

Three Realms 1361

[Sovereign of the Three Realms \(WN\)](#)

Chapter 1361: Emperor Pillzenith's Ambitions

The Empyrean River Palace was located in the northeast of the Upper Eight Regions. Out of the eight great first rank sects, it was Pillfire's staunchest supporter. The other first rank sects wouldn't lower themselves and willingly submit to another faction, but the Empyrean River Palace abased itself without a moment's hesitation. It did Pillfire's bidding, its deference plain for all to see.

Hence, its words carried little weight or authority among the eight first rank sects, but the sect itself thought little of it.

At this moment, an urgent, encrypted missive from Pillfire found its way to the sect head.

The man's brows bunched in a deep frown. "Emperor Pillzenith writes I am to set off this instant and make due haste for the Eternal Celestial Capital. It brooks no delay? Does he have an urgent mission for me?"

The trip wasn't a short one. However, from the sectmaster down to the lowest disciple, Pillfire's word was law for the sect, especially given the encrypted nature and urgency of this message. It'd even been personally penned by Emperor Pillzenith himself.

The sect head dared not delay. He summoned an esteemed elder and both of them immediately set off, leaving a single great emperor behind to guard the sect.

The Empyrean River Palace had three great emperors in total, but a word from Pillfire had dispatched two of them, proof of the palace's dedication to its master.

At the same time, the Sublime Chord Temple also received the same message. The Temple was a little different from the Empyrean River Palace. They also owed fealty to Pillfire, but they took care of keeping up appearances.

They looked like an independent first rank sect on the surface. However, once they received their orders, the sect's powerhouses departed with the same exact zeal. The two sects were located in the core of Upper Eight Regions and even shared a common border.

As to the Heavenly Dragon Sect, it was on Upper Eight Regions' western side, a far distance from Pillfire. Emperor Pillzenith headed there in person.

The Heavenly Dragon Sect also shared a border with the Eternal Celestial Capital, where Pillzenith stopped along the way. He and the Capital's head were familiar with each other. They'd both participated in the attack on Emperor Peafowl.

Pillzenith's visit caught the head by surprise.

"Your Majesty, what wind blew you hither?" The head's tone carried a hint of flattery.

With a smile, Pillzenith looked at him with eyes full of schadenfreude. "Fellow Daoist Luo Jue, your sect must be having a hard time lately?"

Few in Upper Eight Regions knew of the head's real name, but Pillzenith wasn't the run of the mill average cultivator.

Luo Jue sighed. "Your Majesty, are you also here to tease me?"

"Of course not." Pillzenith shook his head indifferently. "In fact, I came to lend you a hand."

"Lend a hand?" Luo Jue blinked. He shot a skeptical glance at Pillzenith. There was no great affection between Upper Eight Regions' factions. Had Pillzenith become a compassionate man? The head would never swallow that story. Why doesn't he just say he has designs on the Eternal Celestial Capital?

"Daoist Luo Jue, it seems you don't believe me?" There was a curve on Pillzenith's lips, a smile that was yet not a smile.

"Your Majesty, please cut to the chase. Your little brother here is most afraid of riddles." With Luo Jue's experience, leaving him hanging was a useless ploy. Jiang Chen was admittedly a great enemy of his, but Pillzenith was no slouch either. Why is he here at such a sensitive time? The head had to stay on his toes against any schemes.

"You seem quite impatient, Daoist Luo Jue. How can the lofty head of the Celestial Capital withstand Veluriyam's wrath if he can't keep his composure?" Pillzenith goaded. "Your enmity with Jiang Chen is no secret," he added, as if muttering to himself. "I thought you would welcome my assistance, but it seems to be wishful thinking on my part."

His soliloquy seemed to divulge the reason for his presence.

Luo Jue hesitated. "Does that mean Pillfire City is willing to assist my sect through these difficult times?"

"Hahaha, Daoist Luo Jue, you've finally dropped the pretense. Very good, let's lay our cards on the table. This is a good start." Pillzenith firmly grasped the initiative, his ferocious ambition seeping through his every word and move.

But Luo Jue didn't fall into this rhythm. Instead, he retorted, "And how do you propose to support us?"

