

Three Realms 1331

Chapter 1331: The Precious Tree Sect, Dan Feis Reappearance

In Myriad Domain, the sixteen kingdoms alliance's Skylaurel Kingdom still knew peaceful days. The great chaos that engulfed region in the past had left deep marks on Skylaurel, but not to the point of extinction, thanks to its status as a mundane kingdom. The former fourth prince had now ascended the throne. However, the past few years hadn't been easy on him.

During the invasion of Myriad Domain, all kinds of factions had also set foot in the sixteen kingdoms alliance. But the then Purple Sun Sect, later Purple Light Division of the Ninesuns Sky Sect, had met with sudden disaster and been destroyed in the space of a single night.

The alliance originally thought they would see better days after the Purple Light Division's destruction, but the Ninesuns Sky Sect sent a prompt replacement. Many factions of wandering cultivators also entered the sixteen kingdoms, setting down roots in every mundane kingdom.

As one of the four great kingdoms of the alliance, Skylaurel was a comparatively prestigious existence and one of the places most prized by the various factions. It saw more of its lands forcibly occupied than most. Although Ye Rong was emperor, the restriction and control the various factions exerted on Skylaurel almost turned him into a figurehead, a puppet.

However, about half a year ago, the Ninesuns Sky Sect had suddenly withdrawn its forces stationed in the region.

Even so, the territories they vacated were immediately seized by others. Just as before, foreign cultivators reigned unopposed. Some of the cultivators came from Great Scarlet, some from other regions. Like dragons among fish, these various factions were the sixteen kingdoms alliance's real masters.

Skylaurel's royal capital was as bustling as before, but none of the faces from the good ole days could be found now. Instead, the streets were filled with foreign cultivators dressed in every sort of bizarre attire.

The royal tutor Ye Chonglou disappeared a long time ago. Tian Shao, the most loyal of the Dragonteeth Guard, had also vanished. Although Emperor Ye Rong still had trusted aides at his side, all of them were too weak. None of them could help him vie for the control of the kingdom. Yet, he had no choice but to forge on as a puppet monarch.

As a mundane kingdom, very few rumors from the outside world made their way into Skylaurel.

Alas, after painstakingly wrestling away the imperial throne, am I destined to be a puppet for the rest of my life? Ye Rong couldn't resign himself to this. He kept close to heart the cherished memories of the old Skylaurel, of his youth, of the years he spent sharing joy and suffering with Jiang Chen.

"I wonder where Brother Jiang Chen is now?" The thought would occasionally flutter across Ye Rong's mind in the depths of the night.

Ever since Jiang Chen's departure from the Precious Tree Sect, Ye Rong's information network had lost sight of his good brother. After all, he was merely the ruler of a tiny mundane nation. The uncle and cousin Jiang Chen had left behind in Skylaurel also departed at some point in time.

The Precious Tree Sect was one that shared in Skylare's fate. As one of the four great sects of the sixteen kingdoms alliance, the Precious Tree Sect used to be one of the wealthiest. In particular, its Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn attracted the interest of many wandering cultivators.

The sect's territory was now under the control of a group of cultivators. These men were former adventurers from another region who'd formed a team and occupied the sect's lands, establishing their own called the "Tree Spirit Sect," and had collected a bunch of wandering cultivators.

When it came to strength, the Tree Spirit Sect far surpassed its predecessor. After all, the Precious Tree Sect only had two origin realm cultivators. In comparison, the Tree Spirit Sect had many origin realm cultivators, while the one calling himself sectmaster was at initial sage realm.

Like a dove occupying a magpie's nest, the Tree Spirit Sect had made themselves at home.

Back in the day, the entire Precious Tree Sect had evacuated the premises in order to hide from Great Scarlet's invasion, leaving their territory to be occupied by foreigners. If the sect ever returned now, they most likely wouldn't recognize their home anymore. A foul, murky atmosphere now reigned over their former domain.

On this day, a slender figure suddenly appeared from a ripple in the void outside the mountain gates and emerged in front of the sect's entrance. It was a woman, her figure tall and willowy, her features clear and elegant. A thin layer of grief seemed to shroud her as she landed in front of the sect.

"Who goes there?" Someone jumped out and blocked the way of this exquisite woman.

The two men barring the path naturally belonged to the Tree Spirit Sect. Seeing the gorgeous young woman in front of them, they looked at each other with eyes gleaming with evil intentions.

This woman's breathtaking appearance and her cool temperament made evil desires stir in their hearts.

"Hot damn, the heavens must have seen how hard we've had it of late. They're delivering a meal to us?" One of the two, a dry, skinny man asked his companion with a wicked laugh.

"Tsk ts, how fine, look at this hot chick. What a sweet figure. Look at that face! If she wasn't so cold, if she could be a bit more passionate, it'd be sheer perfection! Old Yang, you have to let me go first this time." The other man, a burly bald fellow, beamed ear to ear with an obscene grin.

He sized up the beautiful woman's figure up and down, not bothering to conceal his lust. His face expression, the look in his eyes... all seemed to be undressing her in front of him.

However, his companion wasn't willing. "Old Gao, why would you go first? You want to score this magnificent thing first and leave me with your sloppy seconds? Piss off! Over my dead body!"

None of the two were willing to cede an inch.

Quiet and cold, the woman looked at each blade of grass and each tree of the Precious Tree Sect, sadness and regret welling in her eyes.

"Precious Tree Sect... The trees, the mountains, the rivers, nothing has changed, but the faces are now those of strangers... Old lord, Jiang Chen, where on earth are you? Where did you go?" The woman's lips moved faintly as if murmuring to herself. "Perhaps I truly erred. If I hadn't left Skylare, hadn't left the

Precious Tree Sect, then things could've turned out much better." This woman was Ye Chonglou's adopted daughter, as well as his disciple, Dan Fei.

Her appearance was as it had ever been, as if she was impenetrable to the vestiges of the passing years. The bold, heroic spirit was simply now a little dimmer in this woman who used to be the greatest beauty in Sky Laurel, replaced by a newfound sadness absent from her youth.

"Hey girl, what are you mumbling about?"

"Which clan are you from, do you have a husband?" The two men babbled flighty nonsense at her, flirting and whistling.

"Is there something wrong with her mind?" The bald Old Gao looked at Dan Fei with some suspicion.

"Who cares? Even if there's a problem with her mind, an unearthly beauty like that is a sumptuous feast all the same," the skinny Old Yang said with a depraved laugh.

An icy glint suddenly flashed in Dan Fei's phoenix eyes as she snapped out of her distress.

"Oh, looks like her brain's working fine."

"Tsk ts, this little girl seems to have heard us talking about her. She looks a little shy, and maybe also a little angry?"

Dan Fei coldly looked at the two of them, responding quietly, "I don't want to kill people. Cut off your own tongues and get lost."

The two men blinked, then looked at each other, wondering if they heard wrong. This sweet and delicate girl seemed so weak even the wind could blow her away, but her tone was quite the pompous one when she spoke.

Cut off their tongues and get lost?

The bald Old Guo couldn't hold back his laughter. "Interesting, interesting! Who would have imagined this little girl would be so amusing? It's more interesting doing a girl like her with some fight in them. Don't you think so, Old Yang?"

"Hehe, indeed indeed. The personality of a wild mare, she's even more to my liking!"

The two of them felt no threat coming from this weak and tender girl. Moreover, this was the sixteen kingdoms alliance, not the Upper Eight Regions. In this kind of remote backcountry, no one was mad enough to throw their weight around in the Tree Spirit Sect.

"Girl, you want to cut off this lord's tongue? Come come, let's have a kiss. I can let you cut off my tongue if you can, I'll die happy either way. Hahaha..."

Dan Fei's expression darkened. Her body flashed by the man's side like a gust of wind, stopping roughly seven to eight meters behind him.

The skinny man froze. For a split second, he seemed to feel a slight strength cutting across his throat.

As soon as this thought struck him, his head suddenly loosened from his neck and slid down, landing on the ground before he could even close his eyes. Rolling to and fro, the world in front of him suddenly seemed to have been turned upside down...

The next moment, realization finally dawned that his head had been separated from the rest of his body. Unfortunately, this thought was to the last of his life.

Lewdness morphed into dread on the bald man's face, like seeing a ghost in broad daylight. He looked at the beheaded corpse of his companion, so frightened he almost wet his pants.

W-what kind of speed was that?

He didn't even see anything before his companion's head was removed. Both of them were origin realm. They were existences who could move unimpeded in the sixteen kingdoms alliance. With that kind of cultivation, how did his companion end up beheaded in a remote backwater by a strange pretty girl?

Fear spread through every cell of his body.

"D-don't come any closer," the trembling bald man stammered, his face pale, "Young lady, celestial maiden, goddess... I've sinned, I-I was blinded by lust. I've really sinned. Here, I'll slap myself, so please don't kill me, I beg you..."

Despite his tall and sturdy frame, the bald man didn't have a whiff of courage to his name. Left, right, his slaps landed on his own face without interruption.

"Do you want to live?" Dan Fei asked, her voice chilly.

"I-I do." The bald man knelt on the ground with a thump. "Exalted maiden, this villain is blind and offended you. Just think of me as a fart and let me go!"

"Tell me, who's presently occupying the Precious Tree Sect?" Despite her serene tone, Dan Fei's aura froze the man to the bone. He shivered uncontrollably.

Chapter 1332: Charge In And Open Up A Slaughter

"I'll talk, I'll talk! This place isn't called the Precious Tree Sect anymore. It's now the Tree Spirit Sect. Teams of wandering cultivators squat in this area and have established a sect. The sectmaster and several elders come from the strongest team. Ever since the Tree Spirit Sect took over, many wandering cultivators have come for shelter, spreading the sect's fame."

This bald fellow looked tall and brawny, but he was a sheep in wolf's clothing. Dan Fei's threat was enough to make him pee his pants, so he obediently spilled the beans and told her everything.

"A bunch of good-for-nothing ragtags!" Dan Fei's black brows knit slightly together. An ad hoc sect with a stolen territory, founded by wandering cultivators, and home to outlaws didn't have much cohesiveness to speak of, no loyalty nor sincerity. Bluntly put, they'd gathered together for mere temporary interest.

"What about the members of the original Precious Tree Sect?" Dan Fei asked, her tone impassive.

"O-original?" the bald fellow stuttered. "I don't think there was anyone here before! The Precious Tree Sect was empty by the time we came here. I heard the members of the Precious Tree Sect all vanished in a single night before Great Scarlet invaded Myriad Domain. Who knows where they went? No one's spotted a glimpse of them since then."

"Are you certain?"

"I-it's just something I heard." Under the oppression of Dan Fei's icy aura, the bald man stumbled over his words, his face deathly pale. "I-I came here later. I only heard about what happened before that from others."

"Tree Spirit Sect?" Anger flickered in Dan Fei's heart. "You steal someone else's home and even dare change the name of the sect? This Tree Spirit sect head, who is he and where does he come from?"

"H-he's a wandering cultivator from Upper Eight Regions. He's a sage realm senior, his cultivation is far above ours." The bald fellow trembled from head to toe when he felt Dan Fei's murderous ire.

"Sage realm? What's his name?"

"Celestial maiden, everyone calls him Sectmaster Qin. His nickname in the wandering cultivator world is apparently Qin Thirteen."

"Qin Thirteen? Never heard of him." Dan Fei shook her head slightly.

"My lady, I've told you everything I know, so please let go of my worthless self," the bald man implored piteously.

A cold light flashed in Dan Fei's eyes. She responded frostily, "In that case, cut off your tongue and get lost!"

