

Three Realms 1291

Chapter 1291: The Auction Begins

Emperor Vastsea had lied low the past several days after his defection. He knew that it wouldn't be that easy to win forgiveness and acknowledgment from Veluriyam's other great emperors. He'd spent his recent days in unease and misery. The other great emperors of the city were either knowingly or unknowingly, distancing themselves from him. It was as if he was infected with some infectious disease.

It wasn't the others fault, though. Almost all of the blame could be assigned to his past self. His current situation made him feel uneasy about the young lord's request to see him. Is young lord Zhen looking to criticize me? Is he reneging on our agreement?

Jiang Chen arrived in the middle of one of his conflicted deliberations.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Vastsea." Jiang Chen was the image of politeness.

"Oh, not at all. I wasn't busy or anything. If young lord Zhen wants to see me, waiting a few moments is nothing." Emperor Vastsea adopted a very humble position.

"There's no need for such excessive courtesy, Vastsea," Jiang Chen waved a hand. "I said already that I'm looking for actual actions rather than groveling. It's to be expected that everyone isn't going to accept you so quickly back into the fold. Don't think too much about it. Instead, make some substantial contributions. As long as you speak with your actions and properly atone, you'll eventually become a respected great emperor of the city once more."

"Yes, yes." Emperor Vastsea had spent much of his efforts prior upon buttering up to Emperor Shura. Now in new circumstances, he didn't have any ideas about how to contribute.

"Don't worry. This isn't something that can be rushed. Question: when Shura departed from Veluriyam Capital, did he bring all his wealth to Pillfire City?" Jiang Chen cut to the chase straightaway.

Emperor Vastsea was rather embarrassed. "Both his and mine are at Pillfire City, yes. When we left the city, Emperor Pillzenith forced us to leave our belongings behind under pretense of 'safekeeping'. In actuality, he was probably preparing for our indefinite absence."

Jiang Chen was greatly dismayed when he heard the expected conclusion. "I knew that old bastard would embezzle it all. How absurd Emperor Shura's actions were! He hoarded wealth all his life, but that old bastard Pillzenith was the one to benefit!"

Emperor Vastsea didn't know how to respond. He hadn't played a pleasant part in the matter, so he didn't have a right to complain. Now that the assets were in Emperor Pillzenith's hands, it wasn't going to be easy to force him to cough it up.

Seeing the young man gnash his teeth, the emperor suddenly added, "Young lord Zhen, I doubt Emperor Pillzenith will be able to get into Shura's things."

"How so?"

"Emperor Shura realized towards the end that it was hard for him to maintain any prominence in Pillfire City. Emperor Pillzenith didn't seem to care about him much. Because of this, he took the preventative

measure of placing his Shura Bloodcurse upon his storage ring. If he wasn't able to return, the Bloodcurse would serve as an unbreakable seal. If Emperor Pillzenith was to recklessly open up the storage ring, he would be irrevocably cursed."

"Oh?" This development soothed Jiang Chen's emotions over somewhat. The wealth hadn't returned to Veluriyam Capital yet, but Pillfire City couldn't use it either.

"What about your own possessions?"

"Mine... I don't know any such curses, so I put my things inside Shura's storage ring. Ah..." Emperor Vastsea had been living a pretty frugal lifestyle as of late. He hadn't brought back any of his wealth and his original subordinates had all but deserted him. Though he was still a great emperor in name, he had no followers.

"Young lord Zhen." A resolute light shone from the emperor's eyes. "I've decided. My crimes yet weigh down on me. It's hard for me to make my way alone here in Veluriyam Capital. I think it almost impossible for me to return to my former status. Therefore, I'd like to join up with you, young lord Zhen. I'll serve you just like Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers. You can count on me to be your champion... or I suppose guard isn't bad, either."

"Hmm? Why the change of mind?" Jiang Chen blinked.

"I've thought it through. Even someone like Emperor Peerless is willing to follow you. The Jiao brothers have been with you only a few days, yet their loyalty is as strong as steel. And someone as ambitious as Shura... he was arguably quite competent, but lost every match with you. All these things show the genius behind your leadership, young lord Zhen. Following you all but assures a bright future." Emperor Vastsea was extremely serious. His speech was the result of careful consideration.

"If you're set on it," Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "then I don't mind. A word of advance warning, though: if you ever become half-hearted or duplicitous, I'll be able to see that over time. I advise you not to cut your last path of escape off. I've given you a chance already, and I won't give a second."

"Young lord Zhen," Emperor Vastsea swore hurriedly, "if I change my mind henceforth, let heaven and earth destroy me, and let the five thunders annihilate my form."

"Alright. Come with me, then. I've been pretty short on manpower recently, and someone has to do the dirty work."

"Yes, young lord. Come hell or high water, I shall do as you command!" There was undeniable joy upon Emperor Vastsea's face. He knew that young lord Zhen had finally accepted him.

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Three days of trading having concluded, Jiang Chen returned to his residence. During this time, Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie had been almost inseparable. As the former's understanding of past events deepened, so too did his fascination with Jiang Chen's achievements.

At the young lord residence proper, Jiang Chen suddenly remembered something and went to find Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie.

"I've been too busy these past few days, my friends. I almost forgot to something." Smiling, Jiang Chen retrieved five cauldrons from his storage ring one by one. These five cauldrons were part of Regal Pill Palace's heritage: its five strongest legacy treasures.

Back in the Great Scarlet Mid Region, Jiang Chen had chanced upon four of the cauldrons at an auction. He'd purchased them with Wei Xing'er's assistance. His winning bid at the time was thirty-five million saint spirit stones. Jiang Chen had given his helper fifty million in return.

The sight of the five treasure cauldrons surprised both Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie. The two men widened their eyes, gazing upon the cauldrons in sheer disbelief. Many years ago, Palace Head Dan Chi had passed the Skyweave Cauldron onto Jiang Chen.

After the Myriad Domain's invasion and Regal Pill Palace's destruction, the other four fell into the hands of the Great Scarlet Mid Region, whence they eventually found themselves at an auction house. Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie had thought the other cauldrons lost to the four winds. It was a truly welcome surprise that Jiang Chen was able to produce them so readily today.

"This... young lord Zhen, where did you get them?" Elder Yun Nie was the picture of astonishment.

"I passed by Great Scarlet Mid Region once, and came upon an auction there. They were auctioning off four of the five cauldrons. I spent fifty million saint spirit stones to wrest them from their unlawful owners so that I could unify them with the Skyweave Cauldron I have. Regal Pill Palace's treasures should not be so easily lost."

"Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen..." Palace Head Dan Chi couldn't stop himself from sighing. "The Palace owes you a great deal and more."

"Hardly so, Palace Head. I too am one of the Palace's disciples. Doing this was part of my duty. Now that the five treasure cauldrons are together again, the time for Regal Pill Palace's resurgence is at hand. After recent events are over, let's discuss in more detail about how to retake the Myriad Domain!"

Palace Head Dan Chi slapped his thigh. "Perfect! I've dreamed day and night for years about this, but I didn't think that the day would come so quickly!"

"If Regal Pill Palace's resurrection is backed by young lord Zhen, its fortunes are sure to last a hundred million years!" Elder Yun Nie was excited as well.

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After extensive buildup of anticipation, the high-profile auction was underway at last.

Jiang Chen set the auction hall up in a central area. Any guest interested in participating had to pay a princely sum as a security deposit. Those without security deposits had only the right to observe; they couldn't bid.

Everyone knew that the items at this auction were very high level. Several dozen sky rank treasures had been eliminated from the auction list, which only increased the hopes of the attendees. Therefore, every guest of at least reasonable status had paid the security deposit in order to participate.

Even Master Dong Ye of the Sublime Chord Temple and the elder from the Empyrean River Palace shamelessly threw their chips in. Jiang Chen wasn't about to stop them. He'd allowed their presence in the first place, and he had more than enough courtesy to spare for such an unimportant gesture.

"Everyone, I have an announcement. To ensure the justice and fairness of this auction, I've decided to oversee the proceedings and the hammer personally. There will be no cheating involved." Jiang Chen declared to an attentive audience.

"Hold on!" Someone called out suddenly. It was the Heavenly Dragon Sect's Long Baxiang. "Young lord Zhen," he chortled, "so you're serving as the auctioneer, eh? I suppose that's a good thing. But if someone from Sacred Peafowl Mountain decides to make a bid... heh, no one would notice if you were to tap that hammer slightly faster."

"Who told you Sacred Peafowl Mountain was going to make any bids today?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

"Oh? You're not participating?" Long Baxiang narrowed his eyes.

Jiang Chen ignored him altogether. "Gentlemen, I've chosen sixteen treasures from the wandering cultivators' possessions, adding one more to their ranks. The added item is Sacred Peafowl Mountain's very own Pinecrane Pill! There are seventeen items auctioned today in all. The Pinecrane Pill will be offered last. If you're interested, feel free to hold back those stones.

"Furthermore, no member of Sacred Peafowl Mountain will make a bid today. There is nothing to be concerned." Jiang Chen looked around in a circle. The wandering cultivators had some very nice items, but none of them particularly appealed to him.

"The first item up for auction is a single fingerless glove. I'm not sure where it originates from, but it is a sky rank treasure. If worn, it increases its wearer's attack and defense by thirty percent! It is most compatible with emperor realm experts. A great emperor will enjoy a diminished ten percent benefit instead. The starting price is sixty million saint spirit stones."

Everyone went mad at the sight of merely the first item. Was there something as amazing as that? Was the seller mentally impaired? Why wasn't he keeping something this good for himself?

Chapter 1292: Display of Rare Goods

Such thoughts dissipated as quickly as they emerged. Many immediately scrambled for the item. Good treasures were desirable everywhere. Even the representatives of first rank sects participated in the scramble. The powerful experts didn't have any use for the treasure themselves, but disciples were aplenty in first rank sects.

The crowd roared to action, everyone trying to one up each other.

Jiang Chen was witnessing first hand the incredible wealth of the leading great sect figures. The 60 million starting price quickly rose to over 100 million. He didn't even have to fan the flames. The price soared through hype and momentum alone.

Utilizing his immense wealth, Shangguan Yianqing won the glove for 120 million in the end.

"Congratulations friend, the glove is now yours." The bidding had gone on for fifteen minutes. It had been incredibly fast paced with plenty of back and forths.

“Alright, the second item is an anti-poison sachet. It’s extremely old and believed to hail from the ancient ages. It renders the wearer immune to over a hundred poisons except the extremely rare varieties. It’s a must-have item for all explorers, and thus the starting bid will begin from 80 million saint spirit stones!”

Another fine item!

The anti-poison sachet was undoubtedly better than the glove. Although the latter was a fine item, its functions were a bit too simple. An anti-poison sachet that rendered the wearer immune to hundreds of poisons was simply too monstrous. Poison experts were aplenty in the martial dao world. Moreover, the world itself was filled with poison gas, mist, and more. Owning the amulet would make one’s life so much easier.

“I bid 100 million!”

“110 million.”

“120!” The price soared frantically, fully displaying the wealth of tycoons.

Jiang Chen held the auction hammer loosely. Even a child could host an auction like this one. He didn’t need to rile up the crowd because of these opulent moguls. They were so wealthy that even he was taken aback.