"What do you think would be best?" Pillzenith countered.

Luo Jue murmured pensively, "In fact, Your Majesty is in the same boat. You and I both fought Emperor Peafowl. For Veluriyam, both of us are eyesores. Rather than assistance, we should speak of uniting. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Shouldn't this saying apply to us?"

Luo Jue showed his hand after some hesitation. Like his sect, Pillfire also had an irreconcilable enmity with Veluriyam. That made them equals, rather than one helping the other.

Pillzenith smiled indifferently. "Daoist Luo Jue, you disappoint me. It seems you still don't see the greater picture."

"I think I see it clearly enough. Perhaps you feel there's still room for you to mend ties with Veluriyam?" Luo Jue naturally didn't want to be led about by the nose. He had little desire for Pillfire's so-called help. Everyone in Upper Regions knew of the city's insatiable appetite. Its help came at no small price.

Pillzenith's smile was cold. "Luo Jue, I came today because I thought your sect had some value left. Let me be blunt. Who doesn't know you're Jiang Chen's next target?"

Luo Jue frowned, repressing his anger. "Your Majesty, if Jiang Chen destroys my sect, do you think your Pillfire City can escape the same fate?"

Pillzenith said with indifference, "There are as many experts in my city as clouds in the sky. With our solid foundations, there is only a thirty percent chance at most that Veluriyam can overcome us, which means they're most likely to lose. Do I need to fear them without Emperor Peafowl at their helm?"

When it came to martial strength or foundations, Pillfire was a cut above the rest of Upper Eight Regions. His arrogance wasn't undeserved.

Even if Emperor Peafowl still lived, he might not dare wage war against Pillfire.

"Luo Jue, how many great emperors does your sect have? It can't be more than five or six, but at a guess, I would say three or four at most. That's enough to claim a seat at the table of first rank sects, but you're in for a rude awakening if you think you can withstand Jiang Chen!" Pillzenith couldn't be blunter. "Without me, Jiang Chen will level your sect down to the roots. Just wait and see."

Luo Jue paled, his mind in chaos. There was indeed a gulf between his sect and Veluriyam Capital. Pillfire was an option he'd already considered in the past, but... did he want to live beneath Pillfire's yoke?

Perhaps the Eternal Celestial Capital would have forever lost its freedom. He'd seen the shadow of his future in the Empyrean River Palace's servile conduct.

He heaved a long sigh. "I won't deny it. The kid is extraordinary. I wouldn't have touched Myriad Domain with a barge-pole if I'd known. Alas, it's too late for regrets. Fighting to the last breath is the only road left. True, he can destroy us. However, if left to his own devices, he'll grow strong enough to destroy anyone in Upper Eight Regions. Your Majesty, it's better to strike sooner rather than later, or else the kid will become an unstoppable juggernaut. If it happens, my sect will indeed fall, but so will your Pillfire City!"

Faced with Luo Jue's unbudging stance, Pillzenith was at his wit's end.

Seeing Pillzenith's silence, Luo Jue arched his hands. "Your Majesty, why should we waste time in senseless squabbles at this juncture? Why not soften your stance and ally with me? As long as we get rid of Jiang Chen, the human domain will be yours to rule sooner or later. My sect doesn't have such a grand ambition!"

Pillzenith hesitated a long while before exclaiming, "If so, Daoist Luo Jue, please take good care of yourself. There are many people willing to join my banner if I want to handle the kid. As for you, I'll be watching on the sidelines. It'll be a good opportunity to see how many trump cards that he's hiding!"

He fumed over Luo Jue's unwillingness to submit. The man didn't know to appreciate his good intentions. He wants to talk about being equals!?

"Luo Jue, I'm not trying to scare you. I'm not lacking for manpower. One less Eternal Celestial City is no big loss. However, without me, your sect is powerless in the face of Veluriyam's wrath!" It was Pillzenith's last ultimatum.

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Chapter 1362: Jiang Chen's Remarkable Move

Third Master Jing tried his best to keep Jiang Chen, but the young lord was firm in his decision and departed from the Moon God Sect early next morning. The night before, he summoned all of his powerful companions for a meeting.