"Ah? Goddess, please spare me!" The prospect of cutting off his own tongue frightened the man to no end.

However, he stole a glance up and noticed Dan Fei's icy expression. His heart shivered and he realized his life would be forfeit if he didn't obey. He clenched his teeth, thrust a dagger inside his mouth, and cut off half his tongue. Cold sweat trailed down on his forehead from the pain. He grabbed the lower half of his tongue and turned on his heels, making good his escape. How would he dare tarry a second longer?

His tongue could be reattached if he sought immediate treatment, but if he tarried and the frosty maiden regretted her decision, then it would be his head at stake.

For Dan Fei, killing an insignificant character didn't alleviate her anger. Without sparing a glance for the bald fellow, she gazed at the Precious Tree Sect's main doors with a slight frown.

"The old master used to live in seclusion inside Skylarell, but he yearned day and night to return to the Precious Tree Sect. His heart belongs there. He would be distressed if knew his sect had fallen into the hands of a bunch of ragtags."

At this thought, added to the recent frustration of her fruitless search, the bottled-up frustration in her heart instantly erupted.

“For the old master’s sake, for his sake, I can’t allow the Precious Tree Sect to be seized by these savage brutes. What if they came back one day?”

Her arresting figure turned into a pale blue stream of light. She shot inside the sect in the blink of an eye.

Dan Fei hadn’t come very often to the Precious Tree Sect, and the few times she did come, it was to accompany the old master. Hence, she held no deep feelings for this place.

However, when she passed through the mountain gates, she beheld a decadent sight poles apart from what was once one of the four great sects. Wandering cultivators idled along everywhere to the eye. Some drank liquor and ate meat, others sought leisure, and some indulged in debauchery.

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Standing somewhere high above, Dan Fei overlooked the sect, her heart about to explode in anger at the scenes she was witnessing. Her ears pricked as she caught faint voices from a residence at the rear of the mountains, as well as wicked laughter from a group of men drifting in and out.

Lifting her brows, Dan Fei aimed her piercing gaze in that direction.

She saw a group of completely naked girls being chased by a group of men, like sheep being hunted by hyenas. The girls randomly shrieked in terror and fright. They were mindless with fear, their virtue the last thing on their minds. Each of the men held a whip and cracked it in the air.

The scene was reminiscent of humans herding livestock.

Most of these girls were very young, but all of them were attractive with a superb figure to match. Strips of bloody bruises marked their white, tender bodies. It was easy to tell they were being held captive, targets for these brutes to vent their feelings on.

The men lashed their whips in the air. Whenever a strip of leather wrapped around a woman, they would subject her to all kinds of depraved actions, like the men were animals.

Seeing the obscene chaos, Dan Fei’s eyebrows rose in anger.

“These beasts!” As a woman, she fumed at the sight of the savages defiling these women. Her figure blurring, Dan Fei hurled herself downward.

“Hm? What’s going on?” These men were clearly veterans, and their cultivation wasn’t weak, but all they saw was a blur. Had someone appeared inside the yard?

Some paid no attention to her as they continued chasing after the women, caught in their lust amidst chuckles and laughter.

Dan Fei’s exquisite figure flew past them, the short blade in her hand cutting across the wind.

Pfft, pfft!

Two clear sounds swept past the necks of the two cultivators running at the front, suddenly halting their forward momentum. In the next moment, geysers of blood spurted from their throats. Their necks tilted as a pair of massive heads tumbled onto the ground.

“Ah?” Behind the two, the men who were running a little slower paused at this sudden change. They rubbed their eyes, took another look, and saw a young woman as stunning as a goddess riding the wind in their direction, fixing them with a stare as cold as winter.

“Eh? Where’s this chick come from?”

“Be careful, everyone. This wench has extraordinary skill!”

“Hurry up, let the sectmaster know enemies have invaded the sect!”

Dan Fei’s face remained expressionless, but an intense desire to kill was the only thing on her mind. She wanted to slaughter these swine in human skin down to the last and repay them for the humiliation they’d inflicted on these women!

Her silhouette blurring again, Dan Fei accelerated even faster.

The cultivators in the rear were about to escape the courtyard, but Dan Fei reached the exit before them. She was like the wind, her figure as fast as lightning.

Swish swish swish. As if reaping wheat, the short blade in her hand slashed without reprieve, each strike felling a wandering cultivator as they rushed to the doorway.

There were a dozen men in this group. Dan Fei had chopped down five of them in the space of a few blinks. The rest of them looked at her with dread in their eyes. Seeing her ravishing appearance, the first thought to cross their minds was an evil one. But soon, only terror was left in their hearts.

“This girl is ruthless. Everybody attack together, let’s kill her!”

“I agree. We can’t escape since none of us can match her speed. Attacking her together is our only chance of getting out of it alive.”

“Die!” These men were decisive desperados. It was in for a penny, in for a pound. Since they knew they couldn’t escape, they steeled themselves and charged together at Dan Fei.

From beginning to end, no emotion could be seen on Dan Fei’s face. But a murderous glint suddenly sparkled in her cold eyes. Her short blade slashed like the gale. White light burst forth like fish jumping out the surface of a river.

When the white light vanished an instant later, something seemed to be strangling the men’s necks. They threw down their weapons, hands scrabbling at their throats, deathly afraid they might lose their heads otherwise.

But they did indeed lose them. Their hands drooped weakly down in midair. Thump thump thump. Skulls fell in quick succession.

Dan Fei had beheaded all nine cultivators in the space of a single move. Simply killing these beasts didn’t ease her anger. With a leap upward, she flew into the air and raised her voice. “Qin Thirteen, get the hell out here!”

Her shout wasn’t as resounding as Jiang Chen’s dragon roar art, but it carried an astounding momentum with it, engulfing the entire Precious Tree Sect like a raging flood. Floating high in the air, she spread her

consciousness to its limits and fixated her phoenix-shaped eyes on the entire Precious Tree Sect's domain.

A figure flashed out of a secret residence like a bolt of lightning. "Which honored senior has come to my Tree Spirit Sect? Is there anything we can do for you?"

This man was dressed in sumptuous clothes. He was quite good looking with his thick eyebrows and didn't give off the image of an evildoer. However, a book couldn't be judged by its cover.

"You're Qin Thirteen?" Dan Fei stared at him with cold eyes.

"Indeed, this humble one is Qin Thirteen. And my lady, you are?" Seeing Dan Fei's extraordinary demeanor, Qin Thirteen decided to remain until he could sound her out.

However, he was a sage realm cultivator and immediately sensed the gore exuding from below. Glancing sidelong, he saw a dozen sect members lying on the ground at sixes and sevens, their heads separated from their bodies.

With a quiet hiss, Qin Thirteen asked in a grave tone, "Young lady, who might you be? Don't you think it's a bit much to crash the gates of my Tree Spirit Sect without any advance warning?"

Dan Fei's smile was cold. "Is there a need for advance warning when killing someone?"

Qin Thirteen froze. "You mean you're the one who killed these men?"

"These men were guilty of perpetrating atrocities. I presume you must also be an accomplice of theirs as the so-called sectmaster. Don't worry, you're going to keep them company soon." Her voice was indifferent. She had no desire to waste words with Qin Thirteen. "How many of you are there in total? Summon them all."

Qin Thirteen gasped audibly. This girl as beautiful as a celestial maiden seemed more and more inscrutable. His intuition told him she possessed remarkable strength!

Chapter 1333: Stalemate

"Miss, my name is Qin Thirteen. If I've offended you anywhere, I do apologize first." As a man experienced in the ways of the world, Qin Thirteen was deft at reading people's emotions. Dan Fei's murderous intent had intimidated him into backing off. His tone softened in an attempt to gather information. He was unsure he would have any advantage by making the first move.

"Apologize?" Dan Fei's tone was cool. "Some crimes can't be merely apologized for."

Qin Thirteen grew serious. "Miss," he saluted with cupped fist, "I'm not some no-name. Elder Qiu in the Empyrean River Palace, of the Upper Eight Regions, is my uncle. I..."

"Enough." Dan Fei smiled placidly. "Me killing you has nothing to do with whether you're famous or not."

Qin Thirteen had never seen such a dogged opponent before. His expression turned frigid. "Miss, you have to make it clear to me why you want to kill me. Your mannerisms and ability tell me that you are a genius from a large sect. Are you one of the Ninesuns Sky Sect's or the Eternal Celestial Capital's? As I

said, my uncle is an elder of the Empyrean River Palace. The Palace too is a first rank sect. Don't I deserve at least an explanation?"

"The Empyrean River Palace?" Dan Fei frowned a little. "What kind of place is that? Never heard of it."

Huh?

Qin Thirteen was completely stunned. Could there be people in the human domain who'd never heard of the Empyrean River Palace? His brain fritzed out for a moment. He'd wanted to borrow the Palace's name to bring some pressure down the woman. It seemed that this idea had been very foolish. And yet, he wasn't sure whether the woman's ignorance was real or feigned.

Dan Fei really hadn't heard of the Empyrean River Palace. She'd solely focused on cultivation after being saved by Emperor Peafowl all those years ago and hadn't paid much attention to outside affairs.

"Miss, the Empyrean River Palace is one of the first rank sects in the Upper Eight Regions. One of the largest in the entire human domain." Qin Thirteen couldn't help his emphasis.

"Are you done talking already?" Dan Fei furrowed her brow.

Qin Thirteen was at his wit's end. "Woman," he blurted out angrily, "are you set on opposing me? On opposing the Empyrean River Palace?"

"You're overthinking things. I'm only here to kill you."

"How have I angered you? Even if I'm to die, I should at least die knowing why." Qin Thirteen sneered. "A piece of advice: don't push your luck. Otherwise, you'll bring shame upon yourself even if you're a genius from a large sect!"

Dan Fei's expression was cool. She pointed at the women below. "You cage up people like beasts for your own enjoyment. Does that not deserve death? Furthermore, you squat in the property of others. Twice the crime, twice the punishment."

"Hahaha, do you seek justice for these ordinary women? They're no better than animals." Qin Thirteen cackled loudly. "Their ant-like significances mean nothing in the eyes of real cultivators such as us. Don't you eat meat, miss?"

He found it quite amusing that she was intervening on these women's behalves. Was this woman really a first rank sect's genius? Suspicion crept into Qin Thirteen's mind.

Dan Fei sighed softly. "Just as you treat ordinary people like cattle, so too do I treat you. If you're allowed to kill them, why can't I kill you?"

Qin Thirteen was incensed at hearing this. "I'm a sage realm expert! How can you compare me to those people?"

"Are the lives of ordinary people not lives, too? What crimes have they committed?" Dan Fei's tone grew colder and colder.

"No crime but weakness. Who told them to be weak? Because they are weak, they deserve to live for our enjoyment." Qin Thirteen saw no problem in his reasoning. "Are you really the disciple of a large sect, miss?"

"Not at all," Dan Fei retorted coolly. "Not that I need to be one to kill you. It doesn't matter what you say, Qin Thirteen. You won't escape death today."

She was intent on cutting him down.

Not the disciple of a large sect? Qin Thirteen scrutinized Dan Fei once more, weighing the possibility of this revelation.

"What? You dare pilfer someone's property, but you don't have the courage to fight?" Dan Fei sneered.

"Pilfer someone's property? There was no previous owner. That's how it was when I came here. I don't understand what you're going on about." Qin Thirteen's eyes moved shiftily. "Are you related to this place, perhaps?"

"You talk too much." Dan Fei was done with the conversation. She raised her shortsword into the air, creating an atmospheric shift. A swish of the blade and a few afterimages was enough to propel her into Qin Thirteen's proximity.