Is an anti-poison sachet is worthy of such madness? Won’t I be swimming in wealth if I make something even better with Golden Cicada blood?

Of course it was only a passing thought. Golden Cicada blood was too precious to be squandered like that. There were plenty of other ways to create wealth. However, it would make a good protective amulet for his subordinates. An idea immediately came to mind.

The bid for the anti-poison sachet actually rose all the way to 180 million before finally ending up in the hands of the Moon God Sect’s third sectmaster. That faction seemed to value the amulet very much.

Jiang Chen shook his head with quiet disapproval. Money wasn’t an issue for first rank sects, but spending 180 million for an amulet was clearly not worth it. But he naturally kept those words to himself.

A successful auction would only expand the Dragon and Tiger Meet’s influence. Money wasn’t an issue for the attendees. He would never feel heartache over how they spend their money.

The third item... the fourth item... One by one, the items went up for auction. They were all incredibly desirable, with every item being sold for at least 120 million and above.

Such an astonishing record left the audience flabbergasted. No wandering cultivator had ever taken part in such a prestigious auction. Auctions were normally held in private. Other than the participants, there was no other audience involved. And yet, Jiang Chen had gone against convention by setting up an auction in the middle of the arena, allowing wandering cultivators to watch from all sides.

Martial dao cultivators had clear vision from up to thousands of meters away. They were completely dumbfounded by the scale of the auction. A wealthy man’s world was completely different from theirs!

Some gasped in admiration, some hung their heads in depression, while others grit their teeth with envy.

Even the wandering great emperors were feeling extremely uncomfortable, let alone the common folks. A total of twenty-three wandering great emperors was in attendance, including a few titans like Emperor Wellspring. Unfortunately, they hadn't even acquired a single thing after so many rounds. Time and time again, they were defeated by the great sects' overwhelming wealth.

It wasn't that they couldn't afford these items, they just simply couldn't bear to spend their wealth like the great sects. Dissatisfaction started to appear on their faces. Meanwhile, the auction continued...

One by one, the items were snapped up by the great sects. Jiang Chen had finally gotten first hand experience of how big the wealth discrepancy was. Wandering cultivators simply couldn't compete with this pure abundance.

"The twelfth item on auction is the Thundernote Fruit. It's a fruit that always comes in pairs. It might not familiar to most of you, so allow me to introduce it. First of all, it can't be categorized. It isn't meant to be consumed by great emperor, emperor, sage, or even origin realm cultivators. Rather, it's meant to be consumed by those in the true qi and spirit realm.

"What?"

"Why's something like that on auction? Young lord Zhen, surely this is a joke?"

"Is this an item from Sacred Peafowl Mountain meant to make up the numbers?"

"Emperor Dragontyrant, do you have a feud with the young lord? Why does it seem like you're always looking to cause him trouble?"

"Hah! Why would I have a feud with a kid that's still wet behind the ears?"

The crowd speculated fiercely as they simply couldn't understand why such a thing had been chosen for the auction.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "As expected, there aren't many that recognizes the fruit. The Thundernote Fruit is meant to be consumed when one is achieving a breakthrough to the spirit realm. It changes one's constitution to one that attracts and can condense heavenly thunder, allowing one to cultivate the dao of celestial thunder. Once the constitution has fully developed, one will be able to cultivate various ancient thunder techniques and call upon thunder during the cultivation process. Once the genius steps into the emperor realm, he'll be invincible against opponents of the same level."

The crowd instantly fell silent.

A thunder constitution? That was an extremely rare constitution!

Experts that cultivated the dao of thunder were few and far in between. The few that did had only a grasp of surface basics. They didn't truly walk on the dao of thunder. However, Jiang Chen was talking about a genuine thunder constitution!

"Also, once the cultivator reaches the sage realm, the fruit grants the user the ability to cultivate both the thunder and wind elements. The combination of speed and ferocity will decimate all same-tier

opponents and maybe even a few levels above. Of course, that's assuming that the cultivator can breakthrough to the sage realm. The fruit will be a complete waste if it's given to someone with subpar talents in martial dao."

The leading figures of various sects brainstormed strategies amongst themselves to get their hands on the treasure. It'd be a sin to let an item of this caliber slip through their fingers! First rank sects like them had plenty of talented disciples. Breaking through to sage realm would be a cinch! Finding a suitable candidate to consume the fruit would be the least of their problems.

"The auction for the Thundernote Fruit starts at 130 million!"

"150 million!" Someone immediately yelled after Jiang Chen declared the starting price.

"The Skysword Sect bids 180 million!"

"The Heavenly Dragon Sect bids 200 million! Sectmaster Han, we will not back down."

The competition was much fiercer this time. The price rose at an extremely exaggerating rate. 20 to 30 million raises were the norm.

The owner of the Thundernote Fruit was standing just a few meters away the arena. He didn't think that his treasure would be chosen when he'd initially registered. And to think that it was actually such a precious item!

He started to regret his decision. However, he quickly realized that he'd passed the opportunity to take it. Keep it for his descendants? He didn't even have a dao partner, let alone children. Moreover, there was no guarantee that his descendants would be able to reach sage or emperor realm.

The martial dao world was cruel and unrelenting. A wandering cultivator was always one step away from death. Exchanging the fruit for spirit stones was clearly the most logical choice.

The first rank sects were scrambling to cast their bids. Even Emperor Petalpluck could no longer keep his composure and joined the fray.

Emperor Dragontyrant immediately protested when Emperor Petalpluck placed a bid. "Young lord Zhen, didn't you say that your men will not join the auction? Why have you gone back on your words?"

"Emperor Dragontyrant, why go through so much trouble if all you wish to do is stir up trouble? Emperor Petalpluck is a great emperor from Veluriyam Capital true, but he has very little to do with Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Why are you so fervent on raising dissent? Any more nonsense and I'll expel you from the auction. I trust that none of the others will object." Jiang Chen remarked coldly.

Emperor Dragontyrant had offended a lot of people due to his overzealousness during the auction. The crowd immediately burst into laughter, clearly delighted by his misfortune.

The Heavenly Dragon Sect had always taken pride in their reputation as the greatest among the first rank sects, but not even Long Baxiang could afford to offend Jiang Chen despite his tendency to do whatever he wanted.

His face turned green and purple, but somehow, he managed to keep a hold on his anger. He glared at Jiang Chen hatefully, but said nothing else.

The crowd took great pleasure in Long Baxiang's misfortune, but at the same time, they couldn't help but fear Jiang Chen more and more. Young lord Zhen is already so dominating at such a young age. Even an overbearing person like Long Baxiang doesn't dare fool around in front of him. His influence is truly to be feared.

Chapter 1293: Fighting Over Supreme Treasures

The battle over the Thundernote Fruit was especially fierce. The entrance of Emperor Petalpluck's faction into the fray only intensified the conflict.

The wandering cultivators who'd had their treasures eliminated yesterday were thoroughly convinced by now. As young lord Zhen had said, there was an undeniable gap between the treasures chosen for auction and their own. To put the latter with the former would be out of place. Every item on sale today was far more excellent than theirs could ever be.

The Thundernote Fruit was the twelfth item, the last of the standard treasures. The remaining four were amazing enough to be classified as supreme rank, which meant their values far outpaced the Fruit's.

Because of this, many slowly backed off from the fight for the Fruit as the price rose steadily.

Over by the wandering cultivators, Emperor Reliance sighed prettily. "These people are rich beyond words. Old Brother Hui, it seems that we wandering cultivator heavyweights can't compare at all to those sect-affiliated guys."

Emperor Wellspring was in the upper half of the six wandering cultivator titans. He was widely considered to be quite wealthy among his wanderer peers. Compared to these sect giants however, he couldn't do much more than lament. He wasn't able to spend stones nearly as readily as a sect member at the same level.

"I'm beginning to understand why Brother Peerless joined up with Sacred Peafowl Mountain." The emperor laughed self-deprecatingly.

Emperors Reliance and Inferno both glanced at Emperor Peerless, only to see the man in question the very image of serenity. He looked upon the bustling auction with a cool smile, as if he was some far-off impartial observer.

It gave off the impression that the emperor wasn't particularly interested in anything on auction today. No one from Sacred Peafowl Mountain was participating, after all. The comparison made the two onlooking wandering cultivator emperors feel a bit lost. Weren't they supposed to be on the same level, since they were equally famous and strong?

The Thundernote Fruit's current bid now exceeded three hundred million saint spirit stones.

Jiang Chen found the frenzied proceedings somewhat laughable. The Thundernote Fruit was rather precious, but the bid for it had exceeded its fair market value a while ago. These people were letting temper cloud their judgments.

In the end, three factions remained in the bidding war. One was the Heavenly Dragon Sect, one was the Great Yu Skysword Sect, and the last, Emperor Petalpluck's faction. All three parties were intent on nabbing the Fruit.

Jiang Chen didn't quite know why Emperor Petalpluck was so set on buying the fruit. In his opinion, any price higher than two hundred million was excessive. There was no reason whatsoever for the emperor to participate when the current bid was over three hundred.

"Cloudsoar," The young lord messaged the nearby monarch. "Go tell Emperor Petalpluck that the Thundernote Fruit isn't worth bidding on at a price of over three hundred million. It's high time to withdraw."

Cloudsoar Monarch walked toward Emperor Petalpluck, muttering a few phrases in the latter's ear. The kindly emperor looked thoughtful for a few moments, but dejectedly yielded in the end. There was no reason for him not to believe what Jiang Chen had said.

The monarch also looked at Han Qiansui half-deliberately, the Great Yu Skysword Sect head's brother. Han Qiansui had been paying attention to outside activity for quite a while.

Cloudsoar Monarch's meaningful glance made Han Qiansui thoughtful. "Big brother, that's enough," he muttered to Han Qianzhan beside him.

Han Qianzhan chuckled. "I bid three hundred fifty thousand."

"Bid, three hundred sixty thousand." The Heavenly Dragon Sect's Long Baxiang retorted thoughtlessly.

"Three hundred seventy."

"Three hundred eighty." Long Baxiang's eyes reddened.

"Alright, then. It's yours." Han Qianzhan suddenly changed the topic, ignoring any opportunities for further bids. The audience was collectively shocked.

Han Qianzhan had made several rapid-fire bids in a row. Why had he stopped so suddenly? Wasn't he determined to get it?

Long Baxiang adopted a proud expression. "Sect Head Han," he laughed, "Your Skysword Sect seems to be a bit... lacking in the end. Like I said earlier, no one will take this item from me."

Han Qianzhan shrugged. "I haven't wanted the fruit since after the two hundred million mark. I stuck around because I wanted to see how much extra money you had to burn, hahaha!"

Long Baxiang's disdainful expression froze. It was as if someone had choked his throat in the middle of a laugh. He felt like he'd been duped.

"Three hundred eighty million, going once, going twice... three times!" Jiang Chen's tone was highly pretentious. "Congratulations, Emperor Dragontyrant. The Thundernote Fruit is yours."

As the auctioneer, he desperately wanted to deride Long Baxiang right at that moment. Thankfully, he managed to suppress his urges successfully in the end.

Each lingering glance at Jiang Chen's odd smile made Long Baxiang's distaste stronger. He intuited that something was off somehow and he'd been played for a fool. It was as if he'd just swallowed a large fly.