His journey home was going to be completely different from his trip to the Moon God Sect. Back then, he'd wanted everyone to journey separately because he didn't want any mishaps to affect his father's marriage proposal, but this arrangement was no longer suitable.

"Congratulations, young lord Jiang Chen. Have we completed our mission now that your parents are reunited?"

"Yeah. What do you plan to do next?" The crowd glanced eagerly at Jiang Chen. He had mused long and hard on his answer as well.

"Everyone, we arrived at the Moon God Sect separately, but I believe it'd be more appropriate if we travel together on the way back." Jiang Chen raised a cupped fist salute. "After receiving such staunch support, I'll definitely expedite the refinement of the Pinecrane Pill when I return. Sectmaster Han and Courtmaster Su, there's one for you as well."

Han Qianzhan burst into a hearty laugh. "There's something for me as well?"

Su Huanzhen's eyes shone. She'd helped Jiang Chen simply because she was fond of the young man and because of her past relationship with Emperor Peafowl. She cherished those memories greatly and was why she'd maintained a close relationship with Jiang Chen and Veluriyam Capital.

Unexpectedly, her fondness was rewarded with a Pinecrane Pill. Anyone would be pleasantly surprised by the unexpected gift.

"To be frank, I'm worried that something might happen during the journey home. Thus, I sincerely ask all of you to join me in traveling together. I seek your strength in case anything happens." Jiang Chen stated openly.

Emperor Wellspring laughed. "It's only fair that we escort you home safely after taking your Pinecrane Pill. Everyone, young lord Jiang Chen has been very good to us. Surely we can do him this small favor?"

Emperor Reliance chortled. "I don't see why not! The journey will be fun and lively with so many people around! We can take good care of each other."

"Leaving alone or in a group, it's all the same! A forthright person like young lord Jiang Chen deserves a forthright answer! Let's be off!"

"Agreed! Let's go!" The wandering cultivators' minds were completely occupied by the Pinecrane Pill. Naturally, they wouldn't refuse Jiang Chen's request.

The young lord raised a cupped fist salute when he noted no objections. "Thank you all for giving me face. Please make your preparations. We'll depart at dawn."

“Chen’er, is this really necessary?” Jiang Feng couldn’t help but ask after their return to Third Master Jing’s manor.

Jiang Chen sighed gently. “Father, I have a gut feeling that something will happen on our journey back.”

Jiang Feng retorted immediately. “Why are you afraid of them when you have so many powerful companions? Which faction in the Upper Eight Regions can possibly go against your group?”

Jiang Feng learned that his son had prepared a disguise for him and his wife and arranged Gu Xintang to escort them back to Veluriyam Capital that very night. He didn’t think it was necessary as countless experts were in their party. What could possibly go wrong?

However, Jiang Chen insisted on this arrangement. Jiang Feng couldn’t comprehend why.

“My darling, don’t blame Chen’er. He’s achieved so many great things over the years. He must have his reasons.” Xu Meng attempted to mollify the situation.

Jiang Feng sighed. “I’m not blaming him! He must have his reasons for making these arrangements. So be it, let’s do it his way.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t stingy with his father at all and bequeathed a bunch of protective items. Jiang Feng survival was guaranteed as long as they didn’t encounter any particularly perverse opponents.

He was going to stay in the light to keep his parents safe in the shadows. No one would target his parents after they were disguised. Moreover, they were going to take a different route back home with Gu Xintang. There shouldn’t be any mishaps.

Gu Xintang had risen to the higher echelons in the Moon God Sect. Nobody would give him any trouble unless they had insider information.

“Xintang, this matter is very important. You do it well,” Jiang Chen forewarned.

Gu Xintang was extremely grateful to Jiang Chen. He never would’ve been able to wed his wife if not for the young lord and Emperor Peerless. Moreover, the young lord had also given him a Pinecrane Pill. Since he was also Emperor Peerless and Madame Yun’s foster son, he was the most trustworthy person present.

“Young lord Jiang Chen, leave it to me! This will be handled properly even if it costs my life!”

Jiang Chen smiled. “Don’t say such depressing words. You’ll arrive safely as long as you follow my route and avoid the danger zones. I’ll try my best to hold them back on my end.”