Qin Thirteen's heart fell. He was both surprised and wary. Producing a black claymore, he sliced toward Dan Fei's torso. He was actually an earth sage realm cultivator. He presented himself to the public as an initial rank sage realm cultivator to hide his ability. To be more precise, he was fifth level.

In a large sect, someone with that kind of cultivation wasn't much. But in a place like Myriad Domain, especially a place as secluded as the sixteen kingdoms alliance, Qin Thirteen's cultivation made him a terrifying presence.

That was the reason he had been able to retain control of the Precious Tree Sect's grounds for so many years unchallenged. Larger sects didn't care about the land and smaller factions couldn't compete with him. Moreover, his relation to the Empyrean River Palace's Elder Qiu intimidated a fair number of people.

Unfortunately, trading blows with Dan Fei told him that though the woman wasn't necessarily higher level than him, her methods were more than a match for his.

Their weapons clashing created a shower of sparks.

With a malicious bark of laughter, Qin Thirteen brought his claymore down on the side residence below. There were a few dozen ordinary women within. If they were hit by the blade aura, they would be made into instant mincemeat.

Angered by Qin Thirteen's actions, Dan Fei hurtled downward after the blade aura, raising her shortsword to block the attack with a gust from her own weapon. Her body was pushed back by the exchange, dropping another few yards.

"Tsk ts, what a goody-two-shoes girl. It seems that you really do care about these mortal ants. Why don't you stay to keep them company?"

The blows traded so far were enough for Qin Thirteen to have some confidence in his ability to win against the woman. Her concern for the ordinary women below would be her downfall. This was a golden opportunity for him. If he could use this to his advantage, it was very possible to win and even capture the woman.

Dan Fei's beauty and potential connection to Precious Tree Sect made Qin Thirteen thoughtful. She had said herself that she wasn't some large sect's disciple, no?

He'd been cautious with his conduct because she seemed like a genius from a first rank sect. He didn't dare offend her too much, lest she be pushed too far. But since new information had come to light that she wasn't as strong as a first rank sect's true disciple, he began to have some other ideas.

His prudence turned into malice.

When Dan Fei had departed from Skylaurel Kingdom all those years ago, she'd only been spirit realm. She had advanced a fair bit after Emperor Peafowl's rescue; he'd taught her and purified her body, stimulating her body's latent cultivation potential.

She hadn't improved with nearly the same kind of terrifying quickness as Jiang Chen's, but she was fourth level sage realm now, following a system of cultivation that Emperor Peafowl had drafted for her.

The sealed door cultivation she had undergone recently had given her a tremendous breakthrough. Because of this vast increase in strength, Dan Fei's return to her homeland had been rather smooth. On her way here, she'd easily taught some would-be evildoers a harsh lesson.

Still, she was shocked after fighting Qin Thirteen for a while. The bald man had said that Qin Thirteen was initial sage realm, but he was definitely mid sage realm in her opinion. In fact, he was quite possibly higher level than her.

Thankfully, her years spent following Emperor Peafowl hadn't been in vain. She had learned from the best martial methods available. The difference in their cultivation levels was disadvantageous, but not insurmountably so.

There were two reasons she wasn't having a good time after the short exchange.

First, she was uneasy about Qin Thirteen's potential attack on the ordinary women below.

Second, Dan Fei's increase in cultivation was offset by a drastic lack of combat experience. She hadn't even been origin realm when first coming to Veluriyam Capital. But she was now already fourth level sage realm.

She'd barely fought anyone in the interim. This was an extremely unfavorable point for her. She had been able to kill those cultivators before now with ease because of her level. Killing origin realm cultivators was as easy as an adult beating up children. There was no possibility of overcoming such a radical discrepancy in raw strength.

Her fight against Qin Thirteen revealed her present weaknesses.

"Why is she this green? Does she have no experience whatsoever in the world?" Qin Thirteen was astonished. "The way she fights certainly confirms it, yet the methods she uses are mysterious and

powerful. Where did this woman come from? Wouldn't it be trouble for me to capture her, if she really is from a large sect?"

Qin Thirteen was between a rock and a hard place. He didn't know how to deal with his sudden anxiety. The woman attracted him a great deal and he didn't want to let her out of his grasp. Yet worry lingered in his heart. If the woman really did have a powerful background, then he was playing with fire.

"No way... if she's a disciple from a large sect, she can't possibly be this inexperienced. Their disciples begin traveling from a young age and are sure to be far more experienced than someone like me. Competition within large sects is cruel. A disciple as inexperienced as she wouldn't be able to survive internal competition, much less live to venture outside her own sect!" This was how he reassured himself.

Because of this change of heart, his attacks became more ferocious. Every cut of the claymore moved with a mountain-cleaving momentum. Dan Fei was repeatedly forced back.

She was clever enough to play around her inexperience. She adopted a defensive stance, buying time to come up with a strategy.

Chapter 1334: The Three Peafowl Feathers

Despite her inexperience, Dan Fei was a sharp girl. She was forced back, but there was no sign of defeatism in her expression.

"Qin Thirteen is a shameless man. If I use my methods to push him back, he'll use those ordinary women as hostages against me." Dan Fei's brain whirled. "To kill him, I must strike him down in one blow. Otherwise, he'll take those women with him to the grave."

Though Dan Fei didn't know those women, she wasn't going to throw them to the wolves. It wasn't in her nature to see the meek as no better than ants.

As for Qin Thirteen, Dan Fei wasn't scared of him one bit. His current advantage meant nothing. She had a plethora of guidance from Emperor Peafowl over the years and had cultivated a custom-made system of methods. Most importantly, she had a variety of high rank treasures from the emperor.

These treasures could guarantee her life even against emperor realm opponents, much less a mid sage realm cultivator around her own level.

But how would Qin Thirteen know any of this? He swung his claymore with increased ferocity, walling Dan Fei in with his attacks. His dominance in battle increased his confidence in the near-future conquest, dampening his earlier concern and wariness. He had only one thought remaining. Take down this beautiful woman!

Qin Thirteen had seen more than his fair share of pretty girls during his time in the world. However, seeing a woman with Dan Fei's kind of style was the first.

He'd had occasional glances at the top geniuses of first rank sects. They belonged to a completely different world than him, and the only way he could look at them was upward. He and they were as different as a toad and a flock of swans. But he felt at this very moment that a swan was very close to his grasp!

Qin Thirteen had his own plans. He didn't much care about the ordinary women below. He had only given the impression of wanting to kill them to threaten Dan Fei. He didn't want to harm them at all.

The aftermath of sage realm experts battling it out would wreak havoc on the surrounding environment. This land belonged to the Tree Spirit Sect now, and he didn't want to damage it too much. That was why he'd fought Dan Fei airborne the entire time.

The other cultivators of the sect came out from their hiding places as the two fought, watching the aerial combatants intently.

"What're we waiting for? Let's go help!" A few of Qin Thirteen's closest friends called out.

"Just watching is enough, my brothers," Qin Thirteen roared with laughter. "Take notes! Watch me take this girl home! But pay attention to those ordinary ants. If they attempt to escape from the side residence, cut them down on the spot!"

Qin Thirteen's orders eliminated any thoughts Dan Fei had about telling the women to run away. She knew that regardless of what she said, the weak non-cultivators couldn't leave the defenses of the sect. Leaving the side residence meant walking into the jaws of death.

There were people everywhere within the Precious Tree Sect's former grounds. At least a thousand of them, most at least origin realm. There were a handful of sage realm cultivators here as well.

"How has Qin Thirteen gathered up so many wandering cultivators here? The Precious Tree Sect was only a sixth or seventh rank sect. Is it so attractive to them?" Dan Fei found this odd.

Their numbers meant that delaying was worse for her than it was for the opponent. This place was crawling with cultivators! She was determined to resolve the problem as briskly as possible.

Her right hand still brandishing her shortsword, she produced three multicolored feathers in her left. They were peafowl feathers, one of the treasures Emperor Peafowl had given to her for protection.

She tossed them into the air, chanting. Suddenly, the three feathers dyed the entire sky into a kaleidoscopic veil. The firmament was filled with prismatic light.

Qin Thirteen had no time to react at all. Shock flashed through his eyes, but the incandescent light was right next to him in the next instant. One of the feathers became a razor, drawing itself across his face.

Pfft! The light darted past Qin Thirteen's body.

With a ripping noise, the arrogant man was cut cleanly in half. The left and right parts plummeted in their respective directions.

Thump! The two halves of his corpse landed almost simultaneously, bringing with them a bloody rain shower.

Dan Fei was as astonished as the rest. Emperor Peafowl had only told her to use the feathers in times of danger. He'd said that they would allow her to kill higher level enemies, but the 'how' part had been conspicuously absent.

She'd produced them partially because she had wanted to try them out. The results were rather stunning. The dominant Qin Thirteen was rendered helpless before the peafowl feathers. Given the speed with which he'd been bisected, his reflexes hadn't even had a chance of saving him.

The three peafowl feathers returned to their original appearance, resting quietly in Dan Fei's palm. It was as if they were completely divorced from that bloody affair.

Dan Fei's crystal eyes considered the peafowl feathers in her hand, her expression still incredulous. "Your Majesty, you've treated me far too well," she murmured to herself emotionally. "Excuse my foolishness for not severing this final tie to my past. I promise you that if I still can't find him, I will return to Veluriyam Capital and nurture Nian'er to adulthood. Before that though, please forgive my stubbornness. Even if I don't manage to find him, I must find the old master. I am also very grateful to him..."

Clutching her peafowl feathers, Dan Fei lost herself for a moment. Meanwhile, the wandering cultivators below exploded in activity.

"The sect head is dead! That woman was the murderer!"

"Brothers, let's avenge the sect head!"

"Yes, kill that woman!"

The uproar snapped Dan Fei out of her reverie. Qin Thirteen's death had helped her get a better picture of what she was capable of. She glared coldly downward, her graceful lashes fluttering. She locked onto the loudest few.

"Go!" She tossed the three feathers into the distance. Like bolts of lightning, they dove at the boisterous scoundrels.

Whoosh!

Three more heads were sent high into the sky. The swiftness of their decapitation and the force of the flight were astounding.

None of these wandering cultivators had any idea that killing so casually was even possible.

Dan Fei didn't stop at those three. She maneuvered the feathers left and right, reaping lives like a farmer taking in crops crops. The most rambunctious cultivators were mowed down like swathes of wheat.

There was mass chaos and hysteria within the Precious Tree Sect. There was no one left in the crowd willing to incite violence after Dan Fei's killing spree. The remaining cultivators had only a single thought left: flee!

They were a rag-tag group from the start, gathered together by profit alone. Qin Thirteen and his cohorts being slaughtered in such a terrifyingly overwhelming way crushed any sentiments of their own resistance.

Run away!

They wanted nothing more than to run away. Once that thought was cemented, countless people made a mad dash outward from the sect. They didn't think they would get much more time to do so.

"Listen up, cultivators." Her bloodshed finished, Dan Fei declared coldly. "This place belongs to the Precious Tree Sect. I'm not going to pursue you from here, but any who dare set foot in this place once more will be slain without warning!"

Her warning eased the wandering cultivators' minds. From the sound of it, the pretty lady wasn't going to kill them after all. After killing Qin Thirteen and his associates, Dan Fei kept her word, allowing the others to leave in peace.

In about fifteen minutes, every cultivator had departed from the Precious Tree Sect's grounds.

A patrol around the mountain revealed that no one living remained aside from the ordinary women. Dan Fei descended to the earth, walking to the entrance of the residence.

"Where were you all taken from?"

"My lady, we... we are all honest citizens of Skylareel Kingdom."