"Alright, that concludes the twelve sky rank treasures. The four supreme rank treasures are next, and the Pinecrane Pill will come after that."

“The first supreme rank treasure is a sky rank fire source. What’s a sky rank fire? It’s a fire with spirit energy born out of the natural essence between heaven and earth. In the heavenly planes, there are many flavors of sky rank fires. But in the human domain of the Divine Abyss Continent, sky rank fires are exceptionally difficult to find. This fire source isn’t exactly one of the strongest among its same-rank brethren, but it’s still quite rare. Named Rakshasa Fire, its natural ferocity makes it very compatible with fire dao cultivators. One note, however. It can only be used for killing, not refining pills. It’s a fire that brings only death.

“As for the starting price... once again, three million.”

Rakshasa Fire? Sky rank fire sources received their classification by public agreement. Any fire that burned with pure unbridled wrath was eligible to some extent, but such sources were rare in the world of martial dao. In the human domain especially, sky rank fires were severely scarce.

Many hermit pill emperors refined sky rank fires during their cultivation. They then possessed the fire sources within them, allowing them to dominate most top rank pill kings in pill-refining methodology. Oftentimes, the difference between a top rank pill king and a pill emperor was a single sky rank fire source.

Unfortunately, the Rakshasa Fire was appropriate only for martial cultivation. More accurately, it had an affinity for killing. Everyone knew how precious a sky rank fire source was. Thus, many people engaged in a frantic contest for the spark.

This time, Emperor Skysplitter was one of those people.

Long Baxiang was silent this time. His recent purchase of the Thundernote Fruit meant he wasn’t about to race for this item. His amount of capital on hand wasn’t so abundant that he could bid on everything. Without Long Baxiang’s deep pockets in the mix, the Rakshasa Fire’s auction remained mostly civil.

Surprisingly, Emperor Inferno won in the end. The emperor staked everything he had on the bidding war, employing positively suicidal tactics against multiple sects. He managed to secure the desired item at a final price of five hundred twenty million.

It was a sum tremendous enough to tear a huge chunk out of his wallet. But the Rakshasa Fire was an unmissable opportunity for a fire attribute wandering cultivator like him. It was highly unlikely he’d get another like it.

Emperor Inferno’s purchase marked the first time a wandering cultivator great emperor was able to obtain anything of worth at an auction.

“Haha, congratulations, Daoist Inferno! It’s quite possible that we six titans will need to re-rank ourselves in a few years,” Emperor Reliance grinned.

“Compliments to you, Brother Inferno,” Emperor Wellspring applauded as well.

“Many thanks.” Emperor Inferno welcomed the goodwill. Internally, he was extremely excited, not to mention thankful that he’d come to the Dragon and Tiger Meet. If he had decided otherwise out of meaningless restraint, he would’ve missed out on such a magnificent prize! He knew better than anyone what sky rank fire sources meant for a cultivator like him.

“Congratulations to Emperor Inferno. The second supreme rank treasure is something everyone has heard of already: the Seven Star Convergence Talisman. I’ve gone over its effects before, too. It defends against attacks from seven different attributes, making it a perfect defensive treasure. It has multiple usages, is easy to carry and activate. The starting price is three hundred million saint spirit stones.”

Though this price was identical to the price that the Rakshasa Fire had finished at, the bidders were far more delirious in their competition for the talisman. Though the fire was valuable, not everyone found it useful. The talisman on the other hand, was a superbly effective defensive treasure. Almost everyone could use it, and it was able to safeguard someone’s life at a crucial moment.

“I’ll buy it for three hundred thirty million.”

“Three hundred sixty.”

“Four hundred.”

The bids’ rate of increase was noticeably faster than that of the Rakshasa Fire’s. The price soared above four hundred million in only a few short exchanges, with no hint of slowing down.

Jiang Chen shook his head to himself at the bidders’ eagerness. It seems that many fear death. The Seven Star Convergence Talisman is only a protective charm, yet people are vying for it without regard for practicality or prudence.

As he thought, even the likes of Long Baxiang could not ignore the Seven Star Convergence Talisman. He joined the bidding without a second thought.

“Should we make some bids on your behalf, young lord?” The Jiao brothers messaged.

“No, that’s alright. The talisman is very good, but there’s no need to spend so many stones on it.” Jiang Chen didn’t see the point of the treasure. He admired the talisman’s craftsmanship and potency, but at the rate things were going, it was unlikely to go for anything below six hundred million.

It was absolute madness in here.

He felt the actual value of the talisman was three to four hundred million at most. Though it defended against every attribute with a great emperor rank defense, no talisman was perfect.

If its user used the talisman to defend against the first attack, he would be helpless against the second or third without a method of escape. Of course, in the world of martial dao, there was often a hair’s difference between life and death. The defense of a talisman could quite literally save someone’s life.

Jiang Chen understood the reasons for it, but that didn’t mean he was going to pay out such a meaningless sum. He didn’t want to spend the spirit stones on something as trivial as this.

Chapter 1294: An Astronomical Price

Just as Jiang Chen expected, the battle for the Seven Star Convergence Talisman was exceedingly fierce. Surprisingly, the elder from Empyrean River Palace was the one to win out in the end. A stupendously wild result, to be sure.

The elder was the lowest ranked of all the first rank representatives present today. He persisted in the end against so many of his betters and spent the exorbitant sum of six hundred million to wrest the talisman from the auction.

“They’re all fabulously rich without question.” Jiang Chen sighed. First rank sects controlled entire upper regions, after all. It was obvious they would accumulate a king’s ransom in the process.

A fourth rank sect like Regal Pill Palace wouldn’t come close to being worth six hundred million even if every member’s wealth was added together. It was a perfect illustration of the gap between rich and poor. Of course, Jiang Chen was all but numb by now with regards to these fellows’ purchasing powers.

“The third supreme rank treasure...”

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“The fourth supreme rank treasure...”

The auction went on, and the third and fourth supreme rank treasures were fought and spoken for. In the end, the winning bids were as jaw-dropping as the others.

The fourth supreme rank treasure was a mysterious image meant for meditation. It contained a method for cultivating one’s consciousness, and its owner ended up being a rather forceful Emperor Petalpluck.

The four supreme rank treasures’ auctions were finally complete. Rather than the winning bidders, the wandering cultivators behind these treasures were the happiest ones today. They were overjoyed from the bottom of their hearts as the price of their treasures had soared into the stratosphere.

They’d attempted to appraise their treasures elsewhere before now, but some had been completely unidentifiable while others were intentionally vastly undervalued. At the Dragon and Tiger Meet, young lord Zhen hadn’t only determined the treasures’ true prices; he’d maximized their values for the owners as well. How could they not be thankful and elated in light of this?

The sum their treasures had fetched was beyond their wildest dreams. The frenetic bidding of the well-to-do taught them what a large sect’s affluence and style really meant. It was a kind of magnificence that even the wandering cultivator great emperors were depressed by. Compared to sect giants, they barely broke the poverty line.

The conclusion of the fourth supreme rank treasure’s bid marked an emotional lull for the attendees. After a brief reprieve however, their nerves snapped taut once more. There was something exciting that was soon to come!

The Pinecrane Pill!

With a collected look, Jiang Chen swept the whole crowd. “My honored guests. After an intense series of auctions, this is the moment you’ve all been waiting for. May I present: the Pinecrane Pill!

“I do have one comment. The Pinecrane Pill can’t be mass-produced. Sacred Peafowl Mountain will not sell it to the outside world. Only those on good relations with myself are eligible to seek me out for its purchase. Therefore, the opportunity you have before you is a rare one indeed.”

As he said this, Jiang Chen produced a jade box. Within was a single Pinecrane Pill, exuding an alluring scent and hue. As soon as the box was opened, a vigorous aura burst forth from within. It was as if time had been stopped right at this moment, and it was even being turned backward somewhat.

“The Pinecrane Pill is able to extend the lives of emperor and great emperor realm cultivators for eight hundred to a thousand years. The starting bid is five hundred million saint spirit stones!” Jiang Chen’s voice was as clanging steel. He lifted up the box with the pill high into the air.

Five hundred million saint spirit stones was the highest starting bid among all auction items today. Every wandering cultivator great emperor that had participated in the hunting down of Emperor Shura beforehand was both amazed and relieved.

They were truly grateful for having been smart enough to agree to Jiang Chen’s trade. They didn’t have nearly enough stones to spend on something like this otherwise!

Even though the Pinecrane Pill wasn’t necessarily worth this much, its scarcity meant that its price would be artificially inflated. And no one save for Sacred Peafowl Mountain knew how to refine the pill in the first place.

Even Emperor Wellspring was surprised by the price. Hindsight told him exactly how advantageous the earlier deal had been.

Emperors Inferno and Reliance traded a look, grateful relief evident in their eyes. They could afford five hundred million, but that was the starting bid. The pill was liable to end at a price of a billion or more. A sect giant wouldn’t bat an eyelash at spending that much, but wandering cultivator great emperors would be heartbroken at the expense.

“I will pay six hundred million!”

“Six hundred fifty million.”

“Seven hundred.”

“Eight hundred for me!”

.....

The auction became a pot of boiling oil with the introduction of the Pinecrane Pill. There were clamoring voices everywhere, each desperate to make a higher bid than the last. The first rank sect heavyweights were especially enthusiastic.

“Eight hundred sixty million.”

“Nine hundred million.”

Remarkably, there were some wandering great emperors among the bidders. They were the ones that hadn’t participated in the hunt against Emperor Shura, and they desired the pill just as much as everyone else.

Alas, a wandering great emperor’s purchasing power could not compare to a first rank sect’s. They were forced out of the bidding wars extremely quickly.

The bidding war between first rank sects waged ever on. The Great Yu Skysword Sect's Han Qianzhan and the Celestial Cicada Court's Su Huanzhen had also joined the increasingly fierce conflict.

Though they were on good terms with Jiang Chen and therefore didn't need the pill right then, they'd done so in order to drive up demand and price. In other words, they were doing Jiang Chen and Sacred Peafowl Mountain an indirect favor.

Jiang Chen noted their intentions and was pleased with the rapid uptick in bid prices. Both the Empyrean River Palace and the Sublime Chord Temple were relentless bidders, despite their relative allegiances to Pillfire City. They also selectively ignored their recent animosity with the pill's owner.

Over at Veluriyam Capital's side, the city's other great emperors had received notice from Jiang Chen not to participate. There was no reason to offer their opponents any ammunition. Their absence didn't lessen the crazed atmosphere around the Pinecrane Pill one bit.

The price of the pill shot past a billion in the blink of an eye.

Once it did so, several factions slowly retreated from the fray. A price as lofty as that was beyond the reasonable grasp of many. The factions that remained went at it with renewed intensity.

The Empyrean River Palace, Sublime Chord Temple, Heavenly Dragon Sect, Skysword Sect, Celestial Cicada Court, and Moon God Sect... These were the factions that remained.

Jiang Chen knew what these people were thinking. They wanted to take the pill home with them to research it. If the research was successful, there was the potential to refine reasonably good imitations. However, the Pinecrane Pill wouldn't deserve its name and reputation if it was easy to duplicate.

Even if the winning sect did successfully analyze its components, the pill was impossible to refine without Jiang Chen's personal recipe and tips.