The young lord was accompanied by a great number of powerful great emperors, but that didn’t put him at ease. He still opted for the unexpected and sent his parents on their way that very night.

This was all done with extreme secrecy. No one noticed that the young lord’s parents had left under the cover of the night sky.

The next morning, Jiang Chen suddenly announced that he’d stay in the Moon God Sect for two more weeks to refine some pills for his sister. The wandering great emperors didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry. But for the sake of the Pinecrane Pill, a two weeks’ wait was worth it.

The Moon God Sect was a territory rarely explored. Staying a few more days to sightsee wasn't the worst thing in the world.

During this time, Jiang Chen really did enter closed door cultivation to refine the pills. This set of pills catered to a vast listing of needs and purposes. They were made specifically for Xu Qingxuan and extremely suitable for her constitution.

Of course she knew that one of the greatest pill masters in the world was spending two weeks in isolation to refine pills for her. No other person in this world had ever received such treatment.

Xu Qingxuan might not show it, but her heart was filled with warmth. She'd always felt like she was cursed by the fates and constantly caught between her master and mother. But now, she finally realized that she was actually a blessed by the very fortunes she once hated.

Her parents were alive and she was loved by an extremely eminent older brother. She'd never thought that being pampered by an older brother would feel so blissful.

The second sectmaster naturally wouldn't object. In fact, she secretly rejoiced. Just because she had some prejudices against Jiang Chen didn't mean that she didn't recognize his abilities in pill dao.

Having Jiang Chen take care of his sister was a good thing, especially since said sister was her personal disciple.

Back then, her greatest worry was that Xu Qingxuan had fallen for Sir Shao. It was why she was so prejudiced against Jiang Chen in the first place. She'd rather Xu Qingxuan fall for Pill King Ji Lang than Veluriyam Capital's young lord.

After learning that the young lord was actually Xu Qingxuan's brother, she no longer felt a need to be as cautious. Thus, she silently rejoiced for her young disciple's great fortune.

Two weeks later, Jiang Chen exited closed door cultivation and handed the pills over to his sister. "Qingxuan, you have outstanding talent in martial dao. Your potential is limitless. Take these. If the fates allow, we shall meet again."

Xu Qingxuan twisted her sleeves gently. "Are you leaving today? What about mother and father? I want to send them off," she asked downheartedly.

"Don't. There'll be waterworks all over again if they see you. You should remain here and focus on your cultivation. I'll visit you when I'm free, or you can come to us instead. At your level, travelling to Veluriyam Capital shouldn't take too long. Just look at it as training."

Jiang Chen didn't tell Xu Qingxuan that he'd already quietly sent them off two weeks ago because he didn't want her to worry. If word got out, it'd be lifting a stone to smash his own foot.

After saying his goodbyes at the Moon God Sect, Jiang Chen returned to Frostmoon City, summoned the great emperors, and departed for Veluriyam Capital with his "parents".

These "parents" of his were decoys that Gu Xintang had prepared beforehand. They'd put on a simple disguise, but no one was to the wiser. After all, Jiang Feng and Xu Meng weren't eminent figures. It was only natural that no one would recognize them. Execution of the plan was flawless.

The group promptly left the Moon God Sect soon after. They were traveling at a rather relaxed pace since the “parents” were with them.

The Jiao brothers led the way while the others accompanied Jiang Chen at the back. To ease the group's boredom, the young lord held discussions on pill dao as a reward for their patience.

The young lord's lectures on pill dao was extremely enticing. The great emperors were completely absorbed in his teachings. They wouldn't have been willing to leave even if the young lord chased them away.

Jiang Chen's lectures didn't simply touch on the basics. He discussed the profound mysteries of pill dao in the great emperor realm. It was a great source of inspiration for these emperors.

At their current pace, it'd take at least two to three months to reach Veluriyam Capital. But because of Jiang Chen's pill dao lecture, the eminent figures couldn't help but wish that they could travel even slower.

The group soon made their way across Sublime Chord Temple territory.

“Young lord, we'll be in Eternal Celestial Capital territory after this point. Shall we avoid them by heading east and head towards the Skysword Sect instead?” The Jiao brothers came back to report.