Dan Fei sighed softly. The honest were often taken advantage of. These ordinary women had been taken here by those evil cultivators solely to sate their lusts. If she hadn't come here, they wouldn't have been able to live past the week. How could ordinary women survive the torture of cultivators? Perhaps they were only a single batch of those evil cultivators' toys.

Gritting her ivory teeth, Dan Fei sighed once more. "You're safe now. Are you able to go back?"

The women's eyes were filled with fear and misery. Their misfortune the past few days had paralyzed them with despair.

Dan Fei shook her head. She had been able to save their lives, but it seemed that not much remained of their wills to live.

"This is the site of the Precious Tree Sect. It shouldn't be too far to Skylareel Kingdom. Go back. I'll watch over you in secret to protect you from any predatory cultivators," Dan Fei consoled.

Of course, the wandering cultivators had dispersed already. They were unlikely to return any time soon – or ever.

"My lady, are you... are you one of the great cultivators from the Precious Tree Sect?"

Dan Fei shook her head. "Alright, rest here for a while. I will take you back to Skylareel Kingdom tomorrow morning."

She hadn't yet given up. She planned to search within the former grounds of the sect to look for any clues. Where had the people from the Precious Tree Sect gone?

Rumor had it that they had disappeared before the invasion of Myriad Domain. If that was true, then they had likely avoided the disaster altogether. If they had left on their own, they were sure to have left some hint of their whereabouts. Dan Fei began to look more carefully for where hints could be.

Alas, the Precious Tree Sect was in a state of utter ruin after Qin Thirteen and company's continued occupation. The buildings and layout of the sect had been completely altered, and there was no trace where its people had gone.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1335: The True Disciple From The Empyrean River Palace

Ole Mo The Eighth was dismayed. He couldn't quell his trepidation even now. He was one of Qin Thirteen's loyal followers and the only one who'd made it out alive. That wench wasn't any stronger than Qin Thirteen, but the ominous weapon she'd suddenly unleashed was too dreadful.

His face pallid, Ole Mo trembled from head to toe at the mere thought of that flash of light followed by heads rolling. He'd never heard of such a terrifying treasure.

He and his companions had been indulging in pleasure just moments ago, only to see the sectmaster die the next instant, along with all his companions. All of them, dead! Ole Mo himself was now a stray dog.

He looked back as he ran, afraid the mighty weapon would catch up to him if he even blinked.

"Elder Qiu at the Empyrean River Palace won't take Sectmaster Qin's death lying down! This girl might be powerful, but Elder Qiu is an advanced emperor realm powerhouse. She won't look so mighty in front of him. That's right, I must tell Elder Qiu immediately." Ole Mo recovered his clarity of thought after a moment of panic.

"Wait, if I inform Elder Qiu right now, he'll know I'm the only one who survived out of the entire group. If he's angered by that, he might put me to death as a sacrifice for the sectmaster. Won't I get the worst of it then?" Ole Mo had his own personal worries as well.

But as he was fretting, a strand of consciousness suddenly swept through, originating from the sky above. The next moment, a cold haughty voice sounded. "Senior brother, the man below seems a little familiar. I think I've seen him somewhere!"

"Hm? He does really look a little familiar. Let's go down and have a look."

The two men speaking were young men in sect robes, giving off a dignified and extraordinary feeling, particularly the senior brother walking in front. With the dignified gait of a dragon among men, he seemed to exude an undeniable presence, radiating a crushing pressure.

The junior brother behind him seemed younger and more immature, but his expression was equally haughty, as if not many things under the sun were worth his attention. The two of them dropped from the clouds and materialized in front of Ole Mo like two ghosts.

Ole Mo froze when he saw them. He recognized them as Elder Qiu's disciples. In particular, the older one with the extraordinary presence had an exalted identity, being a true disciple. His cultivation was as high as his status was lofty, and he ranked as one of the most notable cultivators amongst the Empyrean River Palace's younger generation.

Ole Mo's impulse was to pick up his feet and flee, but he couldn't move an inch despite the urge. His feet wouldn't budge. They were rooted to the ground. He knew that if he tried to run, it would be no effort for the two disciples to crush him to pieces.

“Senior brother, I think this man is Qin Thirteen’s subordinate.” The junior brother with a frosty, haughty tone seemed to recognize Ole Mo.

With a wry face, Ole Mo stepped forward and kneeled in greeting. “This humble one is Ole Mo, here to pay respect to the two geniuses of the Emyrean River Palace.”

“Ole Mo? Oh I remember, one of Qin Thirteen’s men. Ole Mo is it? Why are you sneaking around? Where’s Qin Thirteen? Tell him to hurry up and come out so he can welcome us two brothers. Our master will also grace him with his presence today, so tell him to make the necessary preparations!” The junior brother was called Lu Yi. He was also Elder Qiu’s disciple, but he wasn’t a true disciple, hence he was far below his senior brother in standing.

Ole Mo started bawling. “My lords, Sectmaster Qin... He can no longer welcome the two of you. You came a moment too late!”

“What?” The senior brother, Zhao Mang, frowned. As a true disciple of the Emyrean River Palace, his position was extremely high amongst Elder Qiu’s followers, and he held far greater weight in Elder Qiu’s heart than a so-called distant nephew like Qin Thirteen.

“A woman came to the Tree Spirit Sect today. She rampaged her way through the mountains and slaughtered Sectmaster Qin, along with many other brothers!” Ole Mo sobbed. “That woman is terrible. I don’t know what evil treasure she used, but heads rolled on the floor as soon as I saw a flash of light...”

“What? Qin Thirteen is dead?” Lu Yi’s brows rose in surprise. “Ole Mo, what the hell are you saying? Is there anyone who can kill him in this damn backwater?”

“My lord, this Ole Mo isn’t brave enough to lie to your exalted selves! Judging from her bearing, that woman isn’t a local cultivator. Sectmaster Qin tried to pry information out of her, but there was something very off about her. Even the Emyrean River Palace was unfamiliar to her.”

“Nonsense.” These words infuriated Lu Yi. “Did you believe her just because she said that?”

Zhao Mang waved him off. “Junior brother Lu, don’t get overexcited and listen to what he has to say.”

“Go on, Ole Mo. Tell us all the details. Don’t be evasive and don’t even think about concealing anything,” Zhao Mang calmly laid out.

In spite of his fear, Ole Mo stammered out a recounting, narrating everything from beginning to end.

Zhao Mang frowned when he heard the entire story. “A beautiful young woman? She fought Qin Thirteen to a standstill at first? If so, she doesn’t sound like a genius from a great sect.”

As one of them himself, Zhao Mang was aware of how strong one of such geniuses were. If she was merely even with a fifth level sage realm like Qin Thirteen, it would be impossible for her to be a true disciple in a first rank sect despite her passable cultivation.

If not a true disciple of a first rank sect, how would she be so contemptuous in front of his Emyrean River Palace? Or say she’d never heard of the faction? A genius from a small sect would never dare utter these words even if they had ten times the courage.

“Can it be an enemy sect? Is that why she humiliated us on purpose?” Lu Yi voiced his own conjecture.

Zhao Mang pondered for a moment, but couldn't come to a definite conclusion.

"Ole Mo, lead the way, let's go take a look." As a bold and adventurous man, rather than being paralyzed by fear, Zhao Mang was keen to get to the bottom of the matter.

The old man's expression exposed his reluctance. "My lords, that woman isn't gone yet. She's still inside sect grounds as we speak. If we go there now, it'll be impossible for us to avoid her."

"What are you afraid of?" Lu Yi erupted with indignation. "With my senior brother here, why would we be afraid of fighting against a nameless woman? Not to mention that my master will also arrive soon."

Ole Mo's anxiety finally abated somewhat when he heard of Elder Qiu's imminent arrival. But now, he worried whether the elder would take anger out on him when the elder learned of Qin Thirteen's death. He couldn't extricate himself from this hesitation.

"You're not going?" Zhao Mang asked with a faint smile.

Ole Mo prostrated himself, repeatedly knocking his forehead on the ground. "My lord, I'm not as brave as you and don't dare go back. If my lords want to go there, I can tell you the way or even draw you a map if you wish."

Zhao Mang nodded. "You can leave in that case. We naturally have our own ways of finding a trivial Precious Tree Sect."

Ole Mo almost thought his ears weren't functioning. Glancing up, he saw the tranquil look on Zhao Mang's face, as if the latter was really willing to let him go.

"Many thanks, my lord." Ole Mo scrambled away, trying to leave.

An icy glint flashing in his eyes, Zhao Mang thrust a sudden palm into the void, the blow as heavy as a hammer. Ole Mo flew straight into the air, dropping back down in a rather spectacular posture, a big hole pummelled through his body. He was dead as a mackerel.

Without batting an eye, Zhao Mang told his companion, "Let's go."

Lu Yi chuckled and spat on the ground. "Hehe, this guy really didn't know how to appreciate kindness. As Qin Thirteen's man, he let his master die while escaping himself, then dared to haggle with us? He was really looking to die!"

Zhao Mang offered no reply, his thoughts already on the Precious Tree Sect. He'd arrived in advance at the command of his master, but he hadn't expected to happen upon such a situation. He was well aware his master cared very much about this place. The elder had specially dispatched a distant nephew to gather some men and pick up the pieces, setting up a local base in Myriad Domain for the Empyrean River Palace.

But no one foresaw that someone would destroy this so-called Tree Spirit Sect a mere few years later, killing Qin Thirteen in the process.

"Senior brother, who do you think she might be? Someone who has no scruples killing even after hearing our sect's name must be a remarkable figure. Even if it's a girl, it must be a fierce girl who's not easy to deal with."

Zhao Mang tuned out Lu Yi's prattling. It didn't matter to him where she came from or who she was. She was barely strong enough to fight Qin Thirteen to a standstill and had to rely on a heaven defying treasure to kill him. Why would he dread that sort of strength?

She had a treasure, but as a true disciple of the Empyrean River Palace, would he be without his own treasures? For that reason, he didn't take her too seriously. The only thorny issue was the death of his master's nephew. Although his master Elder Qiu might not be very close with his distant kin, Qin Thirteen was nonetheless the master's blood relative.

Zhao Mang could only imagine his master's wrath when he learned of what had transpired. He might even blame his disciple from being too slow and too late to prevent Qin Thirteen's death and the Tree Spirit Sect's destruction. The only thing he could do now was to hurry there, apprehend the killer, and hand her over for his master to handle.

Zhao Mang hastened his steps, afraid the killer might have left.

Dan Fei looked for clues in every nook and cranny of the Precious Tree Sect, but to her chagrin, her efforts ended up fruitless yet again.

"It seems the Precious Tree Sect's departure was so sudden that they didn't leave any clues behind," Dan Fei concluded.

At this moment, two very aggressive streams of air shot from the sky and blew her way. They contained very invasive strands of consciousness. The streams shot inside the Precious Tree Sect, sweeping back and forth across the mountains.

Dan Fei found herself very averse to this sort of untoward action.

"Whoever killed Qin Thirteen, step forward!" A rumbling voice sounded from outside the sect. It naturally belonged to Zhao Mang.

Lu Yi also shouted, "Wench, come out and let my Empyrean River Palace have a look at you. Do you have three heads and six arms? You must be amazing if you dare make a move against my sect's subordinates!"

Men from the Empyrean River Palace? Dan Fei was rather surprised. She hadn't expected them to come so quickly.

Just as she was about to respond, two formidable gusts of wind rumbled down from the sky. With a bang, they crashed into a mountain peak, the enormous impact shaving off a part of the top.