The art of refining pills wasn't a textbook process. Each step required meticulous care. One error at any point would result in thorough failure. A hair's difference meant total divergence. If this weren't so, there wouldn't be so many exclusive pills in the marketplace today.

Why the exclusivity? Because most technically intensive pills couldn't be replicated through simple analysis alone.

The bidding continued until the price reached twelve hundred million, at which point several factions were driven out of the match. The factions that remained were the Heavenly Dragon Sect, Sublime Chord Temple, Empyrean River Palace, and Moon God Sect, who still bid against each other incessantly.

The margin increase in their bids was much smaller, however.

"Twelve hundred eighty million!" Long Baxiang punched out a crazy price viciously.

Master Dong Ye of the Sublime Chord Temple didn't move an eyelid. "Thirteen hundred million."

"Does the Sublime Chord Temple have to foil us at every turn, Master Dong Ye?" An agitated Long Baxiang affixed Master Dong Ye with a savage stare.

The Buddhist master closed his eyes. He didn't want to bother with a retort.

Emperor Peerless, who'd been tasked with keeping order at the scene, intervened in his stead. "Emperor Dragontyrant, each and every party has the right to bid here at the auction. Please maintain some decorum."

Long Baxiang exhaled angrily, but uttered no comeback. He poured all of his fury into the ensuing bidding. "Thirteen hundred twenty million."

Master Dong Ye remained impassive. "Thirteen hundred thirty million."

"Fourteen hundred million!"

"Fourteen hundred ten million."

"You..." Long Baxiang was getting starting to lose his temper now. "Fourteen hundred, sixty million."

"Fourteen hundred seventy million."

"Fifteen hundred million!"

"Fifteen hundred ten million." Master Dong Ye had a strong grasp on the rhythm of the auction. He only ever added ten million at a time, no matter how much Long Baxiang pushed the price up.

Moreover, he did so with a blank face the entire time. It was as if he was buying a head of cabbage in a common marketplace, so deadpan was his manner. No hint of emotion was visible on his face whatsoever.

In terms of self-restraint, Long Baxiang was solidly at a disadvantage. He glared at Master Dong Ye in a deadlock stare. He almost wanted to pierce his opponent with his look alone. Master Dong Ye's face, on the other hand, was as inscrutable as ever.

"You win!" Long Baxiang slammed a fist into his chair. "I'll remember you, Sublime Chord Temple!"

It seemed that the expert from the Heavenly Dragon Sect was giving up at last. Master Dong Ye was uncontested.

"Fifteen hundred ten million, going once. Is there any higher price?"

"The Celestial Cicada Court bids sixteen hundred million," Su Huanzhen suddenly interjected from the side.

The woman hadn't bid for a long time now. Her abrupt assertion made Master Dong Ye blink. The Buddhist master's droopy eyelids flipped upward, his eyes glancing toward the head of the Celestial Cicada Court. He glared with his Buddha Warrior's Eye, attempting to judge Su Huanzhen's true intentions.

Su Huanzhen disregarded him entirely, a faint smile hanging upon her lips.

Having read absolutely nothing from the sect head, Master Dong Ye emotionlessly intoned, "Sixteen hundred ten million."

Su Huanzhen giggled. "Young lord Zhen, I owed Emperor Peafowl a favor from long ago. I think this hundred million windfall should be enough to barely cover it, hmm?"

The entire audience burst into laughter, looking at Master Dong Ye with eyes that considered him a fool.

Chapter 1295: The Auction Comes To An End

Master Dong Ye remained unperturbed. There wasn't even a hint of frustration on his face.

"1.61 billion going once, twice, thrice... and sold!" Jiang Chen flicked a glance at Master Dong Ye and smiled. "Congratulations! The Pinecrane Pill is yours. I've engraved my personal seal onto the pill, so do take good care of it. Remember to break the seal before taking the pill. I'm not liable for any damage incurred after the seal is broken."

The young lord was extremely wary of the monk. The bald donkey seemed loyal and kind on the surface, but harbored all kinds of malice within. If it wasn't for him, the fake wandering cultivator from before wouldn't have been able to stir up such a large ruckus.

Jiang Chen had no choice but to take some precautions when selling the Pinecrane Pill to him. It was better to be safe than sorry as there was no guarantee that the monk wouldn't stir up trouble in the future.

"Young lord Zhen, I'm already aware of that." The monk answered blandly.

"That's good. You can still withdraw as the money hasn't been paid. You'll only lose some of your deposit. It'll be too late for regrets once the item has exchanged hands." One had to make the terms clear when dealing with someone like Master Dong Ye. Jiang Chen didn't feel the need to withhold anything in front of so many people.

Master Dong Ye snorted coldly. "Let's verify the goods." He walked up and observed the pill meticulously for over an hour before nodding. "It's a deal."

Jiang Chen hadn't expected Master Dong Ye to be that wealthy. The monk didn't wrinkle his forehead in the slightest when counting out 1.61 billion saint spirit stones.

The other auction items underwent verification as well. The items were collected after the money was paid.

With that, the grand auction finally came to an end. Almost every great faction had bought something they desired. The only group that had gotten nothing out of the auction were the wandering cultivators. Emperor Inferno was the only one who won a bid in the auction for the Rakshasa Fire.

"Everyone, thank you all for coming. I'm truly flabbergasted by your opulence and sheer wealth. Veluriyam Capital will host similar auctions in the future. For all we know, something even more rare or desirable might show up then! We'll definitely make you feel that you've gotten your money's worth!"

Jiang Chen raised a cupped fist salute. "The trading event has officially come to an end! From tomorrow onwards, I'll be giving lectures and having pill dao exchanges with everyone. But a few things before that. The pill dao lectures will involve a wide range of topics ranging from pill dao fundamentals to interesting theories, but no open discussion of pill recipes. I'll also be answering questions on final day of the lecture to relieve you of any confusion. Priority will be given to our wandering friends as they are the main audience of the Dragon and Tiger Meet. Ninety percent of the questions will be theirs, while

the remaining ten will be given to the representatives of the great sects. I hope to be enlightened by all of you.”

“Alright! That’s wonderful!”

“Young lord Zhen! You have our support!”

“As expected of young lord Zhen! We’ll forever support you just for this reason alone!”

“To think that young lord Zhen is so considerate of us! Young lord Zhen, you ‘re too kind!”

“Young lord Zhen, you truly are a man amongst men!”

The wandering cultivators broke into thunderous applause. They were completely touched by Jiang Chen’s actions. They didn’t care if it was just for show. It was a good gesture all the same.

Many powerful factions were participating in the event, yet young lord Zhen was showing favouritism towards the wandering cultivators instead.

The crowd felt that young lord Zhen was a man of his word and an extremely charismatic person. The auction came to a close amidst cheers from the wandering cultivators.

“Item owners please rest assured that all proceeds from the auction will be handed over to you. Also, we won’t be taking a cut since this is our first auction.”

No cut?!

Even the guests were shocked by the announcement. Such generosity! The proceeds from the auction were in the tens of billions. Even a low cut of ten percent would’ve netted him at least a billion! And yet, the young lord had chosen not to collect a single spirit stone.

“Hmm... that kid is a lot more astute than he appears.” The elder from the Empyrean River Palace was extremely taken aback. “How can he remain so composed in front of so much wealth? His actions doesn’t really reflect his youth. In fact, he’s much more excellent than Emperor Peafowl in his youth. The disciple has already surpassed the master.”

You little fame-seeking brat! Emperor Dragontyrant was also quite shocked. How is he so astute at such a young age? One can only imagine the heights he’ll reach in the future. Is he trying to recruit those wandering cultivators by currying favor from them? Hmph! Wishful thinking. Those ingrates can never be bought with money or favor. Giving up his cut is far from enough to gain their undying loyalty!

Emperor Dragontyrant condemned Jiang Chen’s actions. He believed that the young lord was too overzealous and there was no way his plan would work.

Wandering cultivators were loose sand. It was easier to teach a pig flight than to gain sovereignty over the wandering world. Throughout history, there’d been countless heroes who’d deemed themselves worthy, only to fail in the end. Some even lost everything during their attempt.

Various factions congratulated Jiang Chen after the trading event came to a close.

“Congratulations, young lord Zhen. The Pinecrane Pill was sold for such a high price that Sacred Peafowl Mountain will be well-fed for many generations to come!”

“You’ve widened my horizons. Only a few pills have ever been sold for such a tantalizing amount in history.”

“Agreed, but it’s understandable. The Pinecrane Pill is likely one of the top five pills throughout history.” The crowd was obviously very impressed by the pill.

It was a pill that everyone yearned for. Unfortunately, the young lord had already mentioned that the pill wouldn’t be sold to the public and would only be transacted with his close confidantes. It meant that the only way to get the pill was through an auction or a private deal with the young lord. Thus, everyone quickly rushed to curry favor from the young lord.

Emperor Coiling Dragon sighed. “Young lord Zhen, I’ve never truly known how much I owed you until this day. To think that the Pinecrane Pill is actually be worth so much! Young lord, I’m eternally grateful.”

“Haha! Young lord Zhen, the Skysword Sect wishes to reserve two Pinecrane Pills! Surely you won’t reject a brother’s request!” Han Qianzhan cut straight to the point. There was no reason for him to beat around the bush. “Young lord, hiring you as our guest pill king is the smartest thing I’ve ever done in my life! I feel damn good!”

A thick skin is of paramount importance if one wished to be well fed. Since they were already collaborating with each other, there was no reason to be shy.

Su Huanzhen laughed. “Young lord Zhen, I’ve never owed Emperor Peafowl any favors but since I’ve helped you make a hundred million more from that monk, won’t you consider making a Pinecrane Pill for the Celestial Cicada Court as well?”

“Young lord Zhen... It’s not easy for me to say this, but the Pinecrane Pill is simply irresistible. We of the Ninesuns Sky Sect...”

“Young lord Zhen, whenever you have the chance to, do visit us at the Moon God Sect.” The Moon God Sect’s third sectmaster no longer restrained herself as well.

Various other wandering great emperors also went up to the young lord to curry favor. They were filled with regret. Why hadn’t they agreed to Jiang Chen’s terms back then? What a wasted opportunity! Hesitation had costed them the deal of a lifetime.

Jiang Chen was overwhelmed by their enthusiasm. “Everyone, the Pinecrane Pill doesn’t grow on trees. Its availability depends entirely on fate. When it’s finally available, I’ll definitely prioritize all of you. I give you my word.”

“Excellent! Young lord Zhen, I’ve been waiting for you to say that!”

“Such straightforwardness! Young lord Zhen, you’re a man worth befriending!” Shangguan Yanqing from the Ninesuns Sky Sect was obviously currying favor with Jiang Chen.

“Wonderful!” It took awhile for the crowd to finally disperse. Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers were the only ones who remained.

“Young lord Zhen, the earnings from the auction are quite significant. Not asking for a cut is a huge waste.” Emperor Peerless stated in a low voice.

“Agreed. They’ll be more than willing even if the cut was a fifth of earnings. They’re getting off much too easily.” Jiao Yun sighed.

“Young lord, you’ve been showing so much good will to wandering cultivators. Surely you don’t plan on roping in the entire wandering world?” Jiao Feng asked curiously.

Jiang Chen smiled blandly. “That remains to be seen. However, don’t you feel that the wandering world is full of potential?”