Jiang Chen made a sweeping gesture. “Change my path for the Eternal Celestial Capital? No need!”

It was a given that he would refuse to change course. After all, he'd routed his parents towards the Skysword Sect. He'd rather not lead the group to the same direction as any mishap might implicate his parents.

Thus, he decided to keep a high profile in his trespassing on Eternal Celestial Capital territory. He wanted his enemies to focus all of their attentions on him.

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Chapter 1363: Enemies Meet On A Narrow Path

Jiang Chen's choice was a bit risky. Still, he felt that the risk was well worth the rewards. If he attracted more attention to himself, his parents' route would be less dangerous in turn.

He was perfectly willing to be with his parents, but he had a strong premonition that Emperor Pillzenith would try something this time.

Pillfire still hadn't responded with much of anything after he took out two of their great emperors. This kind of silence didn't fit with Emperor Pillzenith's style. The quieter things were, the more terrifying the conspiracy behind it.

Jiang Chen's trip to the Moon God Sect had been entirely undetected, but the return trip was no secret at all. It wasn't that he didn't trust the sect, but that the sect was large enough to have at least a handful of people close to Pillfire.

As long as those people existed, information about him could be easily leaked to Emperor Pillzenith. How would he pass up such an obvious opportunity for revenge?

Jiang Chen didn't think he would be so kind.

When he was first departing from the Moon God Sect's territory, the young lord had considered where exactly Emperor Pillzenith would strike. He passed by Pillfire's land with apparent calmness, but was on his guard every moment of the way against a possible ambush.

However, the emperor stayed quiet the entire way.

This didn't relieve Jiang Chen at all. Quite the opposite: the invisible pressure on him mounted rather than relented.

For the young lord, this was partially a good thing.

As long as Emperor Pillzenith had his eyes on him, his parents would be completely safe. Because he had sent them off half a month ahead and dragged out his own return, they should be safely within Skysword Sect territory now.

While they were there, they had a seventy to eighty percent chance of being safe.

"Young lord, the atmosphere seems strange with the Eternal Celestial Capital." As an elite wandering cultivator, Jiao Yun was a world-wise man. His nose and instincts were sharper than most sect experts.

He'd been perturbed as soon as they'd entered the Eternal Celestial Capital's jurisdiction. It was a feeling born purely of expert intuition. He felt that things were likely to be less than peaceful here.

"We have many great emperors," Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "What could a faction like the Eternal Celestial Capital possibly do to us? No need to worry. Let us proceed."

The Jiao brothers weren't cowards. They had merely relayed their thoughts to Jiang Chen as part of their vanguard duties. What decision the young lord came to was his own business. They had no intention of doing so for him.

Han Qianzhan felt the repugnance in the air as well. "Young lord Jiang Chen," he advised. "The atmosphere here is rather odd. Shall we go eastward to my sect? We can head south after that to reach Veluriyam Capital as well. It'll be a bit of a detour, but that should be no problem for us rough folks. Your parents..."

He was trying to be thoughtful on Jiang Chen's behalf. Great emperors like them could deal with whatever kind of foe that came their way. Unfortunately, the young lord's parents couldn't say the same, especially when caught in a melee.

"Don't worry, Old Brother Han. I have my own ideas about the matter. The Eternal Celestial Capital was the ultimate culprit for destroying Myriad Domain all those years ago and my enmity with them is limitless. Not going on a killing spree in their territory is already showing mercy. Me, take a detour? Impossible!"

The steel in Jiang Chen's words stayed Han Qianzhan from saying anything further. He thought this was a choice made in hot-blooded youthfulness and therefore refrained from further admonishment. The entourage had enough strength to simply power through, anyways. The Eternal Celestial Capital was a first rank sect, but they couldn't compete with the sheer number of experts present here.

The wandering great emperors amongst them were all veterans of battle. The strangeness in the air was clear as day to them, just like everyone else. However, they generally had untamed natures. They had the fewest misgivings about staying, compared to anyone else in the group.

In fact, they were a little excited for something to happen. If a fight were to break out, that wouldn't be the worst of things.

The group maintained its original speed, trudging at a steady pace along the road. Suddenly, Jiang Chen waved a hand. "Hold!"