Chapter 1336: A Powerful Showdown

With his extraordinary aura and his status as a true disciple of the Empyrean River Palace, Zhao Mang was ordinarily full of pride. These traits were even more exaggerated now that he'd arrived in an insignificant place like the sixteen kingdoms alliance.

He surveyed the panorama below, his eyes showing disdain for all things living, until his gaze suddenly landed on a young, graceful woman. Her tall and slender figure was beautiful and as conspicuous as a rare orchid in this mountain valley.

"Hm?" Zhao Mang's interest was piqued. Ole Mo had mentioned that Qin Thirteen's killer was an attractive girl.

Zhao Mang hadn't put much stock in the old man's words. Ole Mo was crude and unrefined, so what did he know of attractive women? Seeing her with his own eyes now, he finally realized the truth of the old man's words.

Even he was secretly awed, the stirrings of desire stoked in his heart. "Where does this young woman come from? Such bearing, she should be famous in the human domain!"

Beside him, his junior brother Lu Yi was also stunned by Dan Fei's appearance.

"I'm a true disciple of the Empyrean River Palace Zhao Mang. Might I inquire whose sect you hail from, my lady?" Zhao Mang's attitude had undergone a subtle change.

Dan Fei replied with indifference, "Are you here to avenge Qin Thirteen?"

Zhao Mang smiled leisurely. "That Qin Thirteen was an uncouth fellow. If he offended you, then he was merely go what he deserved and there's be naturally nothing for me to avenge. However, if..."

"There's no need for ifs," Dan Fei immediately interrupted. "Zhao Mang was it? I am the one who killed him. If you want revenge, feel free to come down."

Although Dan Fei could tell Zhao Fei was far stronger than Qin Thirteen, there was still no fear in her.

Zhao Mang had originally planned to show off his poise and elegance. But Dan Fei's biting words cut him off short, undermining all the lines he'd prepared. Fortunately for him, his experience with all kinds of situations allowed him to retain his composure.

"What a strong temper. Among the innumerable sects of my Upper Eight Regions, the ones with notable female geniuses are the Moon God Sect and the Celestial Cicada Court. Which of these two sects do you hail from, I wonder?" Zhao Mang was still keen to find out her identity, because while he was a true disciple, his sect could only be considered third tier among the first rank sects of Upper Eight Region when it came to strength and wealth.

For that reason, it was best to make thorough inquiries even if they were fated to stand on opposite sides. He wasn't one to shy away from trouble, but neither was he inclined to stir the pot for no good reason.

"No need to beat around the bush. I'm not from a first rank sect, you don't need to be so cautious. If you want to attack, then use whatever means you have at your disposal." False courtesy from these sect disciples was what Dan Fei loathed most. Since they were bound to be enemies, why did he waste her time in probings?

Not from a first rank sect? Zhao Mang froze for a split second. She wasn't a first rank sect's disciple despite her talent?

"Miss, with your natural aptitude, are you truly reduced to wasting away the spring of your youth in a second or third rate sect? If so, I feel genuinely sorry for you." Zhao Mang smiled. "Why not turn over a new leaf? As long as you are willing to join my Empyrean River Palace, I swear I'll do everything in my

power to smooth away Qin Thirteen's matter for you. I guarantee you'll become an eminent figure of our sect."

With the exalted status of a true disciple, Zhao Mang had full confidence he could make good on his promise.

A teasing expression emerged on Dan Fei's face. "A first rank sect's disciple? Are all of them as narcissistic as you? The Empyrean River Palace? I've never heard of it, have no interest in it, and am even less impressed. Attack if you must, why indulge in one-sided flatteries?"

Dan Fei's sarcasm took no prisoners.

No matter how adept Zhao Mang was at posturing, he could no longer endure Dan Fei's derision. With a cold nod, he said in a frosty voice, "Good. Since you don't appreciate my kindness, then don't blame me for lacking chivalry and being ruthless to the fairer sex!"

"Lu Yi, hold the rear." A murderous aura spread from Zhao Mang.

"Now that senior brother is personally taking action, a swift victory is all but certain," Lu Yi flattered.

Although Zhao Mang hadn't broken through to emperor realm yet, he was nonetheless peak sage realm. When it came to real strength, he could hold his own against Cao Jin, the Ninesuns disciple who once stirred trouble on Mt. Rippling Mirage.

Cao Jin was merely ranked ninth in his sect's younger generation, whereas Zhao Mang was among the top five in the entire Empyrean River Palace, or even the top three.

Unleashing the energy of a sage realm cultivator, strange black mountains immediately emerged behind Zhao Mang. The black mountains appeared dark and sinister, and evil winds raged through them, giving off an eerie feeling. He murmured an incantation. The black mountains suddenly exploded in the air, forming countless black boulders shooting at Dan Fei like artillery shells.

"Black Meteorites! Senior brother, what a formidable move!" Lu Yi applauded with admiration.

Black rocks covered the sky, so dense not a sliver of blue was visible. Like meteorites, they rained down with irrepressible speed and momentum, bringing howling gusts of wind in their wake.

They crashed toward Dan Fei in the space of a few breaths, seemingly about to bury her. Peak ninth level sage realm was outstanding to begin with. On top of that, the Black Meteorites art exerted an innate pressure on consciousness.

At this critical juncture, a feather appeared in Dan Fei's hand. She brushed it across the empty air, rending a crack through space. The void inside this crack swallowed her figure. She disappeared on the spot, vanishing from Zhao Mang's and Lu Yi's eyes.

Zhao Mang stared in faint surprise when he saw multicolored rays of light flash, followed by the woman's disappearance. He looked everywhere around him, but no matter how meticulous his scrutiny, he couldn't find a clue anywhere. She seemed to have faded into the void.

"Senior brother, be careful!" Lu Yi suddenly shouted out loud, his senses on alert.

Zhao Mang's reflexes were lightning quick. With a shake of his arms, black mountains hovered in front of him. At almost the same time, a beam of light shot from the void, followed by a sharp blade slashing across space and the black mountain range.

The sparks born from the cruel impact splashed in every direction. The collision of formidable bursts of energy generated ripples vibrating in every direction, leaving collapsed buildings in their wake.

These buildings belonged to the Precious Tree Sect, so their construction quality conformed to the sect's standards. The two current combatants far surpassed the Precious Tree Sect in power. Naturally the sect's domain couldn't withstand this level of fighting.

A single exchange between the two of them already wrecked untold ruin and destruction.

Dan Fei could sense that Zhao Mang's martial cultivation was indeed much higher than hers. If not for Emperor Peafowl gifting her some protective treasures, she probably would have collapsed from the earlier blow.

The peafowl feathers weren't merely offensive weapons. They could also cut through space and let her dodge formidable attacks when combined with an escape technique. This escape technique was exclusive to Emperor Peafowl, and needed to be used in conjunction with his multicolored feathers.

As for these feathers, they were a great protective gift bestowed to Dan Fei by Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

Under constant usage, Dan Fei became increasingly familiar with them. Operating them with her consciousness, she continuously found more ways to use them. The result was especially satisfying when she manipulated them across the void in lethal slashes. Many techniques Emperor Peafowl taught her in the past emerged from her memories.

Even Zhao Mang was quickly backed into a corner by these feathers. Turning into dazzling beams of light, no one could predict where they would strike.

With a flash of light, the glint of blades once again stopped him dead in his tracks. Zhao Mang was rather depressed. He'd faced many opponents in his life, but without any exception, anyone who could render him helpless had a higher cultivation.

However, it clearly wasn't the case with the woman in front of him. Despite her much lower cultivation, she manipulated the feathers with her thoughts like someone else would a flying sword, attacking from all kinds of unpredictable angles. It was impossible to defend against them.

Many times, Dan Fei's feather blades almost caught Zhao Mang, forcing him to use enormous strength to block them. This sort of attack with no rhythm or pattern fanned Zhao Mang's anger.

"Senior brother, I'll assist you and attack her from the rear. What do you say?" Lu Yi couldn't help offering when he saw Zhao Mang's predicament.

Zhao Mang was a proud man. He naturally rejected the suggestion without a second thought.

"Lu Yi, focus on guarding the rear. This wench is at a lower realm than me, even lower than you, but her treasure is special. It appears and disappears like ghosts. Don't worry, it'll be easy for me to capture her once I grasp her pattern of attack."

Zhao Mang would never agree to let Lu Yi help him no matter how sorry his situation. He didn't want rumors to spread that he couldn't even handle a woman far weaker than him.

His current plan was to rely on his mobility. Under Dan Fei's powerful highly threatening moves, there was no gaps or opportunities for any sorts of attacks. He could only rely on his speed and movement arts, as well as his advantage in cultivation, to avoid Dan Fei's offensive while he groped for a way to reverse the situation.

Will I have any face left if I let her continue with her barrage? Her offensive relies entirely on her treasures. If I can make her lose the ability to use them, a few minutes will be enough for me to capture her.

He leered, "Girl, you're forcing me to it! I admit, your treasure isn't half bad. However, if you think it's enough to bridge the gap in cultivation, you're in for a surprise. Watch carefully!"

Reciting an incantation, Zhao Mang suddenly slapped his head. Three black whirlwinds shot out from the black mountains.

They resolved into enormous red pythons with thick skins and strong flesh. They pounced towards Dan Fei. Churning in the sky, they turned into three black streams of air speeding towards Dan Fei from three different directions.

Dan Fei's consciousness instantly perceived a formidable danger.

"Oh no, withdraw!" She reacted without the slightest hesitation. Multicolored rays of light flashed around her. Added to her absolute speed, she broke away from the three pythons' siege.

However, she underestimated the power of these pythons. After failing their first attempt, they elongated infinitely and spiralled endlessly in the sky, intent on surrounding this entire space with their bodies.

Chapter 1337: An Elder of the Empyrean River Palace

Dan Fei shifted left and right, maneuvering in every direction. Yet no matter how quickly she moved, she couldn't escape the three pythons' encirclement. The three giant snakes were filled with an ancient aura. They'd coiled their sinuous bodies into an invincible formation.

"Hmph, wench! Accept your defeat!" Zhao Mang flashed a contented smirk to himself. Capable hunters always enjoyed most the sight of squirming prey. It was an indescribable feeling, but he was filled with exactly that. A pretty female cultivator falling to his powerful methods!

Dan Fei continually deployed her peafowl feathers. Unfortunately, because her cultivation level was limited, the power that she could extract from the feathers was equally limited.

Though the feathers were faster than lightning and always hit their marks, the three giant pythons had thick scales and hides. The reptiles' tempered bodies meant that they enjoyed the protection of a thick shell. Dan Fei's feathers could score bloody marks, but they inflicted no lasting damage.

The scores were quite shallow. Blood spewed everywhere, but such wounds were hardly lethal. She became more serious. First rank sects' true disciples were difficult to deal with.

Dan Fei had a number of Emperor Peafowl's protective treasures, but was held back by her shallow cultivation and lack of combat experience. She couldn't make ideal use of any of them. Therefore, she was immediately at a disadvantage when her peafowl feathers failed.

The more wounds the pythons received, the more vicious they became. She could just barely hold on using the peafowl feathers' spatial power.

The three giant pythons maintained a clear strategy of restricting her movements by cutting off bits and pieces of available territory. Even if she could escape the pythons' entanglement, she would lose to fatigue.

Zhao Mang was thoroughly enjoying himself when he saw the girl struggle against his attacks. A beautiful female cultivator being played with like putty fulfilled his primitive pride considerably.

"Senior brother, you're amazing. That girl can't take much more." Lu Yi began his flattery anew.

