

Three Realms 1271

Chapter 1271: The Seven Star Convergence Talisman

Jiang Chen's words had a significant impact on his audience. It was on the same level as when they'd first known of the Pinecrane Pill, the pill extended the lives of emperors and great emperors. It was an immensely attractive prospect, since everyone had a limitation on their lifespan.

Without understanding the principles of heaven and earth and ascending to empyrean rank, one would still become dust at the end of one's life. Any past heroism and skill would be rendered useless. Therefore, there'd been a great deal of attention on the Pinecrane Pill.

The Emperor Supremacy Pill tugged at the crowd's heartstrings the same way. Great emperors found it exceedingly difficult to take any cultivation steps forward. Wasn't a pill that gave away a free level in light of that too absurd?

"I have another question, young lord Zhen." Emperor Wellspring intoned in a low voice. "The Emperor Supremacy Pill can help an initial great emperor ascend to mid great emperor very quickly, yes?"

"Yes." Jiang Chen nodded with certainty. He'd already guessed what they wanted to ask.

"Then, does it have an effect on people like us? If we're on the boundary of supreme and peak great emperor?" The emperor asked.

"Sure, though the degree of the effect is reduced somewhat. If a supreme great emperor were to take a thousand years to reach peak great emperor realm, perhaps they would need only three or six hundred instead. It depends on one's foundations, and there's a bit of luck involved as well, so there's some variation in the reduction of time needed. However, it'd be halving the time on average." Jiang Chen's explanation was rather objective, but his words sounded sweeter than an empyrean lyre.

"Inconceivable, simply inconceivable! Can there be a pill like that beneath the heavens? We are all well-dwelling frogs after all. How much heritage did the ancients leave us? And now, less than a hundredth remains. It's a shame for all human cultivators everywhere!" Emperor Wellspring was a bit overexcited.

Han Qianzhan and Su Huanzhen couldn't speak. They looked at Jiang Chen with deep uncertainty. They had no words to describe the extent of his bizarre abilities.

Master Dong Ye struggled to form a coherent sentence. Jiang Chen's revelation stunned him; he wanted to refute the youth's claim, but didn't have the sufficient pill dao knowledge to do so. A genius that had the Pinecrane Pill in his possession wasn't someone he had the right to question, anyway.

"Young lord Zhen. If the Heavencloud Ganoderma really can refine a pill like that, it can definitely be considered a third place supreme rank treasure. But actually, isn't it worthy of first place?" The mistress of the Celestial Cicada Court suddenly piped up.

"Not so." Jiang Chen shook his head. "First, the Ganoderma isn't quite mature enough. Given its present age and spirit energy within, we can make two Emperor Supremacy Pills from it at most, and the pills would be mediocre quality to boot. More importantly, there's a very real risk for failure in the attempt to do so."

He'd carefully compared the three supreme rank treasures. If the Heavencloud Ganoderma exceeded three thousand years, it was definitely possible to make three to six Emperor Supremacy Pills of very high quality out of it. Furthermore, his chance of being able to do so was almost certain. The Ganoderma would then be worthy of second place, past the talisman.

As for the jade token, the young man felt that to be first place regardless. It contained a cultivation technique and could therefore be passed on perpetually.

"Alright, I concede the point." Emperor Wellspring smiled. "What about the second-place talisman, young lord Zhen? What are its origins, and what can it do?"

"This is a talisman from ancient times. If I'm correct, it's a defensive talisman of sorts. It can shield its holder from attacks of various attributes: metal, wood, water, fire, earth, wind, and lightning. Take a look! There are seven runes upon the talisman, which means it can be used to defend against seven attacks. It's a treasure almost perfect at accomplishing its primary purpose. The defense it erects is immensely powerful. It would be hard for even you, our honored guests, to break."

"What?" Everyone was stupefied once more.

"That's right." Jiang Chen nodded confidently. "Many large sects refined such talismans in ancient times for their best geniuses. Battles back then were significantly more dangerous than nowadays. There were no barriers between the races either. Anyone from any race could freely enter and exit the other races' domains. There was no such thing as a Boundary Stele. The war between the races was brutal, direct, and cruel. These talismans were extremely valuable to the geniuses for whom they were made."

"Oh, only the strongest factions could afford talismans like this, of course," the young man added. "The smaller ones couldn't really sustain the cost."

"Ah, young lord Zhen is as good as an encyclopedia. Are you a master of ancient matters too? What was the talisman called back then, if I may ask?"

"The Seven Star Convergence Talisman." Jiang Chen's answer was clean and crisp.

By now, even Master Dong Ye's remaining hint of disapproval was entirely gone. The young lord had won him over. Regardless of whether the young man said was fact or not, he was clearly drawing his words from a source. He certainly didn't seem to be making things up on the spot. "This monk yields to your wisdom, young lord Zhen."

"We yield." The audience nodded in concurrence with the Buddhist master.

"Hahaha, we've only been paying attention to the three supreme rank treasures. We need to identify the first grade treasures too, yes? The crowd won't be convinced otherwise." Han Qianzhan laughed.

The audience nodded a second time. They'd been fixated only on the supreme rank treasures too. The first and second grade treasures still needed description and justification. Since this was a treasure identification segment, all the better treasures needed at least a passing diagnosis. At minimum it had to be enough to sate their owners' curiosities.

There was no contest about the qualities of the first and second grade treasures whatsoever. The five judges completed their identification duties effortlessly through smooth cooperation, finishing after

about four hours from event start. The wandering cultivators were all shifting restlessly after the prolonged process.

The dignitaries in the guest area were also eagerly anticipating the results since the judges were taking a long time to reemerge. There were guesses all over that there had been one or multiple amazing discoveries.

Amidst the speculation, Jiang Chen and company finally came out of the identification area. Millions of eyes focused simultaneously upon them in the next instant. The audience's faces were rapt with anticipation and inquiry.

A serene smile hung perpetually upon Jiang Chen's face. The other four were excited, shocked, and overjoyed to varying degrees. Their expressions were all generally a bit exaggerated.

"Can it be? Has some incredible treasure really been discovered?" The heavyweights seated in the guest area were enticed by the possibility – a very real one, judging from the faces of the judges.

Many had come for the Dragon and Tiger Meet in order to get a more thorough understanding of Veluriyam Capital's strength. They wanted to see whether young lord Zhen was as monstrous as the rumors made him out to be. The treasure identification segment alone was enough to titillate them. Their attentions had been unknowingly drawn back to the Meet itself.

Facing his audience's expectant looks head on, Jiang Chen laughed. "Thank you for your passionate support. The four seniors and I took a long time perusing and classifying all your treasures, but we've finally come to consensus on everything given to us. Unfortunately, the fourth and fifth grade treasures will be returned directly to their owners. We gave a rather basic result for the third grade treasures, going into a bit more detail for the second grade ones. The first grade treasures we received are very seriously expounded upon.

"However, what really surprised us was that there were three treasures surpassing the first grade classification. We couldn't let an injustice stand, so we temporarily came up with an additional supreme rank rating. The three treasures in this grade thoroughly surpass each and every first grade treasure. I must congratulate the three lucky owners ahead of time. Anyone with just one of these treasures sits on a king's ransom!"

Like a match to kindling, Jiang Chen's speech set the crowd aflame. There were supreme rank treasures above first grade ones? This surpassed everyone's expectations. The million plus wandering cultivators boiled over with shock and conversation.

The wandering cultivator world leaned on the poorer side. Most wandering cultivators were poor as a rule. What little they did have amounted to nothing before the wealth of a sect.

It was rare for a wandering cultivator to have anything good at all. Thus, everyone had thought that finding a few first grade treasures would be the most that would happen. Supreme rank treasures? What were those?

"Calm yourselves, everyone." Jiang Chen pressed both hands downward. "I understand your excitement. Your rush to know what the three supreme rank treasures are is understandable. Alas, we must withhold their announcement temporarily. The fifth, fourth, and third grade treasures will be listed first

to offer some preliminary information. Nothing listed among these three grades is particularly valuable. Third grade treasures are acceptable, but we must apologize in advance for owners of lower grade treasures. After that, we will come to the second and first grade treasures.”

The wandering cultivators gradually quieted down. After hearing the astonishing news, they became even more apprehensive about what was to come. What kind of treasure was worthy of the supreme rank moniker?

“Before I proceed to the results, I must emphasize the following once more. Protecting your privacy is our utmost concern. No news of the owners’ identities will leak out. If anyone is concerned still, valuable treasures may be submitted to us for auction or transaction immediately afterward.”

This was a necessary assertion. Treasure identification was only the Meet’s first segment. There were many more to come, all designed to reap a bounty of reputation and goodwill on Veluriyam Capital’s behalf.

Chapter 1272: Open Display of Treasures

This was Jiang Chen’s foremost goal for the Dragon and Tiger Meet. He wanted to build up interest in Veluriyam Capital as well as increase the Meet’s attractiveness and influence in the process. How, exactly? Through the contents of the gathering, of course. Sifting treasure from trash was a great segment.

Curiosity was one of the most abundant emotions in the world of martial dao. The pursuit of treasure was one of the strongest desires that martial cultivators could harbor.

“We all trust you, young lord Zhen. Announce the results!”

“Who can dispute your integrity, young lord Zhen?”

“Veluriyam Capital is a gold standard. If we didn’t have faith in it, we wouldn’t have come here.” The wandering cultivators below all started shouting. They were chomping at their bits with impatience.

Jiang Chen smiled cheerfully back at them. “It’s hard to show three thousand treasures one by one. We’ll put all the fifth grade treasures together. If it belongs to you, you’ll be able to easily feel it. The same will be done for the fourth grade treasures.

“There’ll be simple explanations for third grade treasures. We’ll do fifteen waves of ten. You’ll see pretty clearly if your treasure is among these. Much more weight will be given to the second and first grade treasures. Oh, and the supreme ones too. There are fifty-two second grade treasures here with us, which isn’t a small number.

“As for first grade treasures, we have twenty-one of them. A little surprising to be sure, but not unwelcome. The three supreme rank treasures, on the other hand, are truly lucky finds. We will introduce second grade treasures and above one by one, which should make it even more evident where your treasure lies... in both senses of the word.”

Jiang Chen went on with his exposition. “Alright, it’s time to show which treasures are fifth and fourth grade. This’ll be very quick, so keep your eyes sharp. Well, I suppose it’s fine even if you miss it. If your treasure isn’t in any of the higher grades, then it must have been fourth or fifth, right?”

There were loud guffaws from the wandering cultivators all around. The interest of the giants in the guest area had been piqued as well. Three supreme rank treasures? This was a tremendous source of attraction for them.

“Third Sectmaster, how come it feels like those four seniors are all willing to let young lord Zhen have the spotlight?” Over at the Moon God Sect, Holy Maiden Xu Shan couldn’t help but ask her master.

The third sect head looked thoughtful. “Xu Shan, the main sect head allowed me to bring you here to fulfill your wish. You shouldn’t sink deeper into an unrealistic daydream.”

Xu Shan’s face reddened. “Please don’t make fun of me, master.”

“I’m not making fun of you. I’m just worried that you’ll chase after a waterside reflection and waste your Reverse Yin Yang Bloodline.”

The girl sighed softly but uttered no reply. She felt something inexplicable in her heart. She’d been telling herself all this time that she cared about young lord Zhen’s affairs because she was grateful to him. That was the only reason, and nothing else.

But was that really true? That was something she often asked herself, late at night. She didn’t dare ponder it further though. Fear and indecision plagued her heart whenever she tried.

The representative from the Ninesuns Sky Sect had feelings that were just as mixed about the animated young lord on stage. “We should be thankful that our grudge isn’t too serious with that young man,” he sighed internally. “Though we’re eating a loss by pursuing diplomacy, it may be a blessing for us. A legendary youth like him will unquestionably take the entire human domain by storm when he grows up. A hundred thousand years might go by without a character such as him being born. It would be exceedingly unwise for us to maintain hostilities, given everything we’ve seen. And will see, I’ll bet.”