“Oh? Why is that?” Emperor Peerless smiled wryly. “You’ve now seen the discrepancy of wealth between the leaders of the wandering world and the great sects. Our potential doesn’t hold a candle to the great sects.”

He was slightly pessimistic after seeing what had transpired today.

Chapter 1296: Daner Emerges From Closed Door Cultivation

“Old Brother Mo, you’re thinking from the perspective of wealth. To be frank, I’m not considering the personal fortunes of the wandering cultivator world, but the manpower within. It may look like I’ve spent a bit of personal wealth today, but the uproar caused by the events of the past few days will certainly travel to all corners of the human domain in the months to come. Think about it for a moment. When more and more people build your reputation for you, what need is there to be concerned with Pillfire City then?”

Jiang Chen had indeed given up a great deal of money today since he’d given more than a fair price for the treasures that hadn’t been auctioned, and taken not a single stone from the auction. He’d expended more than 1.5 billion spirit stones today.

But honestly, he didn’t lack for these spirit stones at all. If he wanted to earn money, he had at least a dozen ways to easily earn all of these spirit stones back.

After the auction, Jiang Chen had plenty of spirit stones again after he collected from Master Dong Ye. Back in his residence, he didn’t rest before diving straight into preparations for the pill dao lectures.

After a night of effort, he finally organized all manner of thoughts and topics. The wandering cultivators were the main audience of the classes this time, so his content also specifically focused on questions and issues this demographic would grapple with. Thanks to various channels, the young lord had a decent understanding of the exact points that wandering cultivators usually lacked knowledge in.

“Pill King Bu, Pill King Lu Feng, Lin Yanyu, and Mu Gaoqi — come help me with the lectures over the next three days.”

The four were delighted to hear their names. This was another learning opportunity!

On the next day, Jiang Chen’s appearance was greeted with cheers and roars of approval. All of the wandering cultivators rose to welcome him with a standing ovation.

“Young lord Zhen! Young lord Zhen! Young lord Zhen!”

The unanimous shouts illustrated just how much they were looking forward to him and the lectures today. The yells rippled out from Veluriyam Capital like passionate waves, extending for several kilometers in all directions, bringing with them the enthusiasm of the gathering.

At the same time in a deep patch of bamboo forest in the rear mountains of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, a bamboo door creaked open, allowing the gentle, morning rays to grace the inside of the thatched hut.

A beautiful figure appeared in front of it. She was dainty, pretty, and charming, as if an orchid blooming deep in the mountains.

"You, you're out of seclusion, miss?" A maid was washing clothes in the nearby creek and ran over barefoot when she heard the noise.

"Cui'er, what's going on outside for it to be so noisy?" The beautiful figure had a slightly wan complexion due to prolonged avoidance of the sun.

"Miss..." Cui'er's eyes reddened and tears began flowing. She sobbed with utter heartbreak, as if she'd suffered the gravest injustice in the world. "Miss, you locked yourself up for five years. Cui'er was so, so worried about you!"

Emperor Peafowl had originally brought Miss Dan'er back from Myriad Domain, and she'd announced a sealed door cultivation for three years because of annoyance from harassment from Veluriyam dandies.

However, three years had turned into five before she finally emerged. Cui'er was her body servant and had valiantly remained here all this time. Now that her mistress had finally emerged, how would the little girl be able to keep her emotions in? Her pent-up feelings exploded along with her tears.

She wiped her eyes dry a long time later. "Miss, it's wonderful that you're out. You look like you've lost a lot of weight."

The little girl was quite pained by this.

Miss Dan'er stroked Cui'er's head gently. "Cui'er, you're a big girl now too. It's my fault that I haven't settled your affairs properly after all of these years and in fact, delayed things for you."

"Miss, what kind of words are these?" The maid hurriedly responded. "Cui'er is meant to serve the miss. It's my duty to wait until I'm old, much less five or fifty years!"

Dan'er sighed softly at this response and frowned slightly after. "Cui'er, you haven't told me yet why it's so noisy outside."

Cui'er made a face. "Apparently we're holding some Dragon and Tiger Meet these days. All of the wandering cultivators in the world have come. And... all of the great first rank sects have sent representatives as well."

"Oh? Is His Majesty hosting it?" Miss Dan'er blinked. "He's always liked peace and quiet, so why would he hold an event like this?"

Cui'er's eyes reddened again when she heard the words 'His Majesty'. Her mouth curved downward and she seemed to want to cry again.

"What's wrong, Cui'er?" A bad premonition flashed across Miss Dan'er's heart.

"Miss, I hear people say that His Majesty's fallen..." The maid responded timidly.

"What?!" Dan'er's expression changed drastically. "Cui'er, don't sprout nonsense!"

"I'm not, miss! His Majesty left Sacred Peafowl Mountain not long after you entered seclusion. Some rumors popped up after, and he hasn't appeared even with everything that's happened recently. A lot of people in the capital have accepted this by now."

"Impossible!" Dan'er frowned ferociously. "Where did you hear this nonsense from?? His Majesty is almighty and powerful, how would he be gone just like this?"

"Miss, Cui'er also thinks that His Majesty is invincible. Young lord Zhen... young lord Zhen also said that even if His Majesty temporarily can't return, he's not dead."

"Young lord Zhen?" Dan'er had some impression of this name. The young lord had earned quite a name for himself when Pillfire City had come knocking... all of this had happened before her sealed door cultivation.

"That's right. He's also the organizer behind the Dragon and Tiger Meet. Miss, you don't know that we've been in a very dangerous position since the rumors came out that His Majesty is no more. Young lord Zhen wasn't at home then, the four monarchs didn't know what to do and didn't dare take a single step away from Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It wasn't until... young lord Zhen came back that the situation settled. I remember... them saying that Emperor Shura wanted to rebel and called for a Vassal Meeting to take over the capital. Young lord Zhen came back in time and handily defeated Emperor Shura, crushing the conspiracy to protect Sacred Peafowl Mountain's position and prevent the capital from splintering..."

Dan'er's mind was completely blank. She didn't care at all about what the young lord had done. She was completely preoccupied with Emperor Peafowl's disappearance.

"Your Majesty... Your Majesty..." Her heart was in disarray. The two were like father and daughter ever since the emperor had saved her. She'd long since relied on and respected the emperor like a father. The thought of receiving such bad news on her first day out of seclusion had never occurred to her. "Cui'er, do any of the rumors say where the emperor was last seen?"

"Miss, the rumors only say that His Majesty has disappeared, but don't say where. Don't worry, miss. Young lord Zhen's said that His Majesty is alive. The young lord's words can be trusted." Worship suffused the maid's tone.

"Young lord Zhen... young lord Zhen..." Dan'er repeated the name softly. "Cui'er, why do people submit to such a young person? How does he command everyone's respect?"

"Miss, young lord Zhen is amazing! I heard that he battled Emperor Shura during the Vassal Meeting and took all of the emperor's attacks. They fought to a draw! It was a difficult fight that preserved the status of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and prevented Shura Retreat from a successful coup."

"He tied with Emperor Shura?" Dan'er's mind couldn't work fast enough to process this. The emperor was second to only Emperor Peafowl! Wasn't young lord Zhen a young man less than thirty years old? How could he have tied with Emperor Shura?

"Miss, Cui'er doesn't understand all this violence, I only heard it from other people. Oh right, young lord Zhen is holding some pill dao lectures today. You heard people cheering for him just now, miss. Everyone was yelling his name."

Dan'er nodded woodenly. She didn't have much of a relationship with the young lord, so she didn't care about just how strong he was. She only knew that Sacred Peafowl Mountain belonged to Emperor Peafowl. If the emperor wasn't here, could the mountain still be called that?

"Cui'er, how's Nian'er now?"

"Nian'er's still training with Plumscore Monarch. Cui'er hears that young lord Zhen cares about Nian'er a great deal and wishes for Plumscore Monarch to raise her well."

Dan'er sighed softly. "Everything you speak of is something you've heard from someone else. I don't know what I should trust. Forget it, since this is the case, I'll go take a look myself."

"Where are you going, miss?"

"To look in on Nian'er."

"Miss, didn't you say that you wouldn't go see her before she has certain accomplishments with her cultivation?" Cui'er trotted after her mistress.

Dan'er's footsteps paused and she swayed slightly. The words were a hard blow to her heart. She had indeed said those words before, but that was because she wanted only the best for her daughter. In actuality, other than the figure who couldn't be erased from her heart, the only person she was most concerned with was the child from her womb.

"Cui'er, I'll just sneak a look at her from far away before leaving." Dan'er sighed softly.

"Will you come back after you take a look, miss?"

"No, I'm going to take a look at young lord Zhen and see if he's the sort who just pursues a good name. I'll be happy for His Majesty if the young lord truly has inherited His Majesty's legacy. But if he's just a superficial character intending to profit off of a good name, I won't let him off the hook!" Dan'er's figure wavered as she spoke and she disappeared into the bamboo woods.

"Miss, miss..." Cui'er chased after her mistress but couldn't even catch a shadow. The maid was quite depressed. "Her strength seems to have increased a great deal after a few years!"

Chapter 1297: Daners Decision

Plumscore Retreat was snowy year-round. Plum blossoms bloomed around the ingress, a sea of trees stretching into the distance. Many spirit fowl and cranes soared overhead.

A white bolt of lightning descended from the skies, revealing a majestic snow hawk. Upon the bird was a little girl with bright eyes and brilliant teeth. She was dressed in a light-blue robe, her eyes as pure as a

mountain spring. Her rosy cheeks and exquisite features evoked adoration in anyone who saw her. The girl was about ten years old and hadn't fully developed yet. Her slender legs however, was clue enough that the girl would be indescribably beautiful once she had grown up.

"Wonderful, Big White. You're getting faster and faster!" Her voice was soft and crisp, as pleasant as a canary's.

Further into the sea of plum blossom trees, Miss Dan'er stood behind an old tree, looking at the hawk-riding girl from afar. Her eyes reddened as she did so, her emotions having gotten the better of her. She began to weep softly, clapping a hand over her mouth.

The girl seemed entirely unaware that there was someone watching her from afar. She was focused solely on playing with the hawk, bursting out in innocent giggling from time to time. The plum blossom grove was brightened by her mere presence.

When girl and bird had played for a while, the former picked herself up from the ground to preen the hawk's smooth feathers, still smiling.

"We have to go back, Big White. When grandma comes back to see me playing all the time, she'll chide me for being lazy. Grandma always says that if I don't cultivate well, then I won't be allowed to see mom... I really miss her..." Nian'er's voice became lower and lower. She clutched the hawk's neck, uttering an almost dreamlike murmur. It was enough to break the heart of any listener.

The hawk let out a shrill airborne cry, transforming into a bolt of white lightning once more. It shot back into the inner part of the Plumscore Retreat.

Behind the old tree, Miss Dan'er couldn't suppress her passions any longer. She collapsed upon the trunk, sobbing silently against its bark.

"Nian'er, Nian'er, I've really let you down. I'm too selfish. I... I'm to blame for everything. I can't teach you anything useful. That's why I hardened my heart and handed you over to Plumscore Monarch. I want you to get somewhere someday, so that you can grasp your destiny in your own hands. Don't be like me..."

Wiping away her tears, Miss Dan'er collected herself before casting a forlorn glance in the retreat's direction. She lingered there for a moment before harshly turning her head away.