Dan Fei didn't have only her peafowl feathers in reserve. Unfortunately, the other aces up her sleeve were intended for emergencies, and would harm her to a certain degree when used.

Still, she was unconcerned with the three giant pythons in the end. She had a powerful escape glyph at her disposal that would trivialize her current obstacle.

When Emperor Peafowl had given her the glyph, he had told her in person that aside from powerful great emperors, the escape glyph were unlikely to be restricted by anyone. This meant that her glyph was very potent. Zhao Mang was capable, but he wasn't even emperor realm, much less a realm higher.

It was easy enough for her to leave. Fundamentally, her concern lingered with the ordinary women below.

Sweat beaded upon Dan Fei's forehead. The pythons thrashed about like dragons within a vast ocean, creating dynamic waves with each movement of their bodies. She was shaken almost to the point of losing control.

"I can't hesitate any more." Dan Fei had realized the difference in martial strength between her opponent and herself. It was time for her to decide.

If she didn't leave, she would die with the ordinary women. Worse, she wouldn't be given a quick death. Just like Qin Thirteen, Zhao Mang was sure to abuse her many times over before killing her. Dan Fei wasn't scared of death itself, but she shuddered to think of her fate upon defeat.

"The Emyrean River Palace..." Dan Fei imprinted the name viciously to memory. "I better get out of here to fight another day. I'll remember that name."

Producing her escape glyph, she was on the cusp of activating it. As long as she succeeded, she could escape into nothingness.

The beginning of a hand seal was proof of her intent. At that moment, a glimmer of lightning-fast radiance shot into her presence. Dan Fei's hand spasmed as if electrified, her escape glyph falling from it.

This drastic shift greatly shocked the woman. She had no idea where the attack had come from, but her escape glyph had been swatted from her possession.

“Zhao Mang, you’ve disappointed me greatly. You can’t deal with a simple mid sage realm female cultivator?” A sinister voice rumbled from the aether like cacophonous metal. It pained its listeners’ ears, instilling in them a deep sense of discomfort.

“Master!” Zhao Mang and Lu Yi blurted out simultaneously in surprise.

The clouds parted to reveal a ray of divine light. A bald-headed old man in ascetic robes and no shoes at all descended from the heavens, palm fan in hand.

It was none other than the Empyrean River Palace’s Elder Qiu. He wasn’t the most prominent man in his sect, but had a great deal of authority and clout nevertheless. Not because of his own surpassing strength, but rather the presence of a true disciple like Zhao Mang. The expertise of the student invisibly elevated the status of the master.

The bald old man was rotund and heavy, his small eyes in a perpetual squint. A cursory glance would yield the casual assumption that he was an amiable fellow. However, Dan Fei kept her guard up. Her intuition told her that the old man didn’t have even a fraction of his benevolent appearance.

The bald man in ascetic robes examined Dan Fei closely. “Little girl, your cultivation level is unremarkable, but you have quite the treasure trove. Who’s your master? Tell me.”

His master’s appearance prompted Zhao Mang to withdraw his methods. “Master.” He cupped a fist to the elder. “That girl killed Qin Thirteen and the rest. Please do what is best.”

The bald old man’s eyes flared with killing intent. “What? Qin Thirteen was killed?”

“That’s right, and this woman killed her. She admitted to it!” Lu Yi added fuel to the flame.

“Good! Good! Good!” The old man extolled three times, but his expression was more frigid than winter. He was obviously outraged at the revelation.

Qin Thirteen was one of his relatives. The bald-headed Elder Qiu didn’t necessarily like his distant nephew all that much, but this nephew had been one of his juniors nonetheless. There had been a blood tie between them.

Most importantly, Qin Thirteen represented his face and reputation. Moreover, he had been a part of a plan, a jumping-board into that ancient restricted place. Someone had destroyed that jumping-board, and he was none too pleased about it.

“Speak of your origins. Let’s see if I can’t deal with you yet.” Elder Qiu’s tone was icy. There was no hint of his prior affability.

“Master, this woman won’t volunteer any information. I’ve asked before, but she remained completely silent. Plus, she says she’s never heard of our famous Empyrean River Palace.”

“Hmph!” The elder was infuriated. “The human domain is a big place, and few cultivators in it don’t recognize our name. Woman, your murder of my nephew cannot be ignored – regardless of what seniors or master you may have. Resign yourself to your fate!”

Crowing with laughter, the elder flared his aura before sending it all toward Dan Fei's direction. Elder Qiu wasn't a great emperor yet at only ninth level emperor realm. Still, a man of his level could easily crush the fourth level sage realm Dan Fei.

"You say you don't know the Empyrean River Palace, little girl? I'd like to see you mouth off some more."

The elder's pressure bearing down upon Dan Fei posed great danger to her. She wanted to retrieve the fallen glyph, but couldn't spare the mental focus to move her body into action. Her consciousness was completely spent on trying to resist Elder Qiu's attack, but she was still having a difficult time.

"Hmph! You're trying to run with an escape glyph? A foolish fantasy!" Elder Qiu dispensed with all pretense. He contorted his face into a grim grin. "Today, I'll teach you what the Empyrean River Palace is!"

"Is the Empyrean River Palace something particularly impressive?" In Dan Fei's hour of danger, an unexpected voice sounded through empty space. The voice was unruly and untamed, tinged with mockery and disdain. Above all, it was filled with cynicism and scorn.

"Who goes there?" Elder Qiu's face fell. He leaped into the air, scanning his surroundings.

Woosh woosh!

Two burly figures landed before the entrance to the Precious Tree Sect. They bore strikingly similar appearances, seemingly identical twins.

"Brother, this should be the place."

"Yes, I believe so. The Precious Tree Sect? Yes, indeed." The two brothers conferred amongst themselves, surveying the environment while they did so. They treated Elder Qiu as nothing but air.

The elder was incensed.

"Where did you two wild ghosts come from?" As an elder of a first rank sect, Elder Qiu was a man with some wealth and authority. The clothing of these two men didn't indicate their status as experts of some powerful faction. Therefore, he had no reason to withhold the natural arrogance in his tone.

The two brothers traded a look. "Brother," one of them muttered, "who is this old man? The Precious Tree Sect doesn't have someone this that, does it?"

"Didn't you hear him say?" The other one replied. "Who knows where that wild ghost has come from? The young lord told us to come take out anyone lingering upon the Precious Tree Sect's grounds. What do you say?"

"Let's do it, then." The first speaker cackled, then grabbed at the nearby Zhao Mang and Lu Yi. He was as swift as coursing thunder, charging with unprecedented ferocity!

"Get out of there, this is very bad!" Elder Qiu felt uneasy at the potency in the man's movements, hastily calling for his disciples to flee.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1338: Nearing The Truth

"Haha, but can you escape?" The assailant's voice was rough, but his movements were as quick as could be. Elder Qiu's warning only spurred him onwards.

Lu Yi had no time at all to react before his head received a resounding slap. A crunch was all that was heard before his neck was bent. He fell over dead on the spot.

Zhao Mang was scared witless by the viciousness of this new man. He used all the strength he had to deploy the three giant pythons, sweeping the beasts towards the pouncing man. He himself turned into a streak of light, darting to his master, Elder Qiu.

Dan Fei had personal experience with the strength of the pythons. "Careful!" she cried out upon the snakes' charge.

Glancing at Dan Fei for a moment, the man was a little surprised by the gesture. "No worries, leave it to me," he grinned. "But how kind of you."

A cackle and two outstretched hands heralded the man's Dragon-Slaying Hand technique. He waded into melee combat with the three pythons.

"Break!"

A vicious punch slammed into one of the reptiles' scalp.

Boom!

The python's head was smashed to smithereens.

The man didn't stop there. He continuously pummeled the scaly mass until the two remaining pythons yielded to complete destruction as well.

Dan Fei braced herself at the terrifying sight. She respected the man's abilities a great deal. The three giant pythons had caused her no end of trouble, but the man had gutted them with the same ease as handling fish.

Even Elder Qiu watched the proceedings with mouth agape. For the moment, the elder almost forgot about his disciple's death. He shielded Zhao Mang behind him. "When we start fighting in a moment, escape immediately," he messaged. "Don't linger here!"

Zhao Mang was stunned. "Master, how can I abandon you?"

"Fool! I have my ways of leaving after you're gone. If you don't go, it makes it that much harder for me to." Elder Qiu placed a great deal of importance upon this disciple.

"Friends, we don't know each other. Haven't you been too brash in attempting to kill my disciples when we've just met? Identify yourselves. Let's see if you're worthy enough to stand up to the Empyrean River Palace." The elder was positively fuming.

"The Empyrean River Palace?" The two men cackled once more. "We've heard of it."

Elder Qiu's expression was darker than black. "If you know the name of our Palace, why did you murder our disciples without reason? Your crimes must be punished!"

"What crimes? By whom?"

"Old man Qiu, we're ending your life too. What're you going on about?"

These two men were the Geng brothers, here on Jiang Chen's orders. Upon reaching Regal Pill Palace, the first thing Jiang Chen did was to delegate the brothers to the Precious Tree Sect in order to see how they were doing.

One of the Geng brothers was peak of ninth level emperor realm, and the other simply ninth level. Their power was uncontestable within Myriad Domain.

Even Elder Qiu was merely ninth level emperor realm. Either one of the brothers more than matched him in fighting ability. The two brothers combined could easily squash him. Plus, the Geng brothers were backed by the vast Veluriyam Capital. They had nothing to fear. There was no need to show undue respect to the likes of the Empyrean River Palace.

At the Dragon and Tiger Meet, the brothers had observed the Palace to be a dog of Pillfire City. It was concrete confirmation of what had previously only been rumor. Since Pillfire was Veluriyam's mortal enemy, there was no need to treat the Empyrean River Palace nicely.

The Geng brothers would've weighed the pros and cons against any other sect, but the mention of that particular sect meant that they could dispense with pretense and niceties.

Elder Qiu was angry enough to cough up blood. In all his days traveling the world, very few people had ever dared speak to him this way. This was especially true given his status as an elder of the Empyrean River Palace.

Regardless of any public perceptions about that sect, the Palace was one of the agreed-upon first rank sects and prominent factions in the human domain. However, regardless of any negative emotions he was feeling at the moment, he estimated that he and Zhao Mang would be no match for the two men across from them.

Fighting today was out of the question.

"Brother, why waste time talking to them? If the old man is from the Empyrean River Palace, then he's a bad apple to be mucking around a place as insignificant as the Precious Tree Sect. Let's just kill him and present his head to the young lord."

"Heh, I was just worried that the young lord wouldn't be interested in the head of a bald guy like him. Shall we take him down then?"

The Geng brothers weren't exactly shining examples of kindhearted folk. They had come under instructions to exterminate anyone occupying the Precious Tree Sect's land. The two brothers streaked toward Elder Qiu in two surges of light, flanking the old man from the left and right in a two-pronged attack.

"Zhao Mang, go on ahead!" Elder Qiu called out.

Zhao Mang anxiously took out an escape glyph, preparing to activate it. As he was about to finish doing so, what had happened to Dan Fei was visited upon him in a very similar way. However, his was a much worse fate.

A flash was all that he saw before his entire hand was sliced off by an unknown force. The glyph, still clutched in his now-detached fingers, disappeared from his nonexistent grasp.

“Ah!” Zhao Mang screeched in pain, his left hand clutching at the bleeding stub of his right. Giant drops of sweat ran down his face.

A calm voice echoed through the air. “Baldy Qiu, you can’t blame others for your foolishness in coming to Myriad Domain as an elder of the Empyrean River Palace. You ran into the jaws of death of your own volition.”