Thinking this, he looked around the guest area. Out of the eight first grade sects, Eternal Celestial Capital was the only one absent. What did that signify?

Young lord Zhen was baring his fangs. He had fully broken with Eternal Celestial Capital, exiling its entire entourage from the city.

The twelfth grade inspector from the Ninesuns Sky Sect, Shangguan Yanqing, was honestly relieved. “When I go back,” he decided, “I have to strongly urge the sect head to reprimand any would-be troublemakers against the young lord here. The venerated elder Chen Lei especially. I know he was Cao Jing’s master, but it would be absolutely unwise. Angering Veluriyam’s new leader will only lead the Ninesuns Sky Sect to certain destruction.”

A strong feeling about the veracity of that last sentiment intensified in his heart. Shangguan Yanqing’s opinion of the youth rose higher and higher.

The Empyrean River Palace’s representative was both envious and annoyed at young lord Zhen’s popularity. Amongst the eight first grade sects, it was the only one that was absolutely intimate with Pillfire City. In fact, it wasn’t entirely wrong to call it a subordinate faction.

The Palace was the weakest amongst its peers. In a sense, it was a faction that had been forcibly elevated to its current position through Pillfire City's efforts alone. Therefore, its loyalty to its superior city was unshakable.

Thus, young lord Zhen's tremendous gain in publicity greatly bothered the Empyrean River Palace's representative. The Dragon and Tiger Meet was attracting more and more people and activity! Alas, he had to keep his negativity all to himself.

Four out of six wandering cultivator titans had appeared at the Meet. There were another additional twenty to thirty wandering cultivator great emperors in general. These were definitely much larger numbers than Pillfire City's Pill-Martial Summit! This fact brought deep shame to the established pill superpower.

Before now, Veluriyam Capital's influence couldn't even begin to compare to Pillfire City's. It was also supposed to be worse without Emperor Peafowl. And yet, young lord Zhen had caused such a large ruckus that Pillfire City was being overwhelmed.

The Heavenly Dragon Sect's representative was stoic throughout. He seemed to look at the stage with the attitude of a cold-eyed observer. The sect prided itself upon its purity of bloodline, and maintained a front of aloofness everywhere. Its members trusted in the strength of their blood alone. External treasures interested them very little.

That was how they presented themselves to the outside world anyways. No sect or faction could ever be indifferent toward truly priceless treasures. That rang as true for the Heavenly Dragon Sect as it did for everyone else.

The fifth and fourth grade treasures were presented very swiftly.

"For the sake of privacy, we will return all your treasures according to your registrations," said Jiang Chen. "No need to panic or rush. Next, the third grade treasures."

The third grade treasures were a bit weightier. Well, for the wandering cultivators that owned them.

The treasures were rapidly displayed in batches of ten. Some were pleased with their treasure being classified as third grade, while others were the opposite. After the entire grade finished, the wandering cultivators that hadn't had their treasures displayed yet became inwardly ecstatic. If their treasure hadn't showed up yet, that meant that it was at least second grade, perhaps higher!

A few began to anticipate a first grade announcement. Supreme rank wasn't out of the realm of possibility, either!

Most wandering cultivators didn't excel at cultivation and lacked even a rudimentary ability to identify their treasures. They usually weren't brave enough to venture using an identification service either, lest they lose their life. Most didn't have a clue how good their own treasures were. They suffered in ambiguity and ignorance, having little recourse otherwise.

Second grade treasures numbered fifty-two in total. Each announced treasure was accompanied with a reasonably detailed description of its effects, explaining to the audience why it was second grade.

After some time spent reciting the list, the second grade treasures came to an end as well.

“A round of compliments to the owners of second grade treasures. They’re certainly worth more than a pretty stone. I must offer even greater congratulations to the owners of the treasures to come. Each and every one of the following treasures has tremendous value. Anyone who owns one should consider himself lucky!”

The cultivators who hadn’t seen their treasures on display yet were elated. They made sure to keep their expressions as blank as possible though. They were understandably concerned that unwanted attention from nearby onlookers would put them into danger. No matter how much their hearts burst with joy, they had to feign nonchalance. Thankfully, this amount of self-restraint came to cultivators naturally, whether they were wandering cultivators or not.

“Next, we will present the twenty-one first grade treasures. Each treasure may be considered equivalent to sky rank and holds enormous monetary worth.

“Number one, the Violetcloud Windcloak. Its wearer enjoys a speed increase of sixty to seventy percent. Astute usage allows doubling of speed. More than sufficient to enjoy a first grade classification.

“Number two, redsage gold. A precious metal used in refining other treasures...

“Number three...”

Jiang Chen went into excruciating detail about each and every treasure’s origins, usage, and name. His explanations sounded well-researched, reasonable, and convincing.

The treasure owners were euphoric with each word they heard. Some were secretly relieved that they hadn’t just thoughtlessly parted with their treasure beforehand. If they had, they would’ve lost out big time. They were grateful for coming to Veluriyam Capital. For coming to the Dragon and Tiger Meet. And, of course, for the smart and charitable young lord Zhen. Their goodwill toward the youth and his city shot way up.

Even the wandering cultivators that hadn’t submitted any treasures felt educated by the proceedings. They’d learned something today, and that was more than worth their while.

Jiang Chen was patient with all twenty-one treasures, showing them all off to the crowd to see.

“As you’ve seen, all twenty-one of the first grade treasures have been displayed. Again, congratulations to the lucky owners. Oh, and one more thing to put your minds at ease: we five judges came to a consensus about all of the treasures just now. You have our assurance that the identification is completely accurate.” The youth’s last statement stroked the already-excited treasure owners to new heights.

Chapter 1273: Shock, Utter Shock!

The first grade treasures having been shown, there were only the three supreme rank treasures remaining. They were the crowning jewels of this segment and their display was of paramount importance.

“I’m sure the last three treasures are also the most eye-catching ones.” Veluriyam Capital’s young lord smiled. “I’d like to offer my formal congratulations to their respective owners. In my opinion, any one of these three far surpasses any first grade treasure in value!

“Of course, I think it’s natural that we didn’t quite come to a complete consensus regarding the treasures. I’ll go into the details now.” He explained the differences between Master Dong Ye’s opinion and his own. The two had agreed upon this beforehand. The public had a right to know.

“Master Dong Ye, please go ahead. You deserve equal time out of fairness.” Jiang Chen wasn’t at all dictatorial, instead deferring to the Buddhist monk.

The master was the most junior amongst the four guests. He found it inappropriate to open his mouth just yet, glancing toward his three more senior peers. As the oldest, Emperor Wellspring was the first to speak up.

“As the one with the thickest skin here, allow me to step up first,” he laughed. “I know that all three of these are superb treasures, but young lord Zhen was the one who told me exactly why for each. I trust his wisdom and honesty. That’s all.”

Han Qianzhan nodded. “I concur with every point.

Su Huanzhen smiled as well. “I have faith in the keenness of the young lord’s eye.”

It was Master Dong Ye’s turn. He let out a soft sigh first. “The other three fellow daoists have the gist of it. I trust young lord Zhen’s ability and judgment as well. I don’t contest the second place treasure’s position, and I’ve been enlightened as to why third place is so valuable. As for first place... I have absolutely no idea, so I must reserve any decision on it. However, young lord Zhen has already said that he’ll shoulder any associated responsibility. If there’s any fault in his identification, he is willing to personally purchase it for the price that a treasure with equal valuation would fetch.”

Master Dong Ye was an honest man and disclosed everything about their discussion prior.

“Just as Master Dong Ye has said,” Jiang Chen smiled. “It’s normal for there to be debate about supreme rank treasures. To demonstrate the resolution behind my judgment, I’ll be responsible for any problem that arises as a result of possible misidentification. I’m willing to buy or trade for all three of these treasures for a equivalent price. Before we come to that, let’s get into what the three treasures actually are.”

There was very little doubt that young lord Zhen knew his stuff. Emperor Wellspring, Han Qianzhan, and Su Huanzhen were all prominent individuals who supported his conclusion. In light of that, there should be no issue whatsoever with the veracity of his claims. Though Master Dong Ye was verbally stubborn, his clueless but approving attitude was evident to his listeners nevertheless.

“We trust you, young lord Zhen. Show us the treasures!”

“Yeah, you’ve tantalized us long enough!”

“I can’t believe that a wandering cultivator would have a supreme rank treasure. I’d really like to see what it is!”

“Isn’t that right? Show them to us, quick! Maybe I’ll have a treasure just like it, ahahaha!”

The last comment wasn’t entirely baseless. Only a portion of the attendees had submitted their unknown treasures for identification. There were many left over who either hadn’t managed to register or were simply unwilling.

Because the latter group was tremendously large, there was no question that a few more existed who carried priceless things.

Some of the guests were just as fascinated as the wandering cultivators. The three treasures were sure to be incomparably expensive and valuable. There was no reason for young lord Zhen to hype them up so much otherwise.

The first grade treasures were already exciting enough. How much better would the supreme rank ones be? Absolutely everyone craned their necks in anticipation.

“Supreme rank treasure, third place. This is a sky rank spirit herb called the Heavencloud Ganoderma. It’s unique among other spirit herbs of its rank for being the main material to a pill called the Emperor Supremacy Pill. What is the Emperor Supremacy Pill, you might ask? A pill that allows great emperors to ascend one level for free and therefore possesses value beyond compare. Unfortunately, the Ganoderma isn’t quite mature enough, so it’s slightly lacking in terms of quality. The likelihood of successfully refining it into pills is much lower, and only two pills can come from it at most.” Jiang Chen brandished the spirit herb in question to the crowd.

The owner of the Ganoderma felt his body shiver helplessly. He was an earth sage realm cultivator, having obtained the herb purely out of happenstance. It had been with him for several decades now.

He hadn’t been blind to the possibility that it was a sky rank spirit herb – or failing that, an earth rank spirit herb at least. Originally, he’d even planned to get it identified after reaching emperor realm. He’d only come to the Dragon and Tiger Meet after hearing about a treasure identification segment. He hadn’t expected to receive such an amazing surprise gift out of it! His herb wasn’t just any sky rank spirit herb, but many times pricier besides!

Smiling, Jiang Chen showed the Heavencloud Ganoderma all around the square. “As a baseline, the Ganoderma should be three to five times the price of a regular sky rank spirit herb. With a needy buyer, it is reasonable to hypothesize that six or seven times is entirely reasonable, too. Therefore, I offer a toast to the spirit herb’s owner. You have riches rivaling many great emperors.”

In the cultivation world, sky rank spirit herbs held inestimable value. Even great emperor realm experts didn’t necessarily have a large supply of them. Possessing just a few was already remarkable enough.

The price of the Heavencloud Ganoderma rivaled five normal sky rank spirit herbs, giving credence to Jiang Chen’s comment. The crowd boiled over in wonder and praise.

Similarly, the guest area mirrored Emperor Wellspring and Master Dong Ye’s astonishment in their reactions. They’d never heard of the Emperor Supremacy Pill before. Did such a miraculous pill really exist?

Jiang Chen had no intention whatsoever of explaining the finer points of the Emperor Supremacy Pill. Master Dong Ye, Emperor Wellspring, and the others would spread the information for him naturally. He didn’t need to spill all the beans outright.

After brandishing it once more around his audience, Jiang Chen picked up the Seven Star Convergence Talisman.

“Second place for supreme rank treasures belongs to this talisman. This is a treasure passed down from ancient times, one of the best defensive charms available only for the most well-off. This is the Seven Star Convergence Talisman, and it has seven runes to protect against the seven attributes of metal, wood, water, fire, earth, wind, and lightning. An all-around superb shield, reliable against even the strongest great emperor.”

Jiang Chen held the talisman aloft. “A toast to the cultivator who owns this talisman, please! Your treasure is even more valuable than the Heavencloud Ganoderma. If you’re a strong cultivator, I advise you to keep it for yourself. If you are a cultivator below emperor realm, I recommend trading away or selling it instead. The amount of resources you’ll receive in exchange will easily bolster your progress into emperor realm – perhaps even great emperor as well.”