The group instantly came a halt. All eyes focused on Jiang Chen.

"It seems that we have some restless guests," the young lord frowned.

"Who's blind enough to try that?" Emperor Inferno chuckled. "Let them come."

"Young lord Jiang Chen, I hear you have a vendetta against the Eternal Celestial Capital? Shall we go there now and help you uproot that sect entirely?"

"Heheh, we'll consider it part of the repayment for your Pinecrane Pill. Just give us the word!"

None of these wandering cultivator great emperors were meek men. They felt anticipation rather than anxiety at the mention of potential trouble. They seemed almost happy to have the chance to cut a path into the Eternal Celestial Capital and pull off a high-and-mighty sect from its throne. Wandering cultivators were naturally hostile to sects and factions.

However, Jiang Chen was stuck in his silent frown. After a while, he sent a message forward. "Jiao Yun, Jiao Feng, draw back."

As the scouts of the group, the Jiao brothers had been surveying the land up ahead. They traded a glance at Jiang Chen's message and rushed back towards their young lord.

Suddenly, an earth-shaking sound detonated where the brothers' feet had just pushed off.

Like rolling thunder, a ray of light as brilliant as a galaxy swept down from the heavens. Everything in that patch of space was rendered to dust, both flora and terrain.

The light departed as quick as it had come.

When the light faded, only rubble remained where the Jiao brothers had been standing a moment earlier. The earth was ripped apart to a depth of several yards, jagged trails lining the stony walls.

No matter how strong the Jiao brothers were, their bodies were flesh and blood. If they'd been hit by the powerful light an instant later, they would have met with misfortune.

"Everyone, to me! Come into my formation," Jiang Chen called out decisively.

He frowned as his Eight Trigram Boulder Formation flared to life, forming a temporary defensive barrier. He couldn't afford to relax a single iota. "Be careful, friends. There's something out of place here. I think someone set an ambush for us a long time ago."

"Damn. So someone was onto us all this time, eh?" cursed Jiao Feng angrily.

“So what if they were?” Jiao Yun was uncaring. “No matter who our opponent is, we’ll kill him if he comes out!” He considered the number of great emperors with them to be too many to contend with. They had more than a dozen! That number was able to walk the Upper Eight Regions uncontested, much less deal with the Eternal Celestial Capital.

“Young lord Jiang Chen, we should beware of the oddities in this place. The environment here seems to correspond to a formation of some sort, but I’m not exactly sure which.” That came from Su Huanzhen.

Her sect specialized in formations, thus she had a deep knowledge of them. She could feel with only the slightest probing that there was an invisible formation all around them.

Jiang Chen examined the surroundings with his God’s Eye and Psychic’s Head before nodding. “You have a keen eye, Sectmaster Su. The formation here isn’t simple at all. It’s tremendously well-hidden and the terrain here is appropriate for an ancient formation. There must have been someone who laid something down accordingly! Have we underestimated the Eternal Celestial Capital after all?”

Having been the victims of an almost-successful sneak attack, the Jiao brothers were the most impatient of the group.

“What skinless coward is responsible for this? What, you’re brave enough to launch a sneak attack but not show yourselves?” Jiao Yun sounded exasperated.

“Come out if you’ve the balls to! Only women run and hide from a fight!” Jiao Feng was just as incensed.

“We should prepare for the worst,” Jiang Chen waved a hand. “These concealed friends of ours are unlikely to be friendly.” As the leader of the expedition, it was his job to encourage and stabilize the others.

There was another blast of radiant light outside. A prismatic ray held twenty-odd experts within, all of them great emperor realm! Most importantly, they all wore uniform robes and ridiculous masks. Every one of them had a corpse-like layer on their face.

All of the great emperors on Jiang Chen’s side drew a sharp breath.

The uniformity in the newcomers’ clothing choices and their disguises showed that they meant business. More importantly was their numbers.

The opposing side overwhelmed theirs in terms of raw strength. There were only fourteen powerhouses on Jiang Chen’s side, counting both wandering cultivators and sect giants.

Their enemies had more than double the manpower. Furthermore, there was a formation prepared to hinder. The team that they’d thought invincible was now at an obvious disadvantage.