She wanted more than anything to be with her daughter again, but she was worried that she would lose to herself. There was no way she could resist her daughter's pleas to take the girl away when they came face to face. Alas, Dan'er knew intimately that her own strength and knowledge were insufficient to instruct her daughter.

"Wait for me, Nian'er. I promise I won't let you wait too long. When I come back, I'll never leave you ever again. Even if the sky caves in, I'll be by your side to protect you. This is the last time. If I don't take this chance, I'll regret it for the rest of my life..."

Softly incanting these words to herself, Miss Dan'er departed from Sacred Peafowl Mountain in a streak of light.

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Veluriyam Capital was a bustling place. Wandering cultivators in the millions surrounded the Dragon and Tiger Meet's premises, clogging up the surrounding space.

Jiang Chen spoke spiritedly from the stage, words flowing from his mouth with ease. There was a style in his mannerisms that naturally drew respect. Even the Upper Eight Region heavyweights in the guest area waited with bated breath to hear what he had to say. Not a single discordant word was heard.

"Some have asked me this: the Upper Eight Regions has never heard of a Pinecrane Pill or an Emperor Supremacy Pill. Did I make them up?" Smiling placidly, Jiang Chen's expression contained a confident wisdom as he looked toward the Sublime Chord Temple's Master Dong Ye.

"I think that Master Dong Ye should know the answer to that in his heart now." The young man laughed. "1.61 billion saint spirit stones isn't a sum that's given away for free.

"The universe is an enormous place, without border or limit. Our known world is a grain of sand in the vast sea, a staggeringly insignificant mote in the grand scheme of things. Unlike the universe, human knowledge has limits. It's fine if you haven't heard of the Pinecrane Pill or the Emperor Supremacy Pill. But from today onwards, you no longer have that excuse. These pills do exist. Can they represent the pinnacle of the pill world, however?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Clearly not."

"Pill dao has no limits either. Even pills like the Pinecrane Pill and the Emperor Supremacy Pill are rather ordinary in the grand scheme of things.

"Let's not get too ahead of ourselves, here. On the Divine Abyss Continent, we only know of the human domain. How much knowledge do we have of the world outside of that? How many worlds do we know of outside of ours?

"Some might say that our strength and knowledge are limited. As long as we understand what is within our grasp, that's more than enough. Others might say that knowing the unknown is meaningless.

"Yes, I am sure that many here would agree with these two sentiments. It's because so many think this way that the world of martial dao has so many unremarkable cultivators. Those that truly get to the top do so by daring to think what others do not, to do what others do not, to shoulder what others do not.

"Perhaps you might think that we're deviating from the original topic. We're supposed to be talking about pill dao, yes? I sound like I'm wasting time getting into irrelevant, esoteric topics.

"I simply wanted to tell you that the world is a big place. Look a bit further and higher. The world of martial dao has countless undiscovered things, places, subjects. A lot of the time, it's your own self that limits you the most. Your environment, your upbringing, pointless faction squabbles, egotistic profiteering... these are all painful obstacles. I'm only thirty years old, and yet, who can rival me in pill dao knowledge in the Upper Eight Regions?

"Perhaps you might think I'm making an overly general statement, but I'm more than happy enough to make a formal declaration. In terms of pill dao, I am second to none. I have this much confidence at least. No matter who comes to challenge me, I will be ready to defend myself. I'm here anytime!

"Why do I dare to make this bold assertion? Because I see things from a higher vantage point than everyone else. That's what gives me my confidence.

“Back to pill dao. Let’s talk about pill dao factions... there are countless pill dao factions, but anyone who belongs to a faction that reaches its peak won’t further restrict themselves to staying in a section. True masters always amass the advantages of many...” Jiang Chen’s speech was polished and suave.

Suddenly, his heart trembled. He felt that someone’s eyes was on him from a distance. He hadn’t noticed it until now, but its attention pained him. It was the most bizarre feeling, hazy and ambiguous. It wasn’t something that one could get a solid grasp on.

Jiang Chen’s consciousness moved, his God’s Eye moving into action. Unfortunately, all he saw was a throng of wandering cultivators in every direction. He couldn’t find his mysterious observer at all. How can this be? Jiang Chen felt somewhat lost. He was losing his grip over his own emotions.

It wasn’t something that easily happened to him, given his Boulder’s Heart.

Is it someone I’m familiar with? The phenomenon piqued his curiosity. How could someone he knew hurt his heart so?

His mother? Sister?

They were both at the Moon God Sect. There was no way they would be here, of all places. It didn’t seem like them in any case.

Huang’er?

She was back at the young lord residence on Sacred Peafowl Mountain. She hadn’t left at any point.

Who could it be, then?

There was an indistinct shadow in Jiang Chen’s heart, but he found it impossible to gather them into a discernible figure.

Deep within the crowd, Miss Dan’er assessed the young lord on the stage. Her heart was completely calm. “This young lord Zhen is an eloquent speaker. Foiling Emperor Shura’s conspiracy and now hosting an event like this... he must be quite capable. I needn’t worry for His Majesty’s sake any longer; Sacred Peafowl Mountain is in good hands now. I only hope that this guy can uphold His Majesty’s legacy.”

Having seriously considered young lord Zhen quite a while, Dan’er thought that the young lord’s only flaw was that he talked too much. Considering his accomplishments, she could forgive him this much.

Though she had some interest in the lecture’s contents, she wasn’t in the mood to listen to the rest. She lingered a few more moments within the crowd before disappearing with a quiet sigh.

“Your Majesty, I must disobey your instructions once again. I guarantee that this is the last time. If I still can’t find any news of him this time, I’ll give up my fantasies altogether. I’ll cultivate here at Sacred Peafowl Mountain in peace, raise my daughter, and stay by Your Majesty’s side. I only hope that Your Majesty is free of whatever trouble you were in, and we can meet again someday.” Reaffirming these words to herself, Dan’er drifted away from Veluriyam Capital without a trace.

Back on the stage, Jiang Chen fell into a slight daze before quickly recovering his wits. He was perfectly calm once more. He told many enjoyable, unknown stories about pill dao history. His listeners cheered and guffawed in support. After about two hours, he slowly wrapped up the lecture.

“My idle words shall end here, my friends. Next comes free time to ask questions. Opportunities are limited, so I’d like to hear some difficult ones. I wouldn’t want to waste anyone’s time – both yours and my own. Ah yes, a small note: everyone has only one chance at asking questions. Anyone who has already done so is not eligible to ask any more.”

He was hinting that easy questions should not be posed. Each person was incentivized to value their sole chance at having their questions answered.

The wandering cultivators had waited a long time for this.

Chapter 1298: Incredibly Strong Pill Dao

The segment for questions had been hotly anticipated by not only wandering cultivators, but also the heavyweights sitting in the guest section. Although some of them were irked by Jiang Chen self-styling himself as foremost in pill dao, feeling that the young man was simply too cocky, they couldn’t find any proper words to refute him with.

The Pinecrane Pill and Emperor Supremacy Pill were enough to cement his position in the pill dao world, to say nothing of anything else. Besides, he welcomed any and all challengers. This was a proclamation that almost none of the pill dao heavyweights, whether currently active or retired, had ever dared issue.

That kind of overweening tone made for a lofty announcement, but at a high cost. If someone really did take one up on the offer and defeated the issuer, then the issuer would’ve lost all face and reputation.

Therefore, young lord Zhen’s actions came off as a newborn calf unafraid of a tiger. He’d grown too full of himself after a little bit of achievement.

But then again, young people could afford to be that cocky. The advantage of youth was that it didn’t matter if one was defeated. If those hermit experts actually did emerge from seclusion to teach the young lord a lesson, the young man might even be more delighted and proud of himself — such were the thoughts of some of the guests.

They had no idea that Jiang Chen had carefully considered all of his words before voicing them. There were countless wandering cultivators present, but not many would have the chance to raise a question.

The first ten had been selected, one of them being the sect heavyweights in the guest area.

“Young lord Zhen, my question is, who is the senior you respect the most in the world of pill dao?”

This wasn’t a technical question at all, and it elicited uproarious laughter when it appeared. The crowd plainly loved it and might have even felt it more interesting than a serious question.

Jiang Chen wanted to ignore it, but realized how much wandering cultivators liked gossip when he heard them laugh kindly. Since they wanted to gossip, he decided to go with the flow.

“I haven’t had the chance to interact with that many seniors in the world of pill dao, neither have I visited many of them. I don’t actually have anyone in mind right now, but I do admire two young geniuses.”

“Oh?” This response piqued the crowd’s curiosity as well. It was equally interesting to learn about which geniuses the young lord admired.

“Which two?”

“Yeah, which two, young lord Zhen?”

“The two are named Mu Gaoqi and Lin Yanyu. They’re both in my residence now. Gaoqi, Yanyu, let everyone get to know you.”

The two hadn't thought that Jiang Chen would call their names, but they had some worldly experience and immediately stood up. The two were only mid level pill kings, but that was a high level for their age.

“Young lord Zhen, you’re favoring your own people!” Someone called out.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “That's right. I am indeed introducing talents from my own Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Acknowledgement of talent shouldn't be avoided because of ties of kinship. Mu Gaoqi has an innate wood constitution of the highest order and unparalleled pill dao potential. His body is a treasure vault, one that will launch him into the stratosphere of legendary pill emperors in the future. Lin Yanyu’s potential is slightly lower than Mu Gaoqi’s, but he’s studied pill dao since young and has a grasp of it that no one else has. He will also surely become a legend in the pill dao world in the future as well. Mark my words, two more pill dao stars will appear in the human domain in one to two hundred more years!”

“Young lord Zhen, there are many young geniuses in Pillfire City. Are none of them on par with your people?”

Jiang Chen smiled blandly. “Is that a question as well?”

Obviously not. “I didn’t get a slot, but I just don’t agree. Pillfire City’s the foremost faction in pill dao. Do their geniuses really not measure up to yours?”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “I’ll make an exception for this. The reason’s simple. My people are of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and they spend their days learning from me. One day, they’ll surpass those so-called Pillfire City geniuses.”

His response was quite domineering, resulting in a tidal wave of applause.

“Damn straight, young lord Zhen! I like you!”

“That's right! So what about Pillfire City? Yeah they’re pretty strong, but they’re not as generous as young lord Zhen!”

“The young lord is so young so his potential is definitely greater. I feel that in the long run, the young lord will absolutely surpass that Pillfire City.”

Even many seated in the guest area couldn't help themselves and clap. The elder of Empyrean River Palace however, had a darkened expression on his face before schooling it back to indifference. Master Dong Ye of the Sublime Chord Temple looked at Jiang Chen on the stage with a complicated expression, wariness flashing through the depths of his eyes. Long Baxiang of the Heavenly Dragon Sect privately gnashed his teeth. He still had his eyes set on Jiang Chen’s true dragon. That was the real priority.

“Young lord Zhen, I have the second question. I have one about pill dao for you. I once saw a partial recipe in an ancient tome, but it was missing one of the supplemental ingredients. I’ve been studying it

all along, wanting to fill in the blank. But we haven't been able to no matter what we've tried. Can you give us some advice, young lord?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "What's the primary ingredient?"

"Dragonwhisker Whitesilver Fruit."