Helpful as always, the young lord gave an overview of what the Seven Star Convergence Talisman was roughly worth. The owner of the talisman was a wandering cultivator as well, but emperor realm. His face was completely emotionless at hearing Jiang Chen’s breakdown, but his heart was leaping with joy.

He was unquestionably one of the luckiest participants of the event. Just like the owner of the Ganoderma, he knew the talisman was pretty useful, but had no idea whatsoever as to the extent of the item’s value. He had attempted to get it identified several times, resulting in failure every time. He didn’t expect for Veluriyam’s young lord Zhen to be the one to succeed! And it was such a potent treasure, to boot. What a haul!

Waves of astonishment, admiration, and jealousy rippled through the crowd. Some were quite envious of the results being pronounced, and others very regretful that they hadn’t entered this segment.

Meanwhile, the heavyweights in the guest area were all looking at the talisman covetously. This was a treasure! If in their hands, it would be a life-saving treasure! It would gift them two lives in a fight against an expert.

What a pity that Veluriyam Capital was so principled and refused to announce the owner of this talisman. Wouldn’t it be nice if they could get their hands on it?

The ordinary guests aside, even Han Qianzhan and Su Huanzhen had been enticed by such thoughts, however fleetingly. The same was true for a man as composed as Emperor Wellspring.

After everyone had finished taking in the weight of the talisman, Jiang Chen finally put it down, smiling. “I’m sure the last treasure is the one that you’re all looking forward to the most.”

He raised the first-place jade slip high into the air. “This jade slip contains an ancient heritage. The text contained within is an immensely powerful cultivation method, recorded in prehistoric writing. Its worth dwarfs the current first grade sects’ signature methods!

“There is one small flaw, however. How exactly prehistoric writing is deciphered has been lost to time. The owner will find that decoding the jade slip is essentially impossible.” The young man smiled crookedly. “If efforts to interpret the jade slip are unsuccessful, the owner is welcome to flip the treasure to me. I’ll trade for or purchase it for an appropriate price. Of course, you are welcome to try using it yourself. I won’t force your hand or reveal your secret.”

Jiang Chen wasn't interested in sinister plotting. He had a surfeit of valuable methods. In general, he had a much bigger need for resources. He carried plenty of methods within his brain and could produce a large batch on demand.

The method in the jade slip was somewhat exceptional in certain ways, however. The jade slip and the method formed a harmonious whole, meaning that the value of the whole was more than the sum of its parts. He wasn't in a position to declare any of this though. For the sake of fairness, he had to disclose the jade slip's true value.

His words caused mass confusion through the entire audience, the heavyweights in the guest section included. An ancient method? More powerful than current first grade sects' signature methods? That was too absurd for description!

Chapter 1274: The Uproar Caused By the Jade Token

Jiang Chen's words were exceedingly inflammatory and lit the atmosphere on fire. A signature method that surpassed even that of a first rank sect's! This would absolutely cause a furious storm of blood and gore if word got out.

The lucky owner had a completely blank mind at the moment. He'd never thought that a random jade token, one in which he'd thought was trash, would have this kind of value! He almost fainted dead away. Managing to stay on his feet, he flushed beet red instead. This bizarre reaction drew the attention of the wandering cultivators around him.

One of the cultivators next to him couldn't resist. "Old Tan, what's with you?"

Many knew the lucky owner. He was Tan Zhi, a wandering cultivator who'd grown in prominence in recent years. He was only half step emperor realm, but that actually placed him amongst the upper echelon of wandering cultivators. However, his cultivation level was still wholly unfit for this treasure.

"Old Tan, look at how worked up you are! Is that token yours?"

"N-no... it's not mine." Tan Zhi denied with a reddened face.

"Hahaha, come off of it. Look at how nervous you are, you're definitely guilty!"

"Tan Zhi, not bad huh! You stuck with a damn low profile and kept this treasure to yourself!" The other wandering cultivators around them started up good-natured jibing. Everyone who knew Tan Zhi raised their voices in loud comments and jokes, craving nothing short of the good show of complete chaos.

Jiang Chen didn't pay attention to the limited area of disturbance and continued. "We'd previously said that the transaction of the Seven Star Convergence Talisman would enable its owner to ascend to the emperor realm. Well, if whoever possesses the token uses it well, he can absolutely use it to found a new sect or faction. The fortunes he possesses isn't limited to just him alone. Immense congratulations to its holder!"

The cultivators around Tan Zhi were becoming rowdier and rowdier.

"Tan Zhi, just admit it! It's yours isn't it!"

“Why would you be so worked up if it's not yours? Hahaha, Tan Zhi you showed yourself up!”

“Tan Zhi, let's make a deal. Give me the token. The price is totally negotiable.”

The disturbance started growing in scale as the knot of wandering cultivators grew increasingly forceful, sending more eyeballs Tan Zhi's way. Everyone in the area now had heard that the owner of the talisman had been revealed and all wanted to see just who the lucky bastard was.

The wandering cultivator in question had frozen where he was. The overwhelming clamor around him was drowning him and his brain was seizing up. He flailed valiantly to save himself. “Everyone, please don't pressure me like this. This token has nothing to do with me. You're putting my life in danger like this!”

“Heh heh, alright. Are you prepared to swear that it's not yours? If you dare, we'll believe you. If you don't dare to, then it's obviously yours.”

“Yeah Tan Zhi, finders keepers. Don't forget us old friends now that you've made it rich!”

“That's right, Tan Zhi, that's how it should be!”

The intrusion spread and grew, reaching the stage. Jiang Chen frowned and called upon his dragon roar art. “Order!”

The art thundered through the wandering cultivators, making their blood forth and boil. Stunned senseless, they looked fearfully at the young lord on the stage.

“For what do you make disorder for?” Jiang Chen snorted coldly. “My Veluriyam Capital is holding the Dragon and Tiger Meet and is honored by the presence of all of these honored guests. Yet there you are, creating a ruckus. Are you purposefully trying to disturb the proceedings?”

“Not at all, we wouldn't dare!”

“Please quell your anger, young lord Zhen. We're agitated because we think that we've found the owner of the jade token.”

“That's right, young lord Zhen! Please don't be angry. We didn't mean to give offense.” The wandering cultivators were worried they'd be thrown out after angering the young lord. They quickly hunkered down on themselves, presenting a small and inoffensive front.

“Blasphemy! We've kept the owner of the token completely confidential, how would their name link? Don't you try to sway the crowd with your heresy!” Jiang Chen was quite displeased.

“It's not a speculation, young lord Zhen. He... he revealed it himself.” Everyone's eyes shot towards Tan Zhi.

Tan Zhi had recovered by now and raised a cupped fist salute to the stage. “Young lord Zhen, please look into this deeply. These fellows are slandering me and dumped this on me.”

Jiang Chen nodded. “All of you, don't guess randomly like this. This has to do with someone's life and shouldn't be treated frivolously.”

“But we're not making things up, we have a real basis for what we say! He doesn't dare swear an oath and he was very worked up just now when you said the token was better than the signature move of a first rank sect.”

“Yeah, he did it himself. It's nothing to do with us!” The wandering cultivators were all wily fellows and completely shifted the blame away from themselves.

Tan Zhi had an exceedingly ugly expression on his face. As he noted the countless gazes locked onto him, he knew that he'd never be able to wash himself clean of this, no matter what he did.

The world of wandering cultivators was an exceedingly cruel one. Even if he really wasn't the owner of the token, he would be the target of many once he left the gathering. He suddenly felt an upwelling of harsh ruefulness. He truly regretted that one moment of emotional outburst. Just a single moment had been enough to out him.

With the situation now, all of his protestations were useless. When it came to the experts, they'd rather kill a thousand in error than let one target off the hook. Tan Zhi suddenly made up his mind and called out loudly, “Young lord Zhen, this jade token's mine!”

He actually leapt out of the crowd with his declaration. He knew that he'd been exposed and that there was no further use in hiding. He'd be targeted no matter what.

Jiang Chen blinked and then frowned. “Don't worry, I'll have my men escort you out later. Change your name and identity after you leave.” He too could tell that this wandering cultivator was likely the token's owner.

Tan Zhi smiled wryly, an utterly bleak look in his eyes. He shook his head. “Young lord Zhen, I've heard much about your person. I travelled all the way to Veluriyam Capital this time also because I admire your reputation. Even if I do change my name and identity, I still won't be able to vie with all of the wandering cultivators in the world. Therefore, I have a favor to ask.”

Jiang Chen was moved by this response. “Please, go ahead.” For some inexplicable reason, the young lord empathized with the wandering cultivator's circumstances. There's something about his tone and eyes...

“I'm not afraid, but there is still much I can do and so my journey can't end here. Therefore, I'm willing to offer this token to the young lord in return for protection and the teachings of what's within.”

The crowd burst into a clamorous uproar at this. This was wholly unexpected even for Jiang Chen. But upon more careful thought, this was indeed the smartest decision that Tan Zhi could make now.

If the wandering cultivator left under these circumstances, he'd be doing so with a bright-red bullseye painted on his back. Throwing himself on the mercy of Veluriyam Capital was actually a very smart decision. It would ensure his own safety and make certain that he'd learn whatever's inside.

As Jiang Chen pondered, someone called out from the guest area. “Young lord Zhen, how about giving him to my Heavenly Dragon Sect if you don't take him in?”

“Haha, if he's being given away to anyone, it'd be our Great Yu Skysword Sect first! When would it be your turn first?” Han Qianzhan laughed loudly next to Jiang Chen.

“Friend, the Empyrean River Palace is willing to give you an elder seat,” came a stunning pronouncement.

“Tan Zhi, consider our Celestial Cicada Court.” Su Huanzhen smiled as well.

The Sublime Chord Temple didn’t like to play things that blatantly. Master Dong Yue resisted his impulse and didn’t say a word. Meanwhile, the third sectmaster of the Moon God Sect also refrained due to owing Veluriyam Capital a favor to being with. The Ninesuns Sky Sect kept mum out of wariness that they’d anger Jiang Chen.

The young lord smiled easily when he saw how enthusiastic everyone was headhunting the wandering cultivator. “Everyone, you’re all guests here and I won’t claim everything for myself. You’ll all have your fair chances as well. I won’t object to whatever sect he wishes to join. However, the caveat is that you must be able to guarantee his safety and can’t burn the bridge after crossing it. Don’t offer to recruit him if you can’t meet these two conditions. Also, you must be able to swear to these points as well. I won’t agree otherwise. After all, I validated the value of this token and so I have a certain degree of responsibility for his safety.”

These words were responsible and rational. There wasn’t anything that anyone could say against them. It was just like he’d said, but what was young lord Zhen playing at, trying to act all dapper with his youth? Still, his bearing evoked respect and admiration. At the end of the day, he was still being fair, even if it was possibly an act.

Jiang Chen looked at the wandering cultivator. “Tan Zhi, don’t be in a rush to make a decision. Think carefully on it. There are many first rank sects apart from Veluriyam Capital here. Join whichever one you think suits you most. I promise that they’ll make good on their word.”

Tan Zhi showed no hesitation. “I’ve already made up my mind to join Veluriyam Capital. I only trust you, young lord Zhen. You also said that it’s ancient text on the token, so the other sects may not have people who recognize it. You recognize it, so you’re my only choice.”

The sect representatives were depressed by the wandering cultivator’s attitude, but there was nothing much they could do about it. It was true, who would be able to distill the method from the token if they couldn’t even recognize the writing?

Neither Master Dong Yue of the Sublime Chord Temple, Han Qianzhan of the Great Yu Skysword Sect, Su Huanzhen of the Celestial Cicada Court, nor Emperor Wellspring of the six great wandering titans had been able to recognize the token. It was easy enough to extrapolate that the other sect representatives would fail as well. Thus is made sense that Tan Zhi had chosen young lord Zhen.