The Jiao brothers glared at the twenty-odd great emperors who’d just appeared, cowed momentarily by their presences. After a brief moment of awe, Jiao Yun harrumphed. “A bunch of pretentious cowards. Don’t hide behind those paper-thin masks. Reveal yourselves!”

“Jiao brothers of Mt. Huai,” the man who led the strange group called out in a low voice. “You two are some of the strongest wandering cultivators out there, yet you lower yourselves to be the pets of a toothless brat. I feel ashamed on the wandering cultivator world’s behalf!

“Emperor Wellspring, was it? And Emperors Inferno and Reliance too? You call yourselves the wandering cultivator world’s six giants, but you’re being bossed around by a kid. Does doing that match your cultivation and reputation, hmm? I thought wandering cultivators prided themselves on their autonomy? I thought they didn’t care much about the hand of large factions? Are things different nowadays? You’ve tossed your wandering cultivator ancestors’ reputations into the gutter!”

Jiang Chen perused the group before him coolly. Their disguises were quite crude, but it was still difficult to identify their true identities. He could guess who it was with his toes.

The Eternal Celestial Capital lacked both the actual manpower and the draw needed to garner these cultivators’ assistance. There was only one faction capable of this in the mid-north of the Upper Eight Regions: Pillfire City. The masks and disguises fooled nobody!

Chapter 1364: Facing Off Before the Formations

Having realized this, Jiang Chen walked up, staring at the leader of the opposing group with indifference. “Pillzenith, there’s no need for pointless pretense any more. You want to kill me, but you don’t even have the courage to show your own face. It seems that you’re just rotten trash at your core.

“All of you over there, do you think I can’t guess who you are with masks on? Everyone from Pillfire City is here. We also have the Sublime Chord Temple, the Empyrean River Palace, and the Eternal Celestial Capital... hmm, maybe there’s a few from the Heavenly Dragon Sect too?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “We’ve so many great emperors here, but I think you’re all eunuchs. That certainly explains your lack of fortitude. How scared of me do you have to be to resort to this?” The young lord cackled relentlessly.

His words chafed enough for one in the opposing group to tear away and toss his mask onto the ground.

“Your Majesty Pillzenith, there’s no need for this charade. What’s the point of wearing these masks if he’s already guessed who we are? We should bring the fight into the open.” The speaker was none other than the Heavenly Dragon Sect’s Emperor Dragontyrant.

Some of the others were embarrassed when they saw the emperor remove his mask. They looked expectantly at the person in their lead — Emperor Pillzenith himself, of course.

The ruler of Pillfire City was deeply displeased at Emperor Dragontyrant’s actions. Though both parties knew who the belligerents on the opposite side were, Pillfire’s disguises should not have been removed regardless.

Yet Long Baxiang had both admitted who he was and called out Emperor Pillzenith’s name. This was extremely disruptive to the original plan.

Still, it wasn’t a good idea for Emperor Pillzenith to lash out. It was easy enough to guess that the Long Baxiang hadn’t done so because he was brash, but rather had done so deliberately.

As for why he’d done so, that much was obvious with the most cursory of examinations.

The Heavenly Dragon Sect is malicious alright. I invited them here, but they’re intentionally disrupting my plan. Clearly they want to sink me into a pit of injustice and fully set Pillfire against Veluriyam in all-

out conflict. Hmph. As long as I kill this kid, Veluriyam will have no one to lead it. I'll have nothing to fear from them. The Heavenly Dragon Sect thinks itself clever, but I'll soon mop them up!

Emperor Pillzenith showed no hint of his fury toward Long Baxiang's revelation. He glared impassively toward Jiang Chen, then tore off his mask unceremoniously. Now that his identity had been revealed, there was no point to the mask.

They had worn masks in order to take advantage of plausible deniability later on. However, Long Baxiang's thoughtless made that a moot point.

"Spineless trash, just as I thought," Jiang Chen sneered at Emperor Pillzenith. "I thought you would deny who you were to the last, though."

Emperor Pillzenith wasn't interested in arguing with Jiang Chen. He understood that he was no match in a war of words.