Dragonwhisker Whitesilver Fruit? Jiang Chen thought for a moment, mentally flipping through recipes.

"Is the fire attribute Gale Ginseng one of the supplemental ingredients?"

"No."

"Then the water attribute Supple Snow Root?"

"Yes!" The cultivator's eyes lit up. "That's one of them. Do you know it, young lord Zhen?"

"More or less. Tell me the first character of each of the other ingredients and I'll be able to tell you what you're missing." Jiang Chen was doing so to keep the secret. If all of the ingredients were revealed, then so was the recipe. Though it wouldn't be copied in its entirety, it'd no longer be exclusive.

The cultivator was delighted and took a moment before reeling off characters.

The young lord smiled after listening to the list. "I know which one's missing. You're missing a bit of Goldcoin Jadeite, and almost fully mature at that. It'll affect the primary ingredient if it's too mature."

"Almost mature Goldcoin Jadeite?" The cultivator was overjoyed. "Thank you so much, young lord Zhen! If this recipe can be completed, you'll be my born-again parents, young lord!"

Jiang Chen flashed an easy smile. He understood that this was a very precious recipe for wandering cultivators. It would absolutely be a source of wealth if research bore results. It wasn't much in his eyes given his current height, but to a wandering cultivator, it would change his life.

"Go back and study it well. There aren't any mistakes with it. If you succeed, it would completely change your fate." Jiang Chen encouraged.

The cultivator was overcome with gratitude and bowed respectfully towards Jiang Chen before melting back into the crowd. The scene appeared incredibly bizarre to the eyes of others. Many shot stunned glances at Jiang Chen, at a loss for words after his performance.

They even wondered if this had been rehearsed beforehand. Otherwise, how could the young lord just-so-happen to fill in the blanks of a recipe from a random stranger in the crowd? Was it coincidence or heaven-defying?

No matter how skilled one was in pill dao, there was still a limit to the amount of knowledge grasped. It was impossible to complete a pill recipe with just a few words.

Was young lord Zhen a pill dao encyclopedia?

The elder from the Empyrean River Palace couldn't hold himself in. "Young lord Zhen, this seems a bit like child's play. If you pre-arrange everything, aren't you just lying to us all then?"

Honestly, what had happened really did come across as a planted shill. It was simply too outrageous to be genuine. Long Baxiang also sniggered. "Young lord Zhen, I'm not trying to make trouble for you, but some more effort should've gone into this fake."

Jiang Chen smiled with detachment. "Gentlemen, you're doing this just to try to provoke me. But I'm rather happy instead of angry. Do you know why? Your frustrated and harassed countenances are proof that my Dragon and Tiger Meet has been successful."

"Hmph. A glib tongue as always." Long Baxiang sniffed coldly. "Dare you say that you didn't arrange for all of this? I'll be the last to believe that you could just so happen to fill in the missing part of a random pill recipe. That's much too legendary. Do you think wandering cultivators are fools to be so easily lied to and pawns for you to use?"

"This isn't the first time, Long Baxiang!" Emperor Peerless suddenly thundered. "I know you won't accept it if I throw you out, but there's no place for you after your repeated targeting of my young lord."

The sect head threw his head back in laughter. "Mo Wushuang, I would've shown you some respect before, but do you think I care about your opinions now after you've become someone else's dog?"

Chapter 1299: Forceful Expulsion

Long Baxiang's malice deserved capital punishment. He'd intentionally shamed Emperor Peerless both to strike at Sacred Peafowl Mountain and to evoke the wandering cultivators' hostility. His words were full of malicious undertones and incitement.

See, a giant of the wandering cultivator world has become young lord Zhen's dog! This is a heinous offense against your entire class. And yet, you're still giving him this much support?! You've been completely fooled!

Emperor Peerless's expression darkened. He was a man capable of keeping his cool and he knew Long Baxiang's motives quite well. If he were to lash out now, the young lord's plans would be irrevocably damaged.

Frowning, Jiang Chen stepped forward in front of Emperor Peerless. He glared at Long Baxiang coldly. "This is the third time you've offended Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Long. I respected you as our guest the previous two times. But this time, you're taking a mile after receiving an inch. I do not tolerate the debasement of one of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's venerated elders!

"Jiao Yun, Jiao Feng. Throw our our unwelcome guest. If he doesn't leave within the time limit, kill him on the spot!" Jiang Chen scanned the crowd. "Mutual respect is one of my principles. Anyone who seeks a quarrel with Sacred Peafowl Mountain will be struck down regardless of station! Long, watch yourself!"

Long Baxiang's two previous interruptions had gone unanswered. Because of that, he had fallen into a false sense of security. He'd thought that because the young lord had only recently ascended to the throne, he must still lack a bit in charisma. There was no way the young man would risk breaking with him. Furthermore, the sect head's typical arrogance added to his self-confidence.

He'd completely underestimated Sacred Peafowl Mountain's character. Young lord Zhen had turned on him at the drop of a hat, leaving him uncertain and hesitant.

“You dare to expel me, young lord Zhen? A great emperor?” Violence danced in Long Baxiang’s eyes.

Jiang Chen glanced coolly towards Emperor Peerless. “Old Brother Mo, please back the Jiao brothers up. If that Long person over there doesn’t comply, cut him down at all costs!”

The young man was uninterested in wasting words on Long Baxiang. His determination was resolute enough to kill.

The Jiao brothers weren’t a pair of herbivores to begin with. With Sacred Peafowl Mountain backing them up, there was no reason for them to hesitate. Cackling, they hurtled toward Long Baxiang.

“Are you deaf, Long? Are you going to leave by yourself, or would you like some help?”

The great emperor from the Heavenly Dragon Sect had to respect the Jiao brothers’ ferocity, especially since a displeased Emperor Peerless wasn’t far away. Long Baxiang was quite strong, but he wasn’t about to indulge his cockiness against three of his peers in enemy territory.

Sneering, he circled around the crowd. “So many other first rank sects are here. Won’t someone speak up for the sake of justice? I suppose you’ve all fallen in line before the Zhen brat’s terror. If you’re all as cowardly as this, the human domain will soon defer to a singular voice!”

Long Baxiang was still attempting to rile up the audience. Unfortunately for him, there was no one willing to stick their neck out for him. They didn’t want to anger Jiang Chen. And from an objective point of view, the young lord was hardly at fault. Long Baxiang had the one who’d spewed putrid air everywhere.

If he wanted to oppose young lord Zhen, then he should have done so openly and directly. What was the point of dragging Emperor Peerless into it? And connected to the emperor was a large band of his fellow wandering great emperors, amongst whom the Jiao brothers were the closest.

Additionally, Long Baxiang wasn’t the kindest of people. He had a habit of doing whatever he liked. He had threatened Master Dong Ye at the auction just yesterday! When someone like him got into trouble, barely anyone sympathized.

Some of the first rank sect representatives smirked, while others remained impassive. A few were uncaring enough to display open scorn. Not a single one stood up for the arrogant emperor.

Long Baxiang felt blood well up in his face. His cheeks flushed deep red. If a fissure opened up in the ground, there was no doubt he would dive right in. Humiliation like he’d never experienced before flowed into him.

“Ah, never mind. The Heavenly Dragon Sect doesn’t have a habit of asking for help anyways. Zhen, I’m on your home turf today, so I’ll let you get away with this for now. But I don’t believe for a second that a kid like you can run all eight of the Upper Regions! The indignity I’ve suffered today will be revisited upon you tenfold. I promise it!” His face too dark for words, Long Baxiang scurried off after leaving a few choice last words.

“Jiao Yun, Jiao Feng. Keep close tabs on him until he leaves Veluriyam territory. If there is any delay on his part, you may attack him without worry.” Jiang Chen commanded.

“Yes, sir!” The Jiao brothers heard the youth loud and clear.

Jiang Chen's incredible swiftness and determination daunted everyone present.

Seeing the haughty Long Baxiang be so distressed and discomfited by the young lord's actions produced an indescribable mixture of feelings from the observers. Some were guarded, others deferential...

"Friends, there is no end to conflict in the world of martial dao. I've never thought of obtaining everyone's approval. Perhaps you feel that the question just now was arranged beforehand. I welcome you to mention any such concerns to me. I have no problem with them in the slightest. However, maliciously disrespecting Sacred Peafowl Mountain's people is something I will not tolerate! A man walks the world with his reputation before him. Emperor Peerless and I appreciate each other greatly, so much so that we're sworn brothers. He joined Sacred Peafowl Mountain in my time of need solely to help me. This is nobility of the highest order! But Long defiled utterly it with his vile words. Do you think I should simply endure this injustice? He has committed the first and hopefully the last offense. Any infractions in the future will face Sacred Peafowl Mountain's wrath!" Jiang Chen swept the entire place with a frigid gaze.

The wandering cultivator who'd asked the question in the first place walked out angrily as well. He looked furious. "What are you people trying to pull, eh? Young lord Zhen has looked after wandering cultivators very well at the Dragon and Tiger Meet, but you keep making trouble for him! Is goodwill and kindness toward wandering cultivators not tolerated in this world? Should anyone who does so be an instant focus of attack? Why do you say that I'm the young lord's shill?"

"Those who make that claim, are you brave enough to confront me face to face? If I really am a shill, then let heaven strike me down right now with some natural disaster! But if I'm not, then heaven should strike you instead! Do you dare swear such an oath? You're shams, cheats, and hypocrites! Is there anyone brave enough, huh? I'll take all of you on!"

The wandering cultivator roared ferociously, hotly riled up. The veins in his neck pulsed as he heaved for breath, his face was flush with agitation. He was caught up entirely in the heat of the moment.

"I don't care what kind of new crap you're trying to label young lord Zhen with. I only have one thing to say. Among the large factions in the world, young lord Zhen is the only leader who I've seen is genuinely willing to promote wandering cultivators' interests! From today onwards, I will only support young lord Zhen and Sacred Peafowl Mountain! Don't mention anyone else to me. Young lord Zhen is the only one!"

"Which one of you is as forthright as young lord Zhen, hmm? I admire him because he's forthright to the highest degree. If all you know are a few petty tricks, the heavens will clear things up in the end. We wandering cultivators aren't blind. It's easy to separate kindness from hostility in the long run!"

After a lengthy outburst, the man huffed back into a sea of his fellows. In the next moment, all the wandering cultivators began to clap.

"Well said! All of these people deserve to be cussed at! They're jealous of young lord Zhen!"

"Anyone who insults young lord Zhen in the future will be cursed by me!"

"That's right! Young lord Zhen's compassion is unrivaled. Who else would think for us? Before now, absolutely no one!"

"I didn't get a single stone from coming to the Dragon and Tiger Meet, but even so it was well worth my time! At least I know now that there's a young lord Zhen here in Veluriyam Capital. As long as he's here, this entire place is worth coming to!"

"Young lord Zhen, you must hold the Dragon and Tiger Meet often in the future. I'll be sure to attend. Not only that, but I'll bring my brothers and friends here as well!"

There was a tremendous wave of support among the wandering cultivators; Jiang Chen's heart swelled up in satisfaction. To say that he hadn't done much of what had occurred out of partial self-interest would be a lie.

But even so, there was a great deal of sincerity in his actions. It was plain to anyone that many wandering cultivators had benefited from the proceedings. The first person who'd done so had come out to swear rather severe oaths. There was no reason for the audience to suspect that it had all been an act.