Han Qianzhan smiled ruefully. “Young lord Zhen, I really do envy you. The strong fail at nothing. This is personal charisma and something that can’t be wished for!”

“I too am a bit envious. Ai!” Su Huanzhen shook her head.

The other sects sighed and moped. The young lord may be young and appeared genteel, but he was something else when he actually took action. He hadn’t done much to make Tan Zhi completely loyal to him. Not only was this charisma, but even more so ability!

Chapter 1275: The Heavenly Dragon Sects Demands

Jiang Chen didn't put on airs after Tan Zhilian chose him. In actuality, no one would've believed him even if he'd spoken the truth that he wasn't much interested in the token. He'd only listed it as number one of the paramount rank treasures out of fairness. But, since Tan Zhi wasn't about to choose anyone else, there was no reason for him to draw the wandering cultivator's ire by refusing.

The young lord nodded. "Since you trust me, Tan Zhi, I will give you the entire price of the jade token. May the heavens smite me if I fail to do so!"

His straightforwardness won the wandering cultivators' respect. There was applause all around.

Jiang Chen himself remained impassive, pushing both hands downward. "I'd like to offer some advice to the wandering cultivator friends that exposed Tan Zhi, here. It's not a good habit to kick someone when he's down."

The culprits felt their faces redden. They couldn't refute the accusation at all.

The young lord saluted with cupped fist. "This is it for the first day's treasure identification segment. The next three days will be free time to trade or transact. I'll still be present during this time and I invite the seniors here to do the same. If you have something you'd like a second opinion on, feel free to find me. I will consult to the best of my ability.

"After those three days is the auction segment, which will only last one day. If you have something you'd like to put up for auction, you can leave it with Veluriyam Capital. We will auction the Pinecrane Pill at that time as well, as a token of thanks for everyone's kind attendance.

"After that, I will host a three day open lecture on pill dao. After the lectures, you'll have a chance to ask a senior from Myriad Abyss Island your questions about martial dao. Unfortunately, experts from there prefer mystery and secrecy, so there won't be the chance for too many questions. Still, anyone who does have the right to ask will receive an answer they'll be satisfied with."

Jiang Chen meticulously planned out the entire Dragon and Tiger Meet. Each segment linked to the last, and each was equally stimulating to the people's interests.

He firmly believed that Veluriyam Capital's appeal and reputation would enjoy a significant increase after the Meet concluded. It would become a real hub of activity for the Upper Eight Regions. It wouldn't necessarily beat Pillfire City straight away, but the gap would be considerably narrowed.

"Finally, after all those events have concluded, we will come to the Dragon and Tiger Meet's closing ceremonies. At that time, I'd like to reveal a few more details about my plans for the pill dao academy here in Veluriyam. I recommend you act sooner rather than later if you'd like to auction something or get a treasure privately identified. The auction process needs prep time. If you're late, you'll miss the registration." Having completed his speech, he looked toward Emperor Wellspring and the others. "Would anyone like to add anything?"

"Our job here is already done," chuckled Emperor Wellspring. "We eagerly await the more exciting segments that are to come. It seems that you've devoted a lot of effort to sprucing up the Dragon and Tiger Meet, young lord Zhen. Other factions have done similar things to each segment in the past, but you've gathered them up all into one event. Plus, there's more than enough excitement to match. The

treasure identification segment alone has been a real eye-opener for me. If I may, how often do you plan on holding this Meet?”

“Daoist Hui,” smiled Han Qianzhan, “are you impatient for the next one already?”

“I approve a great deal of these high quality events,” replied the emperor seriously. “More importantly, young lord Zhen is a principled man who is willing to protect the wandering cultivators’ bottom line. That makes him very different in this regard from some factions, who are interested only in ripping them off.” Emperor Wellspring was speaking nothing but the truth.

Wandering cultivators were generally at a disadvantage all over the world of martial dao, whether at an exhibition, auction, or open marketplaces. They had very little bargaining power and clout almost everywhere. Even if they weren’t outright robbed of their treasures, they would often still suffer oppression and maltreatment. That was why Emperor Wellspring lamented.

Young lord Zhen’s actions at the Dragon and Tiger Meet protected wandering cultivators’ interests. The treasure identification segment alone was enough to see that.

The emperor knew that young lord Zhen wanted to improve his impression and reputation with this demographic, but the youth’s abilities and respect for wandering cultivators were both undeniable. At least there were no concerns about suffering a loss from transacting with a party like him.

In fact, Emperor Wellspring felt like he was the one taking advantage of the young man. The Pinecrane Pill presently in his possession felt especially undeserving; he didn’t believe he’d done a tenth of what such a miraculous pill deserved. Young lord Zhen is an honest man. Or at least, he doesn’t care for taking advantage of wandering cultivators for personal gain.

And just like that, the first day was over. All of the wandering cultivators were left wanting for more. The things they’d witnessed today informed them more fully of young lord Zhen’s strength and bearing.

Many thought that he was trying to buy their goodwill and praise, but other factions didn’t do even that much. Instead, their blood was openly feasted upon. Young lord Zhen was the image of compassion in comparison, even if he was just trying to build a good name for himself.

“Old Brother Mo, I must trouble you to take care of Tan Zhi. Take him back to the young lord residence. I’m worried that there will be people after him.” Jiang Chen instructed his old friend.

“Alright.” Mo Wushuang’s response was to the point.

Knowing who the old great emperor was, Tan Zhi was very grateful. “I cannot thank you enough for your kindness, young lord Zhen.”

“Let’s go. You’ve joined up with young lord Zhen, so you’re with us now. No need for excessive courtesy.” Mo Wushuang chuckled, taking a slight interest in the younger man.

The wandering cultivator had been extremely decisive after being put under pressure, which was a mark of remarkable character. His current level as a half-step emperor realm cultivator belied his future achievements. Given time, greatness was assured.

After the event was wrapped and cleaned up, all of Veluriyam’s great emperors rushed up to Jiang Chen, saluting him with cupped fists. “Young lord Zhen, today’s event was really successful. The treasure

identification segment was marvelous to watch. There were a lot of treasures. I guess wandering cultivators aren't as poor as we thought they were after all, eh?"

"There have been countless treasures lost since the ancient times," Jiang Chen smiled. "It's natural for far more treasures to exist beyond our imagination."

"Ah, that's right. I forgot to congratulate you, young lord Zhen," Emperor Coiling Dragon laughed. "Our friend Tan Zhi's jade token has a method stronger than first rank sects' signature method? That's pretty amazing."

"Fortune has smiled upon us today," Emperor Mountaincrush laughed as well. There was a wave of compliments offered to the youth.

Jiang Chen maintained a constant faint smile throughout. "The method belongs to Tan Zhi, everyone. You should congratulate him instead."

"Haha, Tan Zhi is part of Sacred Peafowl Mountain now. We're all family." Everyone chuckled this time. The first rank sects' representatives came over one by one as well.

"Could we borrow you for a moment, young lord Zhen?" The man at the very front was the Heavenly Dragon Sect's third in command. His name was Long Baxiang, also known as Emperor Dragontyrant.

"Emperor Dragontyrant, is there anything you need?" Jiang Chen's smile was unchanged from earlier.

"I hear you have a contracted spirit beast, correct? A true dragon?" Long Baxiang asked with a smile.

"Yes." Jiang Chen immediately knew what the other person wanted.

"Young lord Zhen, I'm a straightforward man, so I'll get straight to the point. Are you willing to trade your true dragon over to the Heavenly Dragon Sect?" Long Baxiang's eyes lit up.

Jiang Chen shook his head. "Unfortunately not. My apologies."

Are you kidding? Trade away a true dragon to them? Even if he was willing, was the Heavenly Dragon Sect even capable of controlling the dragon? Was Long Xiaoxuan willing to accept his new associates? The Heavenly Dragon Sect styled itself as a sect with a dragon bloodline from ancient times, but that was a thing of the past.

They wanted to take Long Xiaoxuan to increase the strength of their bloodline? A nice enough plan, but Jiang Chen wasn't going to accept such a proposition.

"Why not discuss it a bit further with us, young lord Zhen? I doubt you'll be able to bring the full power of the true dragon to bear. Name any price you like. We will seriously consider it, no matter how exorbitant you think it may be." Long Baxiang wasn't going to give up so easily. He knew very well what a true dragon meant to the Heavenly Dragon Sect.

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that a true dragon would allow the sect to leap above all its current peers. After the hypothetical boost, it could likely rival Veluriyam Capital in strength. The Heavenly Dragon Sect prided itself upon being a sect of dragon bloodline cultivators. A true dragon would certainly intensify the object of their pride.

"There is nothing to discuss," Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "There's no need to mention it further, Emperor Dragontyrant."

"Don't be so brusque, young lord Zhen! We have many secret methods to quicken a true dragon's bloodline, allowing its cultivation to increase at top speed. You can't possibly offer the same opportunity. How about joint possession? It'll be a win-win situation, yes?" Long Baxiang tried to motivate the stubborn youth.

"I have other matters to attend to, Emperor Dragontyrant. Please excuse me." Jiang Chen didn't want to be badgered about the topic anymore. Sell Long Xiaoxuan? He'd never considered such a thing.

Long Xiaoxuan was like a brother to him. He couldn't just trade a brother away, or somehow 'share' his 'possession.' Jiang Chen would be mad to give such ideas serious contemplation.

Long Baxiang was a little upset at being refused by the young man. He glared at Jiang Chen's departing figure, anger burning within his heart. "So what if he has a few skills? He's not showing me any respect! Does he think he'll be able to shoulder the burden of the entire Veluriyam Capital? Emperor Peafowl isn't around any more. I suppose he likes it the hard way, hmm?!"

The emperor hadn't given up, and neither would his sect. A true dragon was of paramount importance to his sect. It would be the key to the sect's future dominance over the Upper Eight Regions. With enough time, every faction in the eight territories could be swept with ease. The sect would be able to command universal tribute.

"Still, the fact that he admitted to having a true dragon so quickly was surprising. I thought he would outright deny that he had one. I'm glad he did though. As long as it exists, we'll have plenty of opportunities to get our hands on it in the future." Long Baxiang thought viciously. Dastardly plans had already begun to form in his mind.

Chapter 1276: The Owner of the Heavencloud Ganoderma

Jiang Chen refused Long Baxiang's rude request outright.

"You must beware of the Heavenly Dragon Sect, young lord." The elder Jiao brother, Jiao Yun, spoke up. Normally, one would expect a statement like that to have come from Emperor Peerless. However, the two Jiao brothers had become Jiang Chen's most loyal confidantes. Now harboring a healthy respect for the young lord, they protected him constantly.

"We've dealt with many sects during our travels," Jiao Yun continued in a low voice. "We have at least a rudimentary understanding of the Heavenly Dragon Sect's tendencies. People from this sect don't rest until they reach their goal. They're not as high profile as the Ninesuns Sky Sect, but they're far more vicious once they have an objective in mind. Out of the eight first rank sects in the Upper Eight Regions, the Heavenly Dragon Sect is the thorniest."

Jiao Feng nodded as well. "Absolutely. The Heavenly Dragon Sect is not to be underestimated."

Jiang Chen didn't know very much about the Heavenly Dragon Sect, but he knew how to read people. Long Baxiang didn't look like an easygoing man. However, there was no possibility that the young lord would ever turn Long Xiaoxuan over to him, either.

That was a matter of principle. The young lord was now one of the most important people in Veluriyam Capital. The Peafowl Guard paved the way for him, and the city's great emperors roughly flanked him; both gestures were for his protection.

In no time at all, his retinue made its way back to Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

At the young lord residence, Huang'er and the others were waiting at the door.

Jiang Chen was very cautious. In order to avoid unforeseen circumstances, he hadn't brought everyone to the wandering cultivator meet. Aside from Emperor Peerless, the Jiao and Geng brothers, and other powerful experts like the four monarchs, Jiang Chen had only taken Pill King Bu, Pill King Lu Feng, and Lin Yanyu.

