might even call him my lifelong enemy. However, even I admit that Pillfire City’s operation methods are quite impressive. The surrounding regions are very loyal to Pillfire not because Emperor Pillzenith is that impressive, but because Pillfire’s fame and foundation are deeply rooted in their hearts.”

“Do you mean that the ultimate objective of our pill dao academy is to attract geniuses from all across the land, young lord? Are we trying to make Veluriyam Capital everyone’s top choice in the Upper Eight Regions, and even the entire human domain?”

“That’s exactly what I’m planning. However, I need everyone’s cooperation to make it come true.” Jiang Chen sighed.