There was a magnificence behind this voice, as relentless as the ocean tide. Elder Qiu felt an agitation in his entire body and could just barely stay standing. Cold sweat pooled on his entire body.

The two brothers were hard enough to deal with, yet the newcomer surpassed them in both cultivation and spirit. His aura alone was far more daunting.

“Could it be a great emperor?” Touching upon this possibility. Elder Qiu became white in the face. If it really was a great emperor, he was probably dead regardless of how crafty his methods were.

“Master, he... he cut off my hand!” Zhao Mang let out a maddened shriek at the sight of his palm-less stump.

There was a flicker before everyone’s eyes. Another figure landed in their midst. The new arrival was none other than Emperor Vastsea, hot on the Geng brothers’ tail.

As a loyal servant of Jiang Chen, the emperor respected the young lord’s orders a great deal. If Jiang Chen said to turn to the left, he would not have veered a single degree to the right.

“Emperor Vastsea?” Dan Fei blinked upon seeing the man. She had followed Emperor Peafowl for many years, so the emperor’s face was familiar to her. The sight of the man made her instinctively blurt out his name.

“Hmm?” Emperor Vastsea paused himself at the sound of Dan Fei’s voice. “You... you’re... Daoist Peafowl’s foster daughter, Miss Dan’er?”

As a great emperor, Emperor Vastsea had a photographic memory. He instantly recalled the girl’s identity when he saw her. Numerous disciples across multiple emperors’ factions had attempted to court Dan Fei in Veluriyam Capital. He himself had done a few favors for his own disciples to that end.

The entire reason Dan Fei had entered closed door cultivation on pain of death was because of the mounting pressure on her romantic life. She had done so in order to alleviate Emperor Peafowl’s potential difficulty.

Dan Fei’s graceful face paled. “Emperor Vastsea, why are you here? I hear you’ve turned to the light and joined up with Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Is that true?”

Emperor Vastsea grinned. "That's right. I've turned back at the cliff's precipice, and now I fight for the side of good. But what are you doing here, Miss Dan'er? We haven't seen you for many years now... did you come out to look for Daoist Peafowl?"

Elder Qiu's scalp tingled as he listened to their conversation.

Emperor Vastsea, Daoist Peafowl...

These names connected many passageways inside his brain. Information began to gather together, revealing to him the full picture. It was a bone-chilling one: endless terror swelled up in his heart!

The elder wasn't particularly scared of any would-be fellow first rank sect members. He had reasonable clout within his own sect after all. Veluriyam Capital was what he was most afraid of. And yet – his deepest fear had materialized in front of him!

"Sacred Peafowl Mountain felt a bit stuffy, so I came out for a walk," Dan Fei sighed softly. "I thought I might look for a few people on the side and where His Majesty might be."

She didn't have a favorable opinion of Emperor Vastsea. Although he'd turned to the light and joined Sacred Peafowl Mountain, her previous impressions of his villainy weren't easily erased.

"Ah..." Emperor Vastsea didn't know how to follow up. Emperor Shura had been single handedly responsible for Emperor Peafowl's disappearance. Though Emperor Vastsea hadn't personally been involved in ambushing Emperor Peafowl, he had played an unpleasant supporting role.

"That's right, the young lord you were talking about. Is he the young lord Zhen that His Majesty ordained? Why is he here in Myriad Domain? Why did he send you two to the Precious Tree Sect?" Dan Fei couldn't help but ask when all this suddenly occurred to her.

The Precious Tree Sect was a tiny place. It was as insignificant to something as large as Veluriyam Capital as a grain of rice. She didn't know why the young lord would possibly be interested in a place like this.

Emperor Vastsea chuckled. "Miss Dan'er, how long have you been gone? Haven't you heard of the recent news and happenings?"

"What?" Dan Fei was completely blank. "I've been around only the sixteen kingdoms alliance recently. I haven't heard of anything from outside."

"Haha, what a funny coincidence. How come you're interested in the Precious Tree Sect too, Miss Dan'er? Just like the young lord. He used to be a disciple of this sect. Perhaps you were as well?"

His joking statement shook Dan'er to the core. Electricity coursed through her and her graceful visage blanched. "What did you say? Young lord Zhen, he... he was a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect?" Dan'er suddenly found her head spinning. Her mind was completely blank, and she could no longer keep up with reality. She found it difficult to stand upright and had to lean on a small tree beside her for support.

"You really don't know, Miss Dan'er!" laughed Emperor Vastsea. "The young lord comes from the sixteen kingdoms alliance of this Myriad Domain. He stayed at the Precious Tree Sect, once upon a time. He always takes care of his past acquaintances, so that's why he sent us here as soon as possible."

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1339: Tears Of Joy

Dan Fei's mind turned blank. Her brain WAS mush at Vastsea's words. She murmured, "Precious Tree Sect, the sixteen kingdoms alliance? Young Lord Zhen? Emperor Vastsea, are you playing a joke on me?"

"Of course not." Vastsea grinned. "The whole world knows. Ask the Geng brothers if you don't believe me. Both of them are young lord Jiang Chen's trusted followers."

Jiang Chen?

These two words were a bolt from the blue. Her tender figure shook. She almost thought she was hallucinating. The name she'd longed for for so many years had resounded in her ears without the slightest warning.

Born in the sixteen kingdoms alliance, once a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect, and now the young lord of Veluriyam? Jiang Chen?

"Miss Dan'er, are you alright?" Vastsea was baffled. "Do you really know the young lord?"

Vastsea found this incredulous. Miss Dan'er had been on Sacred Peafowl Mountain all this time while Jiang Chen was the mountain's young lord. They should've met already. How was it possible for them not to know each other?

Dan Fei struggled to compose herself, yet her voice was still raw with emotion. "Young lord Jiang Chen... young lord Jiang Chen. Is this really not a dream?"

Vastsea and the Geng brothers looked at each other. The brothers actually didn't know her. Their attitude had become much friendlier once they learned she was Emperor Peafowl's adopted daughter.

"Miss Dan'er, our young lord did indeed come from the sixteen kingdoms alliance, but he didn't stay for long in the Precious Tree Sect. He left for the Regal Pill Palace afterward. After Myriad Domain's invasion, he made a narrow escape to Veluriyam and gained Emperor Peafowl's favor. In a short decade, he displayed his extraordinary talents for the whole world to see, and became a peak existence of the young generation. You're Emperor Peafowl's adopted daughter, did you never hear him mention this?"

Dan Fei turned her back to the brothers with tears streaming down her face. She felt dazed, in a dream. Never in a million years would she have imagined that the man she yearned for day and night had been within reach all this while.

Fortune truly toyed with them all!

Seeing them absorbed in their discussion, Elder Qiu threw Zhao Mang a meaningful look. Although sweating with pain, Zhao Mang clenched his left fist, ready to pick up his severed limb and escape.

"Qiu, you better stay honest." Each and every move of theirs was within Vastsea's perception. Once a great emperor extended his consciousness, any blade of grass swaying in the gentlest of breezes within several dozen miles was within his awareness. "How dare you leave? Did this emperor say you could?"

Elder Qiu stiffened, his face pale. He thought he could sneak away while his opponents were distracted. He never imagined this Emperor Vastsea would be so sharp, that he would watch master and disciple so tightly.

While an attempt at forceful escape wasn't entirely doomed, he knew the probability of success was almost negligible. There was a huge disparity in strength between great emperors and those below. Perhaps some geniuses could try to fight despite that gap, but Elder Qiu wasn't one of them.

Most importantly, Emperor Vastsea wasn't one of these initial stage great emperors, but a bona fide veteran with at least two thousand years of fame to his name. He was an advanced great emperor, even if he hadn't reached the peak stage yet.

Vastsea had always been fond of flattering others. People like him were usually very attentive and proficient at reading body language. He saw Dan Fei turn her back to him and somewhat sensed the surge of her emotions. He could even see the slight shake of her shoulders.

A thought occurred to him. Perhaps Miss Dan Fei is truly an old friend of the young lord? That boggles the mind. Both of them were in Veluriyam for the past few years, did they never run into each other?

Then an explanation dawned on him. Wait, the young lord always wore a disguise while in Veluriyam and he never made his identity public. If they never met face to face, it's quite possible for both of them to be ignorant of the other. Otherwise, why would Miss Dan'er be so affected? Why would she show such an exaggerated reaction?

Perhaps... Vastsea's thoughts whirled at top speed. "Miss Dan'er lost all her self-possession and became so agitated after hearing the news, so a relationship must be involved... Right, I have to handle this carefully. Wouldn't it be a great accomplishment to bring back the young lord's woman?"

Coming to this conclusion, he waited patiently for Dan Fei to regain control of her emotions.

After a long while, Dan Fei finally steadied herself and faced the great emperor once again. She asked quietly, "Emperor Vastsea, where is your young lord now?"

"He's at the Regal Pill Palace. The sect is in the middle of rebuilding and requires his presence. Miss Dan'er, is the young lord perhaps the one you came to find in the Precious Tree Sect?"

Dan Fei wanted to protest, but in the end, she didn't deny. Instead, she quietly responded, "I never thought he'd become Veluriyam's young lord after we parted. I brushed past him countless times, yet thought he was at the other end of the world. Emperor Vastsea, how... how is he doing nowadays?"

Vastsea hurriedly to reply, "Very well, he's doing very well. Miss Dan'er, why don't I take you to him right now? I'm sure the young lord will be delighted to meet an old friend. Before sending me here, he especially told me to make inquiries and see whether I can find old acquaintances from the Precious Tree Sect. For example, a certain Ye Chonglou, or a Tang Hong. Oh I remember, he even told me to go to a mundane kingdom when I'm free..."

"Oh? Did he tell you to look for someone in that kingdom?" Dan Fei's tone took a strange turn as she suddenly thought of something.

“Yes, the young lord told me to visit Skylaurel’s king. I think he’s called Ye Rong or something. Oh right, there’s also a girl. He said she’s Ye Chonglou’s disciple, called Dan Fei.”

Vastsea stopped all of a sudden. His eyes fell on Dan Fei as if he finally understood something. No wonder Dan Fei asked him who he’d been told to look for.

It seems Miss Dan’er happens to be the Dan Fei the young lord asked me to find? Judging by her reaction, it seems her relationship with the young lord is quite deep indeed.

Tears threatened to spill from Dan Fei’s eyes, almost getting the better of her. Countless feelings welled up in her.

So he didn’t forget me after all! He didn’t forget me. A faint wisp of happiness rose amidst her sadness. All of a sudden, she felt that she hadn’t suffered in vain during these years, that the torment of her longing had been worth it.

“Geng brothers, why don’t you take Miss Dan’er to the Regal Pill Palace first to meet with the young lord. I’ll follow you once I capture Qiu.” Vastsea didn’t act high-handed. Instead, he spoke as if consulting with them.

The Geng brothers shared a look, well aware this Dan’er might well be someone dear to Jiang Chen. They dared not slight her importance. They knew they were strong enough to suppress Elder Qiu if they stayed behind, but it was another story when it came to capturing him.

In an exchange of blows between experts, one wouldn’t be able to stop an enemy from fleeing if one was only slightly stronger.

“Miss Dan’er, the Geng brothers are the young lord’s trusted followers. With them by your side, nothing will happen to you along the way.” Vastsea’s tone couldn’t be more courteous.

Dan Fei hadn’t freed herself entirely yet from the stupor of the happy tidings. She sighed softly, her voice conflicted. “Right now, I’d like to go back to Skylaurel first.”

She’d really planned on visiting Skylaurel. Logically speaking, she should be wishing that she could grow wings this instant and fly to Jiang Chen. However, for some inexplicable reason, she was a little afraid of having this decade-old dream suddenly come true.