The others had stayed behind for the most part. Newcomer Tan Zhi hung behind everyone else, following Mo Wushuang very closely. He looked a little restrained and lost.

"Don't worry," Mo Wushuang chuckled. "Everyone here is family. Since the young lord has decided to take you in and brought you back to the residence, he won't mistreat you."

Tan Zhi nodded. Before he was spoken to, he'd kept his eyes mostly to himself. After being comforted, his heart settled down a little, and he began to curiously scan the residence's surroundings.

His gaze circled the place, pausing fleetingly upon the welcome party. Suddenly, his look became strangely incredulous. He was so surprised that he couldn't shift his eyes away.

"What's up?" Emperor Peerless had a stronger consciousness than most, and easily sensed the nearby cultivator's peculiarity.

Tan Zhi's shoulders shook. "Maybe my eyes deceived me," he sighed softly.

Emperor Peerless chuckled. "Those here in the young lord residence have come from all over the world. Perhaps you do know some people here already. Let's head on in."

Nodding hurriedly in agreement, Tan Zhi followed very carefully behind Emperor Peerless. However, his eyes darted back to the reception crowd from time to time, as if there was someone he cared a lot about there.

"Gouyu, this wandering cultivator friend is named Tan Zhi," Jiang Chen introduced. "He'll be one of us from now on, so please look after him. Try to settle him in near Emperor Peerless, so my old brother can take him around a bit more to familiarize himself with his new home."

After glancing at Tan Zhi, Gouyu inclined her head earnestly.

"Senior brother, I'm sure the wandering cultivator meet will be very exciting. I'd really like to take a look for myself." A handsome young daoist spoke up - Mu Gaoqi.

"I was worried that there'd be some unexpected surprise on the first day, Gaoqi. That's why I asked everyone to stay at home. For the marketplace tomorrow, I'll definitely take you to see the sights. How can I leave you out of the proceedings with how spectacular your pill dao potential is?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"Fantastic," Mu Gaoqi was overjoyed. "Can I go with my master?"

"Of course."

A pretty figure edged out from the rear of the crowd. "Senior brother," a girl's voice muttered, "you can't be biased like that. Don't just take Gaoqi! Hui'er wants to go as well."

The girl was none other than Ling Hui'er.

"Yes, yes, everyone can go." Jiang Chen waved a hand.

"Hehe, I know senior brother wouldn't refuse!" The enthusiasm on Ling Hui'er's face was palpable.

There was a collective roar of laughter before the combined entourage headed further inside.

Standing behind Mo Wushuang still, Tan Zhi was almost electrified by the sight of Mu Gaoqi and Ling Hui'er. He could barely move his feet. Mu Gaoqi, Ling Hui'er...

Countless thoughts flashed through his mind. His lips trembled. He felt the impulse to speak up several times, but his reason suppressed it each time. At last, Tan Zhi's eyes settled on Jiang Chen with some confusion. Suddenly, a possibility crept into his heart, sending a slight spasm through his body. A warm current flowed through him, filling him with a vigor that almost made him shout aloud. If he wasn't harboring worries still, he would've pounced forward to ask details.

Nearby the younger wandering cultivator, Mo Wushuang felt each acute change in Tan Zhi's psyche. However, he chose not to point out anything this time, instead looking thoughtfully at the cultivator many years his junior.

"Young lord Zhen, Emperor Coiling Dragon and young master Ji San are here to visit. They have a wandering cultivator with them." There was a report from outside.

"Oh? Send them in."

Having come so soon after their departure moments earlier, the former clan lord's arrival likely concerned something important. He had brought a wandering cultivator with him, hmm? Can it be...?

A thought popped into Jiang Chen's head, but he didn't pursue it. He would soon know exactly why they'd come anyways.

Emperor Coiling Dragon and the wandering cultivator made their way into the residence rather quickly. Young master Ji san was with them.

"Young lord Zhen, this wandering cultivator friend found us in order to speak to you personally. He says he's the owner of the Heavencloud Ganoderma. We didn't dare leave him waiting after hearing that, so we came straight away." Emperor Coiling Dragon was very responsible with his explanation.

Jiang Chen had guessed the very same. The wandering cultivator in question was likely either the owner of the Ganoderma or the Seven Star Convergence Talisman.

"What should I call you, friend?" Veluriyam's young lord was very amiable. He could see that the man's cultivation level was even lower than Tan Zhi's.

Tan Zhi was half-step emperor, but this man was only earth sage realm. He would be considered a reasonable expert in a more remote place like the Myriad Domain, but the Upper Eight Regions demoted him to one of the small fry.

“My... my name is Cheng Qian. H-hail, young lord Zhen.” The wandering cultivator stuttered a little. He’d felt little pressure looking up at young lord Zhen from within a crowd, but seeing the youth right in front of him was something else. Nearby were men many times his senior: Emperor Peerless, the Jiao brothers, and others. No matter how unbridled Cheng Qian was ordinarily, he felt a mountain of pressure bearing down upon him.

Jiang Chen smiled indulgently. “Everyone, take a seat,” he instructed those around him.

Having said this, he turned back to Cheng Qian kindly. “You’re Cheng Qian, right? Try to relax. Sacred Peafowl Mountain has always been gracious toward the wandering cultivator world. Look at Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers. They are your seniors, no? No one will give you a hard time here, haha. Take a seat.”

Beads of sweat formed on the earth sage realm cultivator’s forehead. He protested several times out of embarrassment. How could he sit before so many great emperor realm experts? Any seat he did take would burn his rear.

Jiang Chen was helpless before Cheng Qian’s self-inflicted tenseness. “Old Brother Mo, you’re a wandering cultivator,” he turned to his old brother. “Can you soothe his emotions a bit for me?”

Emperor Peerless smiled. “Since it’s been said already, Cheng Qian, why not take a seat? I guarantee that Sacred Peafowl Mountain will not lay a finger on you. If you own the Heavencloud Ganoderma, I will personally ensure that you receive your deserving portion.”

The Jiao brothers laughed as well. “Young lord Zhen has seen countless treasures. Are you worried that he’ll rob you of yours?”

The young lord smiled good-naturedly in turn. “Cheng Qian, if you wanted to find me, why didn’t you come to me straight away? What’s with the detour to Emperor Coiling Dragon?”

“I was worried that I would... would be tailed by someone, if I came to find you,” Cheng Qian looked somewhat bashful. “So I thought a detour would be better.”

Jiang Chen offered the sheepish cultivator some cheerful applause to boost his confidence. “Well done. Those were wise actions. Tell me, what would you like me to help you with? You can be open about it. Everyone here will bear witness for you.”

Cheng Qian puffed himself up for several moments before he managed to blurt out the following words. “I... I wanted to trade the Heavencloud Ganoderma with you, young lord Zhen.”

That was within the realm of expectation. Of course the wandering cultivator had come to trade or auction off his treasure. It was either one or the other.

Jiang Chen nodded. “Sounds good. What would you like from me?”

What Cheng Qian did next was quite funny. He scratched his head, but couldn’t think of anything to say. He hadn’t even thought up what he really wanted. He’d had the Heavencloud Ganoderma for a long

time, and had always viewed it as a prized possession, not expecting its actual value to be beyond his wildest dreams.

Even after the event, his brain was still rather mushy. He did have one instinctual thought, however: he needed to get rid of the spirit herb as quickly as possible. Otherwise, he could very well befall the same fate as Tan Zhi. Unwanted exposure was a very real problem.

“Don’t be nervous, Cheng Qian. Speak your mind.” Emperor Peerless consoled sympathetically. As a senior in the wandering cultivator world, the emperor tried to take care of his juniors as much as he could. It wasn’t any day of the week that a wandering cultivator came upon a valuable treasure.

The earth sage was still flustered. “Actually... I, uh, I haven’t really thought of anything yet. Young lord Zhen is a generous and considerate man, so I’m sure that he’ll treat me well. I... I didn’t think the Heavencloud Ganoderma would be so expensive. Happiness came upon me so quickly that... that, my brain can’t keep up. So... so... I’d like young lord Zhen to give me some pointers about what’s best for me...” His face reddened after stammering all this.

Everyone broke out into good-natured laughter. It was evident to any onlooker that Cheng Qian really was in a tough spot. He was so stunned by his fortune that he couldn’t think straight any more. For an earth sage realm wandering cultivator, the Heavencloud Ganoderma was really too expensive to take in. Cheng Qian’s reaction was perfectly normal.

Chapter 1277: The Transaction For The Heavencloud Ganoderma

Cheng Qian felt a bit embarrassed himself. He scratched his head sheepishly, constrained by the awkward situation.

Emperor Peerless found the younger man’s silliness both endearing and sad. He saw a shadow of his past self in the man as well. In his younger days, Mo Wushuang had also felt this kind of helplessness. Without the opportunities that he’d chanced upon later on, he would never have gotten to where he was today. The sight of Cheng Qian touched him just like Gu Xintang had, back in the Tilted Moon Region.

Though Mo Wushuang appeared rough around the edges, he was actually a very sensitive man and easily became emotional.

“Young lord Zhen, the world is a much crueler place for wandering cultivators. Cheng Qian happening upon this spirit herb means that he’s one of the lucky ones. Since he’s come so sincerely to trade the Ganoderma with us, do you mind helping him a bit?”

Emperor Peerless was now making a more personal request on his junior’s behalf. The junior wandering cultivator had never thought that his great senior would do this. The gesture greatly warmed Cheng Qian’s heart.

Jiang Chen inclined his head slightly. “Even if Emperor Peerless hadn’t interceded, Cheng Qian, there’s no reason for me to refuse your very reasonable request. Tell me, what kind of need do you have?”

Cheng Qian thought about it a little. “I think, if... if I can try breaking through to emperor realm just once in my life, I’d laugh myself awake at night.”

For most wandering cultivators, emperor realm was a place forever beyond their grasp. Even earth sage realm, like Cheng Qian was currently, was an impossible task for many.

The world of martial dao was a harsh place with each level was more difficult than the last. In this world, emperor realm was already a rather high peak. Countless cultivators found that it was essentially unreachable. Only a very few could enjoy the scenery from the top.

Evidently, Cheng Qian wasn't a part of this latter group. He could only look up longingly from below. Though he was already an earth sage realm cultivator, Cheng Qian knew himself better than anybody. He wasn't particularly old, but he'd dug out most of his martial dao potential.

Without a special opportunity or three, he would at most get to sky sage realm in this life. In light of this, Cheng Qian had mustered up all his courage to make his request when faced with this rare opportunity. Getting to emperor realm was his life's greatest wish.

Seeing that young lord Zhen's prolonged silence, Cheng Qian began to panic. "Young lord Zhen, I know my demand is a bit unreasonable. I... I only wanted a chance at breaking through to emperor realm. It's fine even if I fail."

He hurried to explain himself, worried that he'd be thrown out.

Jiang Chen didn't reply to the man directly. Instead, he turned toward Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers with a serene smile. "Gentlemen, how do you feel about Cheng Qian's potential?"

Mo Wushuang was brutally honest. "Optimistically? I think ninth level sage realm is his limit.

Jiao Yun nodded. "I agree. He doesn't have much more potential left."

"Did you hear that, Cheng Qian?" Jiang Chen laughed.

The earth sage realm cultivator looked quite down. Hearing the wandering great emperors' analysis painted a rather grim future for him.

"I spoke out of line, young lord Zhen." Cheng Qian conceded sadly.

"Haha, that's what anyone would think from an ordinary perspective. However, if I am to trade with you, I must fulfill your wish in earnest – for the sake of the Heavencloud Ganoderma, if nothing else. How can I honestly accept your treasure otherwise?"

Jiang Chen's declaration was absolutely stunning. Everyone tried to guess at what he meant. Did young lord Zhen have another way?

Emperor Peerless suddenly thought of something, his gaze brightening.

"Cheng Qian, you should thank young lord Zhen." Out of nowhere, the emperor slapped his thigh.