Even the elder from the Empyrean River Palace felt a certain amount of agreement. He was both wary and concerned about the crowd's rising emotions.

What he had witnessed today told him that Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord Zhen had a magical sort of charisma that could win people's hearts. Why else were these wandering cultivators so supportive of him?

"Emperor Pillzenith has found a difficult opponent this time," the elder lamented to himself.

Jiang Chen stepped forward, pressing both palms slightly down. "I'm truly thankful for your heartfelt support. What little abuse I bear in the process is entirely worth it. Alright, let the questions continue! Let's not let the calumny of a few ruin the event for the rest."

The question and answer segment continued as planned.

Order was restored to the staging grounds. The wandering cultivators who got a chance at a question were all marvellously excited, devoting their entire intellects into devising the perfect inquiry.

Some of the lucky ones who couldn't come up with a question right away received buy offers from their powerful peers. Getting answers from young lord Zhen's own mouth was a service that fetched a high premium.

The atmosphere was electric.

As the segment went on, the price for a single question shot up higher and higher. Each question asked became more and more technical. Some wandering cultivators were able to serendipitously pawn off their chance for a modest sum of wealth.

Jiang Chen didn't interfere in these organic transactions. They were part of the larger wandering cultivator ecosystem, which he saw little need to disturb.

In the guest area, the sect representatives occasionally received the opportunity to ask a question as well. But Jiang Chen naturally didn't open the floor up to factions hostile to him. The few chances that he had freely given early on had gone to the Great Yu Skysword Sect and the Celestial Cicada Court – with the occasional leftover for the Moon God Sect and the Ninesuns Sky Sect.

Chapter 1300: Huangers Worries?

The sect representatives implicitly understood Jiang Chen's deliberate bias. In particular, the Empyrean River Palace didn't receive a single chance to ask questions.

Sublime Chord Temple's Master Dong Ye was equally out of luck. However, the Buddhist master didn't look particularly interested in the opportunity in the first place. Instead, he tossed an occasional, inspecting look at Jiang Chen, as if he beheld a monster.

The three days' worth of pill dao lectures incorporated a great deal of pill dao wisdom. In this way, Jiang Chen was able to both maintain interest and broaden his audience's horizons.

Both the wandering cultivators and the faction delegates reaped substantial benefit. The pill dao prowess that Jiang Chen exhibited during the question and answer segment was especially impressive. It was difficult to deny that the young lord's pill dao knowledge was almost encyclopedic.

After the pill dao lectures were concluded, it was time for one of the weightiest segments. It was one that carried a lot of anticipation and expectation behind it. A senior from Myriad Abyss Island was going to answer martial dao questions!

"I'm sure that the segment to come has been hotly anticipated. Tomorrow, a mysterious expert from Myriad Abyss Island will descend upon Sacred Peafowl Mountain. However, he has told me in advance that he will answer only seven questions. Only seven of you will be lucky enough to have a question answered. As with this time, one chance will be given to one of our guests, while the remaining six will be limited to wandering cultivators only. Only then can this Meet be called a wandering cultivator meet.

"Unfortunately, how exactly the chances should be handed out is a very thorny problem. Everyone knows that a senior from Myriad Abyss Island is sure to know much more about martial dao than us human domain cultivators. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity. Who do we give these chances to? If we give them to ordinary cultivators, that seems a little bit wasteful. Questions that ordinary cultivators encounter can easily be answered by many of the emperors and great emperors present as well.

Jiang Chen paused here a moment before continuing. "Because of this, I'm conflicted about how I should hand out these opportunities. Why don't I hear from some of you? There are cultivators of many levels here. Sage realm cultivators, emperor realm experts, and great emperor realm seniors. If we give all the chances to the great emperors, it'll be unfair to the emperor and sage realm cultivators. If we give some to sage realm cultivators, emperor and great emperor friends won't be happy about how simple their questions will end up being. Come, share your opinions with me on how to deal with this."

It was a real dilemma.

"Emperor Wellspring, you are the most senior of the wandering cultivators here today. Why don't you tell us what you think?" Jiang Chen glanced at the emperor in question.

Emperor Wellspring laughed. "To tell the truth, I'm as interested as the rest of you in conversing with the mysterious expert from Myriad Abyss Island. I can definitely understand where young lord Zhen is coming from. Still, I think that because of how incredibly rare this opportunity is, all of the chances should be left to the highest-level cultivators. It has always been an unspoken rule in the world of cultivation that the strong are entitled to precedence, and I'm sure everyone attending understands me.

I do have a suggestion however, to counter the fact that only great emperors are benefiting from the segment.”

“Please go on, Emperor Wellspring.” Jiang Chen wanted nothing more than for the emperor to solve this problem for him. He didn’t want to anger all the wandering cultivators in the world.

“The six chances will be decided by lot among us wandering great emperors. Furthermore, we will adhere to young lord Zhen’s principle of including as many as possible. Each person who gets the chance to ask a question will need to contribute for fairness’ sake, at least. We should give and take to maintain balance.”

“Oh? What kind of contribution do you propose?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“Each great emperor who gets to ask a question must lecture to their wandering cultivator juniors. At said event, they must answer at least a hundred martial dao questions. What do you think about that, young lord Zhen?”

Requiring anyone who benefited from Myriad Abyss Island’s senior to teach more of their juniors in turn was a very good suggestion. Since wandering great emperors had six chances to ask questions, the questions of six hundred lesser wandering cultivators would end up answered.

“What do you think, gentlemen?” Jiang Chen looked toward the other wandering great emperors.

“Old Brother Hui’s idea is excellent. We are fully behind him.”

“Yes, it is as it should be. Emperor Wellspring’s advice makes perfect sense.”

“Young lord Zhen, you should do as Emperor Wellspring says. He has always been a fair and reasonable senior in our community. We are grateful that he’s mindful of our needs!”

“Yes, six chances for six hundred questions is rather reasonable. We have no objections.” The lower level wandering cultivators had nothing to dispute. In terms of qualification, it was a complete waste to allow any of the chances to fall into their hands.

Because they weren’t at the senior’s level, there was no common topic of conversation between them. What was the point in asking a distinguished senior a bunch of basic questions?

Such chances were reasonably reserved for great emperors. Most other wandering cultivators hadn’t even thought about competing for them in the first place. That young lord Zhen and Emperor Wellspring were able to protect the masses’ interests was already very kind.

The relative lack of opposition prompted Jiang Chen to beam with genuine pleasure. “Very good! I daresay there aren’t many ways much better than this. The sects’ representatives will have a chance as well. As with the wandering cultivators, we’ll decide who gets the chance by lot.”

The twenty-one wandering great emperors and the factions’ representatives all gathered together. The latter group included representatives from second and third rank sects in addition to first rank ones, but the emissaries from the lesser sects didn’t dare fight for their own prospects. In the end, the first rank sects were the only factions included in the lottery.

The drawing itself was completely aboveboard. The six chances were drawn one by one among the wandering great emperors. Even Emperor Wellspring didn't get one. Despite this, the emperor was untroubled. There was nothing he wanted to protest given the clear-cut rules.

On the other hand, Emperor Inferno was lucky enough to have his name be drawn.

Emperor Reliance has missed out as well. The remaining chances went to Emperor Ye Jianlei, a great emperor who'd been the first to agree to the transaction with Jiang Chen.

Among the first rank sects, the lucky chance fell into the hands of the Celestial Cicada Court. Su Huanzhen was overjoyed by the stroke of happenstance.

After the lottery was done, Jiang Chen smiled. "Congratulations to our winners. Tomorrow, each person will have an hour's worth of time to hear from the expert. Please wait here. If the senior is willing to come here, that would be for the best. If not, I can't exactly force him to come out, so I'll have to trouble all of you to come to Sacred Peafowl Mountain instead."

The staging ground for the meet wasn't far away from Sacred Peafowl Mountain's entrance. Since they were all cultivators, it took only a few seconds to travel between the two points.

"Young lord Zhen, has a senior from Myriad Abyss Island truly graced Sacred Peafowl Mountain with his presence?" The Jiao brothers looked expectant. Though Mo Wushuang stayed silent, his eyes overflowed with similar curiosity.

Jiang Chen laughed. "I can't reveal too much about anything that relates to that island. Still, please do not worry."

The three great emperors came to a tacit understanding upon hearing this. There were no further questions. It wasn't only those three who were inquisitive, however. The entire Sacred Peafowl Mountain was keen to know more about the senior who had come from Myriad Abyss Island – in particular, whether he was really already here.

Personally, Jiang Chen was in no hurry to remove the veil of mystery. There was someone from Myriad Abyss Island, but it wasn't some senior. It was Huang'er. If Elder Shun was here, he would count as a senior from the island. Alas, he and Huang'er had been separated for almost ten years now. There had been no news from the old man since.

Within the young lord residence, Huang'er had found out what was about to take place at the wandering cultivator meet.

The time was deep into the night. Only Jiang Chen and Huang'er remained in the courtyard. The moon was full today, and bleak moonlight scattered upon the yard's stony tiles. The shadows of the trees formed indistinct shapes upon the earth, and the occasional chatter from ambient insects created a rather distinct atmosphere in the inky gloom.

"Your hands are a bit chilly, Huang'er. Don't catch a cold." Gently cradling his arms around Huang'er's shoulders, Jiang Chen basked in the sensation of intimacy to her graceful figure. He didn't expect the slight shiver from the girl next to him. Though Huang'er tried very hard to suppress this reaction, Jiang Chen caught it nonetheless.

"It's getting late, Huang'er. The temperature is dropping. Go rest for today." Instinctively, Jiang Chen took off his coat and placed it over his female companion.

Huang'er's upward-facing visage was filled with love and emotion. And yet her eyes, clear as mountain springs, hid a hint of muted sadness.

Jiang Chen hummed quietly. "Huang'er, do you have something on your mind?"

The girl didn't answer, instead gazing directly into Jiang Chen's face. "Brother Chen, what are you planning to do for tomorrow's martial dao lecture segment?"

Jiang Chen chuckled. "There's nothing to do about it. I'll have to direct a one-man show."

"But, can you really answer the martial dao questions from those great emperors?" Huang'er paused, anxiety clear on her face. "Brother Chen, you've been working really hard the past few days. Do you know? My biggest worry is that you'll overwork yourself. There are too many burdens on your shoulders."

Huang'er sighed wistfully. "If I could, I'd like to put everything down and find a secluded spot. We can spend some time there, just the two of us. Brother Chen, do you think I'm being too selfish?"

A sharp, painful sensation spiked into Jiang Chen's heart. He was apologetic and contrite. As of late, Huang'er was the person he owed the most to. He had spent the past few years traveling the world while Huang'er had stayed behind in the young lord residence to manage and maintain it. That was why he had been able to wander so much without worry.

Realizing this made him emotional as well. He grasped the girl's hands tightly, taking in her smooth skin. "Huang'er, I've been the selfish one. I've asked you to do too much, but I haven't ever calmed down my heart to stay by your side."

"Don't say that, Brother Chen. You've already spent a lot of time with me. When we went from Myriad Domain to Veluriyam Capital, then from there to the desolate wildlands... I'll never forget those days of happiness. Never..." Huang'er's murmuring softened into a whisper. Tears welled up at the corners of her eyes.