She wasn’t afraid that the dream would shatter, but she was at a loss how to face Jiang Chen. Should she tell him that she’d been his partner during that night of absurd debauchery?

If so, Dan Fei was worried whether Jiang Chen would think her a wanton woman. Would he look down on her? Even if he didn’t, even if he felt guilty, Dan Fei knew that Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s young lord Zhen had a dao partner.

Dan Fei felt a faint ache in her heart at that thought, as well as a twinge of jealousy. How should she face him? And more importantly, how should she face his dao partner?

Uncertainty and conflicted feelings weighed on her. Although she was still as excited and happy as ever at finding Jiang Chen, a newfound conflict now reigned in her.

Vastsea blinked. Dan'er had cried tears of joy when she learned of Jiang Chen's whereabouts, so why had she become so aloof again all of a sudden? However, he was a clever man. Putting two and two together, he realized Miss Dan'er must be worried about something, or perhaps she couldn't put down her pride as a woman.

With a small smile, he said, "It happens I'm also headed to Skylarell. Since Miss Dan'er wants to go there, why don't I go with you?"

Dan Fei had been a little prejudiced against Vastsea up until now, because she still held lingering memories of him as Emperor Shura's man. But that prejudice was slowly fading away, because of news of Jiang Chen and how considerate he was. She nodded after some thought. "It will be my honor to have your company."

"Hehe... Miss Dan'er, please wait a moment." Vastsea's figure moved while he spoke. With a wave of his arms, the formidable energy of a great emperor lifted walls of water cresting toward Elder Qiu.

The elder's expression turned to dread. The momentum of a great emperor's full-strength attack was frightening enough. Moreover, the difference in cultivation between Elder Qiu and Vastsea was as great as the distance between the sky and the earth.

The thought of resistance had barely crossed the elder's mind when the daunting water curtains crashed over him, shaping a vortex of water that sucked him inside.

Free and easy, Vastsea's figure blurred as he charged inside the vortex.

Crash!

He came back out of the water holding two men.

Chapter 1340: Dan Fei's Decision

Dan Fei secretly admired Vastsea's power. Apart from the even mightier arts she'd once seen from Emperor Peafowl, Vastsea's prowess was as great as anything she'd ever witnessed.

The Geng brothers also shared a look tinged with respect. Great emperors were something else alright. Elder Qiu hadn't had the slightest chance for escape or resistance. The brothers couldn't match the great emperor even if they tried their hardest.

Just like the Jiao brothers, the Geng brothers used to think of Vastsea as nothing more than Emperor Shura's lackey, forced by the circumstances to surrender to Jiang Chen. They thought his character despicable, hence they subconsciously looked down on him.

Now that they'd witnessed his impressive power, they finally realized that flattery wasn't the only thing he was proficient in. His mastery at fighting was nothing to sneeze at.

Elder Qiu drooped like a defeated rooster in Vastsea's hand. After sealing his prisoners' vital points, the great emperor tossed them on the ground.

"Brothers, bring these two guys back to the Regal Pill Palace and tell the young lord everything that's happened here. In particular, don't forget to mention we found a friend of his from the sixteen

kingdoms alliance, Miss Dan Fei. Ah, remember to tell the young lord that Miss Dan Fei and Emperor Peafowl's adopted daughter Dan'er are one and the same."

The Geng brothers nodded without hesitation. "Alright, we'll leave the rest to you, Emperor Vastsea."

Watching the Geng brothers take away Elder Qiu and Zhao Mang, Dan Fei still had a hazy, persistent feeling that she was in a dream. She'd almost given up all hope before those from Veluriyam Capital had showed up. Zhao Mang had been thorny enough by himself, to say nothing of another Elder Qiu, especially when the elder's strength was so overwhelming.

Although Dan Fei had many escape items, she wasn't certain she could slip away alive from under the elder's nose.

However, the situation suddenly underwent an enormous reversal at her most desperate hour. The appearance of the Geng brothers, followed by Emperor Vastsea, had turned the tide of the battle. Not only that, they even brought with them earth-shattering news she still had trouble comprehending.

"Miss Dan'er, should we depart now? Or should we stay here first?" Vastsea had conjectured that the relationship between Dan Fei and young lord Jiang Chen was anything but ordinary. She was also Emperor Peafowl's adopted daughter.

Either of these two identities was more than enough for Vastsea to treat her with patience and respect. After all, his own position was in an awkward spot at present. He was no longer one of the mighty and exalted great emperors of Veluriyam as he'd once been.

Meanwhile, Dan Fei was a little embarrassed at Vastsea's courtesy. He was, after all, a great emperor.

"Senior Vastsea..." Dan Fei decided on this form of address after some thought.

However, Vastsea turned green at her address. He waved his big, leaf-like hands forcefully. "Miss Dan'er, I dare not assume this mantle. Please, don't. You and the young lord are peers of the same generation. I'm presently in the young lord's service. At best, we should address each other as equals. How would I dare be Miss Dan'er's senior?" Vastsea was truly afraid to.

Dan Fei was taken aback by how scared he was at the mere mention of it. However, she came to some conjectures of her own after a moment of thought.

"I'll still call you Emperor Vastsea then. A band of wandering cultivators has seized this Precious Tree Sect. Their leader was Elder Qiu's distant nephew. I killed him, but I didn't think they would come here one after another. The Precious Tree Sect is a mere sixth or seventh rank sect, why is it so important for them?"

This question quite baffled her. The sect wasn't without its own inheritance. The Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn, for example. However, the tree was a commonplace spirit tree. It was sect-defining at the level of a Precious Tree Sect. But for a first rank sect like the Empyrean River Palace? She found it hard to believe. However, if not for that, what else had attracted their attention here?

Dan Fei searched for clues, but she couldn't find the beginning of one no matter how she looked.

The Precious Tree Sect had vacated the premises many moons ago. The mountains had been home to wandering cultivators for long years, so there were no traces left of the original sect any longer. The mountains and the rivers were still the same, but everything had changed.

She searched but came back empty-handed, so her interest slowly waned, distracted as she was by the ever present thoughts of Jiang Chen. After all, she held no feelings for the sect. She came purely to look for Jiang Chen and Ye Chonglou.

Early next morning, Dan Fei summoned the women and brought them out of the Precious Tree Sect's grounds, taking them back to Skylaurel Kingdom. She'd thought these women would be delighted after being freed from their hell. However, she noticed they didn't manifest any visible excitement or happiness.

This left Dan Fei perplexed. As for Vastsea, he didn't say anything. The only thing he was responsible for was Dan Fei's safety.

"Alright, we're back in Skylaurel Kingdom. Return to where you came from. If you find yourself lost, you can ask someone for the way." Dan Fei was satisfied now that she'd completed her good deed.

Seeing the stupefaction on these women's faces as they disappeared from sight, Dan Fei heaved a heartfelt sigh. "These wandering cultivators were beasts. They ruined these women's lives solely for their own amusement. I hope these poor creatures can spend the rest of their lives in peace, now that they've escaped from their nightmare."

Dan Fei had acted out of compassion, but Vastsea smiled wryly. "I admire Miss Dan'er's benevolence. However, if you will forgive my bluntness, these women are like the walking dead. I fear they won't ever be able to find happiness again in this life. Even how long they can survive is an issue."

"Why so?" Dan Fei's heart fell at his words. She naturally hoped the women could survive after she went through the trouble of saving them.

"The mundane world holds its own prejudices. Dying of hunger is a small matter, but not the loss of chastity. Why do so many people long to cultivate and grow in strength? Precisely so they can break away from mundane conventions and free themselves from the shackles of dogma. These are ordinary women. The mundane world can't tolerate their loss of virginity. I fear difficult days lie ahead of them back home. More importantly, did you notice their dazed faces? None of them have any drive left. Those without drive have very little desire for survival." Vastsea smiled. "Miss Dan'er, you've already done what you could. Everyone has their own fate, you need not be too sad."

Her heart aching, Dan Fei sighed and murmured in disappointment, "Their only crime was weakness. Is there truth in these words?"

Vastsea heaved a sigh. "The mighty is king, such is nature's order. Otherwise, the world of cultivators wouldn't flourish so. Anyone qualified to cultivate yearns to climb on top of the world. Why? Is it not because they want to shed their weakness? Because they don't want to be an ant, to be meat on someone else's chopping block? Sometimes, weakness is truly an original sin."

They reached Skylaurel's capital as they conversed. High above in the sky, Vastsea barely released one percent of his consciousness, but it was enough to cover the whole of this tiny capital.

“Listen up, all foreign cultivators of Skylaurel Kingdom. I am Veluriyam Capital’s Emperor Vastsea. On the orders of young lord Jiang Chen, I’m here to wipe out all foreign invaders in Myriad Domain. You have one day to scram from Skylaurel and leave Myriad Domain. Those who fail to do so will be deemed enemies of Veluriyam and killed without quarter!” Vastsea wasted no time with diplomacy, preferring an aggressive approach instead.

His voice resounding like the clap of thunder, he released a fraction of his aura. All of the wandering cultivators residing in the capital felt a strange panic, as if the end days were upon them.

The aura of a great emperor was extremely invasive. If not for Vastsea purposefully restraining himself, it would’ve been powerful enough to shatter the consciousness of every wandering cultivator in the capital, killing them in the process.

This was no exaggeration. Only emperor realm or stronger could face a great emperor’s aura head-on, but no truly powerful cultivators would be in Skylaurel.

“This emperor will only say it once. You have one day. Whether you leave or not depends on you.”

As soon as Vastsea’s voice fell, countless wandering cultivators squeezed out from every corner of the capital and gushed out of the city gates in a frantic chaos, like anxious rats fleeing judgment day.

Traveling at top speed, the Geng brothers rushed back to the Regal Pill Palace the second day.

There were a hundred things to do in the sect. A simple ceremony had been organized for the sect’s reopening. Jiang Chen was in the middle of discussing plans for the reopening when he heard about the Geng brothers’ return.

He’d just sent these two brothers out only a few days ago. Why had they returned so fast? The time was barely enough for a round trip even if they were at top speed. Had something happened in the sixteen kingdoms alliance?

The brothers picked up Elder Qiu and Zhao Mang and quickly strode into the Regal Pill Hall when they were summoned.

“Young lord, us brothers ran into many things at the Precious Tree Sect. Emperor Vastsea’s entrusted us with coming back first and relaying important news.”

“What news?” Happiness shone on Jiang Chen’s face. “Did you hear something about my old friends?”

Just as he had feelings for the Regal Pill Palace, he held the same feelings for the Precious Tree Sect. Jiang Chen wasn’t one to forget his roots. He would always remember Ye Chonglou’s care for him back then, or being sworn brothers with Tang Hong during the trial.

“We rushed there and found some fellows from the Emyrean River Palace attacking a woman. We killed one of them and Emperor Vastsea captured these two. He had us come back with an important report.”

“What is it?”

“It’s about the woman they besieged. She seems to be an old friend of yours. Emperor Vastsea also knows her. It’s Emperor Peafowl’s adopted daughter, Miss Dan’er.”

“Miss Dan’er?” Jiang Chen blinked. “She’s from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but I’ve never had the chance of meeting her all this time. What was she doing at the Precious Tree Sect? Was she looking for Emperor Peafowl?”

“Nonono. Young lord, what we meant to say is, although Miss Dan’er is Emperor Peafowl’s adopted daughter, it seems she already knew you before that.”

“She already knew me?” Jiang Chen’s face suddenly froze. The beautiful silhouette of a woman appeared his mind. He blurted out, “Dan Fei?”