Cheng Qian was astonished, but he was clever enough to understand what that meant: perhaps there was something more to things! He knelt on one knee without hesitation. "Thank you so much for your charity and grace, young lord Zhen."

Jiang Chen flashed an easy smile. "Old Brother Mo, you really are one of the six titans, huh? You always take extra care of our wandering cultivator friends. Cheng Qian, I'll grant you an opportunity that gives

you the chance to break through to emperor realm. I'll also give you some pills to help you in your attempt. In exchange, Sacred Peafowl Mountain will take the Heavencloud Ganoderma. Do you have any problems with this deal?"

"None whatsoever," Cheng Qian denied hastily.

"Even so, I've benefited far more than you in this deal," Jiang Chen smiled. "How about this. When you get to emperor realm someday, come to Sacred Peafowl Mountain again. I'll give you another opportunity. How does that sound to you?"

Though the young lord wasn't specific about what he was going to give, a promise from both Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Veluriyam Capital was nothing to be taken lightly.

"Truly, young lord Zhen, a thousand thanks for your generosity and benevolence. I'll never forget it as long as I live!" These words came from the bottom of Cheng Qian's heart.

"I don't think I'm being overly generous or benevolent, really. Your ownership of the Heavencloud Ganoderma is the origin of your luck. I've always put an emphasis on fair dealing, so I can't exactly take advantage of you now, can I?" Jiang Chen chuckled before continuing.

"Spend a few days here. I'll have your accommodations arranged. If you're concerned about your safety, I'll ask Old Brother Mo to look after you personally. Aside from that, here's a batch of Heroic Sage Pills, a single Sage Smile Pill, and a selection of sage realm cultivation resources. Take them. They should help immensely in your road to emperor realm."

Jiang Chen had no shortage of Heroic Sage Pills. Back in his Mt. Rippling Mirage days, he'd gotten his hands on a huge number of Sage Fledgling Grass specimens. A ton of Heroic Sage Pills had come of that lucky find. These pills were extremely beneficial to cultivation in the sage realm. Though their effects became less pronounced later on, they were still exceptionally important for wandering cultivators such as Cheng Qian.

The Sage Smile Pills used the Radiant Celestial Grass as its main material. Jiang Chen also had an equally sizable assortment of said pill. The pill granted Cheng Qian a free level in the sage realm.

Thus, those three words instantly got Cheng Qian's attention. His hands shivered as he accepted Jiang Chen's items. Currently, he was peak earth sage realm at the sixth level. He'd been stuck at earth sage realm's peak for many years now. He hadn't been able to try for sky sage realm all this time.

The Sage Smile Pill was surely the impetus that would allow him to finally get there! Once he was there, he would be on an entirely different level. It would be the platform that allowed him to touch the threshold of emperor realm!

The excitement on Cheng Qian's face made Jiang Chen sigh with wonder. Wandering cultivators, huh... the things I gave him were fully traded for with his treasure, but he still feels tremendously grateful for some reason. Honestly, I'm still the one coming out ahead in this deal after all that.

The actual value of the Heavencloud Ganoderma was equivalent to five sky rank spirit herbs. After totaling things up up, the things that Jiang Chen had given Cheng Qian were worth only one.

The deal wasn't what made Cheng Qian happy, however. It was that Jiang Chen was giving him the opportunity to break through to emperor realm. For cultivators at the extent of their potentials, this was the greatest gift of all.

From his position, Cheng Qian had made the correct choice. If he couldn't improve his strength, the value of the Heavencloud Ganoderma was meaningless; none of it could really be actualized.

If kept on him, the herb was as good as wasted. If traded anywhere else, there was no guarantee of making it out with one's skin intact, much less making a fair trade. At least with Sacred Peafowl Mountain, there was no risk of the former. Moreover, the items received in exchanged were materially useful. In light of that, what was there to be displeased about?

Jiang Chen called for Gouyu once more, notifying her of Cheng Qian's temporary stay.

After he saw the wandering cultivator off, everyone around him saluted with cupped fist.

"Congratulations, young lord. The Heavencloud Ganoderma is finally in deserving hands. There's no doubt that it would be a horrendous waste anywhere else."

Everyone had heard of the intended purpose for the Heavencloud Ganoderma. The Emperor Supremacy Pill!

No one had heard of such a pill before. Its miraculous properties were enough to set their hearts aflame. There was also a strong curiosity about something hitherto unknown.

"Young lord Zhen, can you really refine the Emperor Supremacy Pill that you spoke about during the treasure identification?" Emperor Coiling Dragon inquired piously.

Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers looked longingly at the young lord as well, interested in hearing a confident answer.

"The Emperor Supremacy Pill is a real pill." Jiang Chen was completely aboveboard with them. "And yes, the Heavencloud Ganoderma is the main ingredient. It's all true."

His audience was overjoyed. Emperor Coiling Dragon especially so, since he was initial great emperor realm. Presently, he was the weakest among the great emperors at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. His desire to increase his strength was more fervent than anyone else's. Therefore, he thirsted the most after the Emperor Supremacy Pill's effects.

"If the Heavencloud Ganoderma was allowed to grow for another thousand years, it would be worth even more. Alas, it's a bit on the young side. If one can be found that's more than three thousand years old, then we'll truly have a perfect cauldron of Emperor Supremacy Pills!" Jiang Chen felt that it was somewhat of a pity.

Emperor Coiling Dragon slapped his thigh. "If you'll let me, young lord Zhen," he chuckled, "I'd like to reserve an Emperor Supremacy Pill. The Coiling Dragon clan is willing to pay any price you name."

Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers wanted the pill just as badly, but it wasn't appropriate yet for them to ask for one. After all, they'd followed Jiang Chen for only a short while. On the other hand, Emperor Coiling Dragon was one of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's staunchest, direct supporters.

Furthermore, Emperor Peerless still had the kunpeng bloodline that Jiang Chen had given him. He had greater goals than the Emperor Supremacy Pill and didn't need it nearly as badly as the others. He had set his eyes on breaking through to empyrean realm instead.

The Jiao brothers genuinely craved the Emperor Supremacy Pill, but they'd joined up only recently and had already received advice from Jiang Chen about their martial techniques to boot. They couldn't work up the thick skin they needed to open their mouths.

"Of course I can, Emperor Coiling Dragon," Jiang Chen laughed. "The Ganoderma isn't mature enough, so I think I'd only get two pills out of it. Still, if everything goes perfectly, a third is potentially possible."

"Haha, your pill dao prowess is unmatched. I'm sure you'll have no problem getting three, young lord!" Emperor Coiling Dragon engaged in some shameless flattery.

Chapter 1278: Tan Zhis True Identity

Deeper within the young lord residence, Gouyu delegated to Xue Tong the work of accommodating the newcomers.

As Jiang Chen's cousin, Xue Tong had remained dedicated and loyal throughout the years. He had no complaints about being handed Gouyu's work. He knew that Gouyu tended to be a bit haughty and was probably concerned about taking a strange man around by herself in trying to figure out living quarters. It was no trouble for him to step in on her behalf.

They were within the young lord residence anyway. Their safety was assured. Furthermore, Tan Zhi didn't look like a bad guy, though he did seem a bit out of it. Was it because of nerves from where he was now?

As one of the young lord's earliest confidants, Xue Tong had excellent martial dao potential. That, coupled with Jiang Chen's cultivation of his abilities over the years had easily brought him into earth sage realm. In the process, he'd also become experienced enough to deal with a variety of situations.

"Fellow daoist Tan, I heard that you've declared your allegiance already to the young lord at the wandering cultivator meet. As long as you're not planning to two-time us, we're one family from now on. There's no need to be so anxious." Kindly consoling the apprehensive recruit was the best course of action at the moment.

Tan Zhi forced out a smile. "Thank you, Brother Xue. You look rather young."

"Aside from our seniors, the great emperors, most of us are pretty young around here," laughed Jiang Chen's cousin.

"I see." Tan Zhi nodded in acknowledgment. "Brother Xue, I'm new here, so I don't know all the rules yet. Are there any areas in the young lord residence that are off-limits?"

"None outright," Xue Tong chuckled, "but there are a few unwritten rules. The young lord's personal area, for one. Also, the female cultivators' living spaces are generally barred for most members of the opposite sex. There are people watching all the important turns though, and security is pretty tight beneath the surface. As long as you don't aimlessly wander, you should be completely fine."

"So, is it fine if I visit some friends?"

"Of course. Daoist Tan, you have friends in the young lord residence already?" joked the guardsman.

"I just got here, so I haven't made any yet," Tan Zhi replied. "But there's plenty of time to make some in the future."

"Indeed. Everyone here is relatively kind. As long as you're not too haughty yourself, of course."

Tan Zhi nodded and said nothing more.

"Alright, we're here. This courtyard isn't too big, but it should be enough since you're living alone. You have a good number of neighbors around here, so feel free to visit when you have the spare time." Settling Tan Zhi into his new home, Xue Tong issued a gentle reminder before turning to leave.

The wandering cultivator was quite satisfied with the space. As he was about to push open the door, a silver-haired cultivator came out from a different house a dozen yards away. The old cultivator spotted Xue Tong by the wayside immediately and smiled in greeting. "Xue Tong, my young friend, what're you up to?"

It was none other than Elder Yun Nie, whom Jiang Chen had rescued from Pillfire City a while back. The elder occasionally made an appearance overseeing Taiyuan Tower, but often returned to spend time with Mu Gaoqi.

The residence that Jiang Chen had assigned Mu Gaoqi was very large.

"Haha, if it isn't Master Yun! We have a new friend here that the young lord told me to take care of." Xue Tong gestured to the wandering cultivator beside him in introduction. "Daoist Tan, this is Master Yun. Both he and his disciple are the young lord's old friends, and his lordship treats the latter like a brother."

Jiang Chen's cousin carried on with the introduction. "Master Yun, this is Daoist Tan Zhi. He was found to have an extremely valuable treasure at the wandering cultivator meet. The young lord saw promise in him immediately and the appreciation turned out to be mutual. That's why our friend here joined up with us. Let's try to make him feel welcome!"

Xue Tong was a smooth talker and deftly avoided mentioning Tan Zhi's embarrassing situation. The alternative explanation averted a potential social gaffe.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" Elder Yun Nie chuckled. "Sacred Peafowl Mountain is growing stronger by the day. This is truly a testament to young lord Zhen's charisma. You're welcome to have tea with me any time, Daoist Tan."

Unfortunately, the wandering cultivator who was being spoken to could only manage an emotional stare in return. The bleak desolation of the cruel tides of time could be found in his eyes.

"Daoist Tan?" Elder Yun Nie found the silence a little off-putting.

Tan Zhi shook himself free of his reverie. "I'm sorry, Master Yun," he coughed apologetically. "You reminded me of a past acquaintance. I lost control of myself there. Please, excuse the discourtesy."

The cultivator's genuineness won Elder Yun Nie over. "Not at all. There is nothing wrong with being sentimental, Daoist Tan."

“Feel free to chat a bit more, gentlemen,” Xue Tong smiled. “I have other matters I must attend to. I’ll go on ahead.”

His duties having been completed, there was no more reason for him to stay.

Elder Yun Nie saluted with cupped fist in farewell before turning back to Tan Zhi. “Daoist Tan, I have a few errands of my own to attend to. I must take my leave as well. Shall we share a drink sometime in the near future at my place?”

Tan Zhi managed a faint smile, but his eyes were stuck upon the old man. He stayed completely silent for a long while, his gaze unmoving.

From the moment he saw Tan Zhi, Elder Yun Nie had thought that there was something strange about the man. There was an indescribable feeling about the way the newcomer looked at him. The elder’s heart trembled. He felt restless and nervous.

“Friend Tan, am I really that similar to your acquaintance? I’m, ah, I’m having trouble staying cool beneath your gaze.” Finally, he teased the man to lighten the mood.

Tan Zhi sighed softly, nuance filling his eyes. “I didn’t expect Elder Yun Nie from yesteryear’s Regal Pill Palace to ascend to a position as Veluriyam Capital’s honored guest. Shall I congratulate you, Elder Yun Nie? Or shall I express sorrow for Regal Pill Palace’s fate?”

His words were a painful lash upon Elder Yun Nie’s face. The old man’s facial muscles contorted for a moment. He returned an incredulous look at the stranger, his heart thumping uncontrollably.

“Daoist Tan, you... know who I am?” When the elder spoke again, it was with a wary tone.

“Not just you. I know who your disciple is as well, the one that’s so brotherly with the young lord. He’s Mu Gaoqi, yes? Ling Hui’er as well, and maybe a few others from the Palace, too...” Tan Zhi sounded sour, though it was hard to tell how much of it was out of grief and indignation.

Elder Yun Nie stumbled. “Who... who are you, really?”

The wandering cultivator broke a tragic smile. “The calamity that befell the Myriad Domain destroyed both it and its inhabitants utterly. The sect was crushed and many died with it. The remainder was scattered to the wind, and one knows not the other. Who do you think I am, Yun Nie?” Tan Zhi’s voice suddenly changed.

Elder Yun Nie shivered when he heard it. “Palace Head?” he cried out. Suddenly, he seemed to think of something. “Tan Zhi, Tan Zhi... Dan Chi... Are you Palace Head Dan Chi?”

Tan Zhi and Dan Chi were extremely similar names. Not quite homophones, but very close.

Tan Zhi sighed softly, then wiped away the disguise from his face. His true appearance was revealed. It was none other than the lost palace head, Dan Chi. His eyes were as bright as they’d always been and his face was still handsome. However, there was a tinge of frost-white within his hair.

Palace Head Dan Chi wasn’t actually an old man. He was just over the hundred-year threshold. In the world of martial dao, that was relatively young. His hoar-tipped head told of the bitterness and suffering he’d experienced in the years since the sect’s fall.

Elder Yun Nie was paralyzed, possibly by electricity, or perhaps petrification. He stood unmoving for a long while, his lips quivering the entire time. Not a single coherent sentence came out of his mouth.

“Palace Head... Palace Head... is it really you?” Surely he was dreaming.

“Yun Nie. Who would’ve thought that our separation before the Myriad Grand Ceremony would take so long to bridge once more? Who would’ve thought... that Myriad Domain would be in pieces, and we would be homeless dogs?” The palace head found it difficult to control his own emotions.

Elder Yun Nie was brought to tears by what Dan Chi had said. He rushed forward, clutching tightly at the palace head’s shoulders.

“Palace Head! It really is you! I’m so glad...” Elder Yun Nie was as excited as could be. “The heavens have shown mercy upon us. You really are still alive, Palace Head! All of the Palace’s disciples devoted themselves to continuous self-improvement in order to rebuild the sect. I’ve shouldered that burden for all these days, but I’ve always felt that my own strength was insufficient... Truly, it’s wonderful that you’ve appeared before us. The disciples will be inspired even more when they see you’ve returned. I’m so, so glad...” Elder Yun Nie was having a hard time remaining articulate.

Palace Head Dan Chi blinked. “The disciples? What, do they still exist in large numbers still?”

“Yes, there’s a good few of them. A couple dozen at least, all thanks to Jiang Chen.”

“Jiang Chen?” The palace head looked like he’d just thought of something, becoming passionate once more.

“Yes. He’s the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Young lord Zhen and Jiang Chen are the very same. Without him, we would be stuck as menial slaves in servitude, our lives not our own. It was Jiang Chen that cut a path from the Myriad Domain to Veluriyam Capital in order to rescue a large group of Regal Pill Palace disciples. After that, he journeyed a long way to Pillfire City to rescue Mu Gaoqi and I. He’s never stopped reminding us of the sect’s shameful fall, of the goal of rebuilding the sect. Without him, we wouldn’t have survived until now.” Elder Yun Nie was genuinely grateful as he spoke about the youth.

Palace Head Dan Chi’s eyes lit up. “So it really is him... Young lord Zhen, Jiang Chen... Hahaha, I’ve always known that he was a large fish in a small pond! I suspected too much, Yun Nie. My years drifting about has changed my outlook a great deal. When I saw Gaoqi on the way in, I didn’t dare reveal myself to him. I was worried there was some mistake. But I see, now. Jiang Chen... Jiang Chen...” The impassive expression that the palace head had held for so long finally turned into a joyful grin.

All of the dangers and meandering he’d experienced over the years was worth it.

He had never considered the possibility of seeing his fellow peers under these current circumstances. He hadn’t expected the calamity to have left anyone behind it. Palace Head Dan Chi didn’t think that even Jiang Chen would survive Eternal Celestial Capital’s relentless pursuit.

Yet, despite all the odds against him, the palace head had never given up. He had kept struggling to survive in the wandering cultivator world. The jade token obtained through serendipity had brought him an unexpected miracle.

Chapter 1279: Those of the Regal Pill Palace Gather Again

Come to think of it, his road to here had been filled with adversity, hardship, and near-death experiences. But the clouds had dispersed and the sky was clear once more. Palace Head Dan Chi didn't know what to think. Happiness had arrived far too quickly and completely. His bottled-up feelings were finally able to be fully released into the world.

Elder Yun Nie was even more excited than the palace head himself. He grasped the other man's arms firmly, as if worried that his long-lost friend would fly away.

The elder and palace head hadn't enjoyed a particularly close relationship in the Palace's early years. Dan Chi taking over the helm had led to a massive push toward martial dao. The traditionally important pill dao was forced to yield its position, and the Herbal Hall its own leading spot to the Hall of Might.

Jiang Chen's entrance into Regal Pill Palace had been a lubricant between Elder Yun Nie and Palace Head Dan Chi, bridging the differences between them. Eventually, they became united in purpose. The two men had harbored a common ambition: revitalizing Regal Pill Palace. Alas, the Eternal Celestial Capital and Great Scarlet Mid Region's invasion had scattered that to the wind.

"Yun Nie, that we've reunited once more despite every peril... this means that heaven has watched over Regal Pill Palace. We shouldn't be so emotional." The palace head's outburst was only temporary. With minutes, he recovered the composure that suited a sect leader.

"You are right, Palace Head. Heaven watches over Regal Pill Palace and the Myriad Domain as well." Elder Yun Nie recovered himself as well before continuing. "I'll go inform Jiang Chen of the good news. He deserves to be brought here at once."

Palace Head Dan Chi waved a hand. "Yun Nie, we cannot live in the past. Jiang Chen has distinguished himself as an extraordinary star. He is both stronger and more eminent than I. It is I who should go meet him."

Elder Yun Nie considered this for a moment. "You're right. We're both exiles. Without his protection, our very safety would be in question, much less our prospects of rebuilding the sect."

"Don't be so hasty, Yun Nie. Tell me about Jiang Chen's experiences these past few years." Palace Head Dan Chi was worried whether he and Jiang Chen could interact the way they had all those years ago, given the disciple's current status.

The elder did so without a moment of hesitation. He detailed all minutiae of Jiang Chen's legendary exploits, emphasizing especially his careful protection and exhortation of Regal Pill Palace's former disciples.

Palace Head Dan Chi sighed after he heard all. "He occupies such a lofty position, yet doesn't forget his roots. He is a man with an excellent temperament. Bringing him from the Precious Tree Sect was the best decision of my life."

Elder Yun Nie sighed as well. "Absolutely. If it wasn't for your keen eye all those years ago – your small kindness to him – Regal Pill Palace would be just like every other sect in the Myriad Domain. Utterly destroyed, with no hope of restoration."

Both men sighed over their past losses.

“Which disciples are here in Veluriyam Capital from the palace, Yun Nie?” The palace head went on to ask.

“Among the four geniuses of the Sovereign Area, Shen Qinghong and Nie Chong are both dead. Jun Mobai was an undercover agent from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Ling Bi’er is missing. Aside from Jiang Chen, only Mu Gaoqi, Shen Trifire, Rong Zifeng, Ling Hui’er, Ouyang Chao, and others remain from the younger generation. Thankfully, they’ve all progressed a great deal with Jiang Chen’s help.”

Having been specially rescued by Jiang Chen from Pillfire City, Elder Yun Nie hadn’t expected so many surviving disciples to reside at Veluriyam Capital.

“Shen Qinghong is dead?” Palace Head Dan Chi shook his head sadly. “What a shame. The elders who were with me on our breakout attempt are mostly dead as well.”

The duo exchanged lamented about their prior experiences.

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Jiang Chen’s living quarters.

“Elder Yun Nie wishes to see me?” Jiang Chen blinked. What was the elder here for? It was really late. Did he have something important to talk about?

He knew how cautious and circumspect the elder was. With advance knowledge on how busy Jiang Chen would be over the next few days, he wouldn’t have disturbed the youth without something sufficiently notable.

“Send him in.”

In no time at all, the elder made his way into the room.

“Greetings, young lord Zhen.” He came forward with a courteous salute.

“No need for such excessive politeness between us, Elder Yun Nie,” Jiang Chen laughed. “You’re in a rush. Did you have something important on your mind?”

Elder Yun Nie looked serious. “Yes, there is a very important matter.” He nodded. “I’ve brought a past acquaintance. Do you have the time to see him, young lord Zhen?”

“A past acquaintance?” Jiang Chen was a bit taken aback, but the elder’s quite solemn expression told him that he absolutely had to see who it was.

“If it’s a past acquaintance,” he smiled, “then we should be old friends already. Why didn’t you bring him with you, Elder Yun Nie?”

The elder sighed. “This acquaintance is... a bit different.”

“Please, invite him over immediately.”

Elder Yun Nie nodded before turning back out the door. It wasn’t long before he returned with another person in tow.

“Palace Head Dan Chi?” Jiang Chen thought his eyes were deceiving him. He hadn’t remotely thought of the possibility of seeing the palace head here. Experiences from decades ago began to resurface instantly.

A reunion after a long time apart, especially after life-threatening danger in the interim, meant that both parties had a ton of things to say to the other. Even Jiang Chen could barely hold back his elation.

Perhaps Palace Head Dan Chi’s cultivation level was insignificant within the Upper Eight Regions, but that didn’t diminish Jiang Chen’s respect for him one whit. Without the palace head, he would’ve stuck around at the Precious Tree Sect for a much longer time, missing out on several opportunities that had come later.

Therefore, Jiang Chen had always considered Palace Head Dan Chi as one of his talent scouts. The palace head had been the one to drag the young man out of relative obscurity.

Most importantly, Jiang Chen saw something special in the other man. Regardless of martial strength, he’d only seen the quality in a specific few.

Ye Chonglou from the Precious Tree Sect was one of them, Veluriyam Capital’s Emperor Peafowl was another. There was a great difference between their comparative strengths, but they all had a unique aura. Therefore, Jiang Chen was overjoyed to see Palace Head Dan Chi once more.

After an extended period of greetings, the two parties finally got into recounting the particulars of their separate ways. Palace Head Dan Chi had succeeded all those years ago, but found the Palace occupied and under enemy control upon his return. He chose not to turn himself in, aiming instead to smash through enemy lines. The sect’s other elders had died one by one in their noble attempt.

After being forced eventually to split up, Dan Chi survived only through superhuman perseverance. He outlasted both Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region’s chase.

After that, he had changed his name to Tan Zhi, a name with very strong overtones about his former identity. But Tan Zhi had another layer to it as well; it was meant to constantly admonish him of the eventual goal to re-establish the sect. He had chosen the name, lest he be overwhelmed by prolonged misfortune.

“You’ve suffered greatly all these years, Palace Head Dan Chi,” Jiang Chen sighed.

“How can the small problems I’ve faced compare to yours? I’ve heard from Elder Yun Nie what you went through to get here. My greatest decision in this mortal coil was to dig you out from the Precious Tree Sect,” the palace head recounted emotionally once more.

“Back at the Regal Pill Palace,” Jiang Chen sighed, “you treated me with great respect beyond my deserving. It was the least I could do to repay you and I only did what was my duty. Plus, Eternal Celestial Capital considers me a stubborn thorn in their side regardless. They would hunt me even if I didn’t do any of that.”

“The Eternal Celestial Capital is the only first rank sect absent at the wandering cultivator meet,” Dan Chi suddenly realized something. “Is your identity known to them already?”

“They sent a saint holy king here to parley, but I refused,” Jiang Chen affirmed.

Joy and affection filtered into the palace head's eyes. Elder Yun Nie was equally excited by those words. They could the young man's steel-clad resolve and attitude.

"My friends, though I am Veluriyam Capital's young lord, and thus bear a weightier responsibility... rebuilding Regal Pill Palace is still something that concerns me. I protected the palace's disciples and rescued Mu Gaoqi precisely to preserve a spark of the sect's heritage in order to one day re-establish it. Now that you've appeared once more, sect head, the day of the palace's reappearance is not far at hand." Jiang Chen made a very serious declaration.

His words inspired both the palace head and the elder. The speech was more than enough to assuage their worries, giving them genuine hope for their sect's tomorrow. If the sect had Veluriyam Capital's support, what could Eternal Celestial Capital do? Would it somehow become stronger than Veluriyam Capital?

"Alas, this old man's abilities are far too limited," Elder Yun Nie lamented. "The road to rebuilding the sect is long and arduous."

Hardship had advanced the palace head's cultivation with blustering speed. He had broken through to half-step emperor realm in only ten short years.

In the Myriad Domain of yesteryear, this level of cultivation rivaled the Great Cathedral's Sacred Elephant family head. However, it wasn't nearly enough to re-found an entire sect. Moreover, it was easy to call the sect reestablished, yet a great deal more effort was required for full revitalization.

Palace Head Dan Chi's gaze was burdened by the problems ahead.

"Young lord Zhen," he glanced at Jiang Chen. "I said all those years ago that the Regal Pill Palace will survive any storm, no matter how chaotic, as long as it had you. Today, less than a tenth of the palace's disciples remain and my personal prowess is anemic at best. The way to restoring Regal Pill Palace is burdensome and challenging. I'd like to humbly request your assistance in the matter."

"Please, Palace Head, don't say this. I too, must do my part in the Palace's restoration. In actuality, you have one of the most fundamental elements to reforming the sect already." Jiang Chen replied, smiling.

"Oh?" The palace head hesitated.

"An ancient martial method is recorded in that jade token, a method strong enough to be compared to any first rank sect's best methods. In fact, it actually surpasses them in numerous ways. You came upon such a valuable text as a wandering cultivator, Palace Head. It means that you are far luckier than the rest. There is no question that the Palace will soar to great heights in your hands."

None of this was false. It was a stroke of immense fortune that the palace head had both survived and received such an amazing find. As long as he was willing to lie in wait for a time, the ancient method would ensure there was substance behind his promise.

Chapter 1280: Opening of the Trading Fair

"This absolutely is a blessing of enormous proportions. Mayhap the disaster that befell us was just a minor obstacle on our path to great glory. In the end, the sect is to reach end new heights with the palace head at the helm."

Elder Yun Nie was someone who placed a lot of stock in the notion of fortune. He had experienced many things in the past couple of years and comprehended many theories. When it came to fortune, young lord Zhen was clearly a person with a great destiny in front of him. Everything he did was full of surprises. He could turn even the most dismal situations into something advantageous and procure victories.

However, the most important factor was that the young lord clearly supported Palace Head Dan Chi. The young lord wasn't going to use the opportunity of rebuilding the sect to seize the leadership. He was going to follow protocol to the letter and return authority to the palace head.

Jiang Chen had been in charge the rebuilding process up to this point and had delegated responsibilities to Elder Yun Nie. His attitude changed with the appearance of Dan Chi. It was a wonderful development for the sect that Jiang Chen was willing to hand over power back to the palace head.

If he'd remained in charge of redevelopment, everyone would only recall that the young lord of Veluriyam Capital had reconstructed the Regal Pill Palace. No one would care much about the sect itself. The connotations would be entirely different if Palace Head Dan Chi was the one leading the process.

Although Elder Yun Nie had a close relationship with Jiang Chen, the former still cared about maintaining the traditions, heritage, and legitimacy of the sect. Even though Jiang Chen was technically a disciple, he'd been studying under both Regal Pill Palace and Precious Tree Sect at the time.

"Young lord Zhen, are the methods of the ancient past really that magical?" Palace Head Dan Chi was slightly skeptical.

"Palace Head, only by cultivating it yourself will you know how true that is. However, this method requires you to reach emperor realm before you can use it. Only then can you reap its true benefits. You're wasting your time otherwise. Thus, your first priority is to reach emperor realm as quickly as possible."

Jiang Chen could tell that the palace head was only halfway there. However, Dan Chi's martial dao potential was much higher than Cheng Qian's. Even if Jiang Chen didn't help his old benefactor, the palace head could have broken through to emperor realm on basis of his own merits alone.

"Palace Head, it's probably best that you don't reveal your true identity for now. Why don't you continue being a wandering cultivator and remain at the young lord's residence? Once the Meet concludes, we can start the mighty feat of rebuilding of the Regal Pill Palace. Myriad Domain has languished in the hands of petty tyrants for long enough. It's high time that we took it back. Furthermore, it's about time that we collected the debt that Great Scarlet Mid Region owes."

Jiang Chen sounded quite remote. He had certain ideas of how to rebuild the sect; his blueprint was vast. Not only did it include rebuilding the Regal Pill Palace, but it also included taking back Myriad Domain, and even annexing the Great Scarlet Mid Region to form an area completely under his absolute control. That was his true goal.

He needed to bring all of the human territories under his control before the demons invaded. The race needed to band together as a cohesive whole. Myriad Domain and Great Scarlet Mid Region were the territories closest to the demons, particularly Myriad Domain. It was the tip of the frontlines.

Thus, it was especially important that he had these two areas in the palm of his hand. He would slowly reveal his ideas to Dan Chi later. It was too early to go into detail now.

Seeing that the powerful Jiang Chen was completely behind them, Elder Yun Nie and Palace Head Dan Chi were delighted beyond belief and headed back to their dwellings.

The rest of the night passed peacefully.

Elder Yun Nie and Dan Chi appeared together at dawn the next day. The palace head was still dressed like a wandering cultivator. The elder had a smile on his face. "Young lord Zhen, can I also partake in the festivities of the Dragon and Tiger Meet?"

"Yes, please enjoy yourselves. Make sure to keep an eye on your surroundings," replied the young lord in approval. "Oh right, it's best if you don't tell Gao Qi and the other young disciples what's changed. I'm afraid that they won't be able to conceal things because of their youth."

The elder laughed. "I've already discussed this with the palace head and we both agree on that point. We can tell everyone after the Meet concludes."

"Alright. The day's about to start, go on ahead."

General enthusiasm and participation had increased visibly after viewing countless wonderful treasures and events on the first day. Many hadn't brought out their baubles for the first segment. Now that they didn't have any doubts, they planned locate young lord Zhen at the trading fair and ask for an appraisal.

When Jiang Chen arrived at the gathering, he could see that the size of the crowd had increased by a large amount compared to the previous day. The excited and charged atmosphere quite pleased him.

"Young lord Zhen, there's certainly plenty of crouching tigers and hidden dragons at the gathering. I think that everyone has been buoyed by the splendid show from yesterday." Emperor Peerless was also very cheerful when he sensed the electrifying mood.

"Haha, I wonder how Pillfire's doing? We've gotten a good kick in this time and slapped their faces harshly!" Emperor Coiling Dragon was very animated.

Jiang Chen had a steady head on his shoulders and didn't let things go to his head. "Everyone should return to their own duties and not treat anything lightly. The Meet's just begun. Anything could happen before it's ended."

"Understood!" Everyone went back to their own areas.

Jiang Chen's appearance caused a stir in the crowd. They chanted loudly, "Young lord Zhen, young lord Zhen!"

"Young lord Zhen, we want to have another treasure identification segment!"

"Yeah, have another one!"

The wandering cultivators started clamoring for more, plainly caught up in the thrill of yesterday. Many of them hadn't taken action in a timely manner due to prudence. In the end, they delayed far too long and missed the window of opportunity entirely. After seeing the multitude of first grade items yesterday,

and the three supreme treasures in particular, many of them felt that they'd stumbled into a fairytale. Dreams of overnight riches sprung up in more than a few individuals. They searched themselves for anything that looked promising, wanting to send them in for appraisal. Although most knew this was just a fantasy, this was precisely the kind of dream and legend that was most scarce in their world.

Jiang Chen stood up tall and a slight smile stretched over his face as he gazed out into the sea of humanity. The crowds extended far to the back for many kilometers.

"Everyone, calm down please." He stretched out his hands and pushed downwards.

The din slowly died down. Soon, no one made a peep. They stared at Jiang Chen and waited with baited breath to hear what the young lord had to say. Seeing their eyes full of excitement, he could easily guess what they were thinking.

Public sentiment can be useful. Jiang Chen was pleased and knew that he finally had their attention now. "Everyone, we have a strict schedule to follow for the Dragon and Tiger Meet. It would be very difficult to alter it. But I can sense your enthusiasm and desires. The following three days are set aside for free trading sessions. During these three days, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain will set up three trading districts with some purchase lists and free item appraisal. However, our time and energy are finite, so we will be filtering the requests. If you're unable to pass the tests, then you have no qualifications to enter these districts."

He paused for a second before continuing, "It will be the same as the previous treasure identification event. The Sacred Peafowl Mountain will be as fair and impartial as before. We will not exaggerate or make falsely low appraisals. No matter what type of treasure it is, we will give a fair pronouncement.

"Apart from this, the other Veluriyam great emperors will all be opening trading districts. In addition, the first rank sects will also have the qualifications to open transaction areas. At the same time, we will also open a special large trading district just for great emperors."

Jiang Chen had done all of this to win people's hearts.

After hearing his speech, many of the first class sects and the emperor realm experts were all surprised by his shrewd methods. Their admiration for him stepped up a notch. Young lord Zhen is clearly not a simple individual. This was beautifully done.

He continued, "Other than these special areas, there is also the largest trading district reserved for free trades. Within this section, all of our wandering cultivator friends can carry out whatever transactions they wish. However, please remember that the rules must be followed. Trades should be conducted fairly and no one is allowed to force purchases or sales. Shameful methods are strictly prohibited. Should anyone break these regulations, then they will be considered individuals who are no longer welcomed within the Dragon and Tiger Meet. We will immediately expel any troublemakers. Should any malicious plots arise, we will immediately send to stamp them out."

No one felt he was bluffing. Within the Veluriyam Capital, the young lord indeed had the qualifications to carry out such a threat. As the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain with a large group of great emperors, Jiang Chen had multitudes of troops beneath his hand. The capital was fully under his control.

“Alright, everyone should make their preparations. We will start to set up our trading districts. The trading fair will now begin!”

Sacred Peafowl Mountain had three sections available, with the most important district naturally under Jiang Chen’s authority. As for the two remaining areas, Emperor Peerless was responsible for one and the four monarchs in charge of the other.

The responsibility of administering the qualification tests were given to Pill Kings Bu and Lu Feng, as well as Mu Gaoqi and Lin Yanyu. This was also a tempering trial for the latter two.

With stringent qualification rules, much of the pressure was off Jiang Chen’s shoulders. After all, most who wanted him to assess their so-called ‘treasures’ couldn’t even past the first test.

Even if they qualified after the first round, they would likely be stuck with the four monarchs and Emperor Peerless. It was impossible that all wandering cultivators had some priceless treasure.

There were occasionally a couple of objects that even Emperor Peerless couldn’t identify, which meant they came to Jiang Chen, who would promptly accurate dissect their value.

Over half a day had passed for the trading fair and Jiang Chen still hadn’t come across even one object that made his heart race.