"Jiang Chen, you killed two of Pillfire's great emperors, Old Ma and Big Horn. Our differences are absolutely irreconcilable. I called these other factions together solely to act upon the mandate of heaven. You pose too large a threat to the human domain! Look at the immoral things you've done lately! In addition to killing Pillfire's great emperors, you annihilated Great Scarlet's imperial family and took over the region yourself. And just now, you brought a group of experts to intimidate the Moon God Sect..."

"His Majesty Pillzenith is right. Jiang Chen has done everything bad beneath the heavens. We move only to bring justice and restore peace, and thus are naturally blessed!"

"If you know what's good for you, Jiang Chen, surrender now!"

Those clamoring on Pillfire's behalf were largely the city's great emperors. As for the representatives from other factions, those from the Heavenly Dragon Sect observed with sneers on their faces.

On the other hand, those from the Empyrean River Palace and the Sublime Chord Temple kept a lower profile.

The lord of the Eternal Celestial Capital, Luo Jue, bore a dark expression upon his face. He gazed at Jiang Chen with a deadly vehemence. Evidently, his hatred wasn't much weaker than Emperor Pillzenith's own for the youth. He hadn't officially joined the fight, but was also waiting for the emperor's orders.

"Give it up, Jiang Chen!" Emperor Pillzenith sounded emotionless. "You have a lot of great emperor realms with you, but we have almost double that number in a straight-up fight. Look at them. None of them belong to your actual faction. Do you think they'll fight to the death just for you?"

He attacked his enemies through their hearts in an attempt to destroy their morale.

"The Jiao brothers are only my discarded pawns. I don't know how you got them to follow you, but only you would treat mercenary trash like them as treasure." Emperor Pillzenith glanced derisively at the Jiao brothers.

"The heads of the Skysword Sect and the Celestial Cicada Court have their own factions to worry about. Do you honestly expect them to put in full effort?"

“As for the other wandering great emperors, do you think your charisma is great enough that they’ll lay down their lives?” The leader of Pillfire City snickered incessantly.

Emperor Pillzenith’s strategy was evil indeed. Jiang Chen’s side sank into a bit of turmoil when he finished.

“Emperor Pillzenith,” Han Qianzhan snickered. “If you’ve planned to act against young lord Jiang Chen for so long, why make up all those nice-sounding excuses? Don’t you think that’s rather hypocritical and tiring?”

Emperor Pillzenith’s brow furrowed. “Han Qianzhan, do you want me to kill you along with that kid?”

Han Qianzhan roared with laughter. “I’d like to see you try!”

The heads of first rank sects were masters of their craft. As the head of one of the top three first rank sects, Han Qianzhan wasn’t much weaker than either Emperor Peafowl or Emperor Pillzenith.

“Su Huanzhen, what do you think?” Emperor Pillzenith smirked scornfully, turning to the head of the Celestial Cicada Court. “If you realize your misstep, I can consider letting you leave. As long as the Celestial Cicada Court breaks away from Veluriyam Capital, I won’t hold anything against you.”

Su Huanzhen smiled smoothly, tossing a look of contempt in Pillzenith’s direction. “Pillzenith, you think too highly of yourself. What do you mean by ‘hold nothing against me’? Are my actions somehow subject to your approval?”

“Good, good, good. It seems that you intend to resist to the bitter end. Very good! As expected of a first rank sect’s leader. I’d like to see whether you’ll retain that fire when you fall into my hands!” Emperor Pillzenith turned once more, this time to Emperor Wellspring. “Your name is known far and wide, Emperor Wellspring. One of the six titans of the wandering cultivator world. Do you want to bury yourself with this kid?”

Smiling slightly, he pointed to another by his side. “I requested the aid of another of the six titans specifically for you.”

A cultivator in violet robe and cloak stood aloft beside the emperor. His face was completely obscured; a cloud of purple haze hung around it, its cosmic tint deep and terrifying. It was Emperor Everviolet himself. First amongst the six titans of the wandering cultivator world.

Though the top three were evenly matched, there was nevertheless a ranking. Emperor Everviolet was the holder of first place.

“Pillzenith, I didn’t want to intervene in the affair between Pillfire and Veluriyam,” smiled Emperor Wellspring. “However, now that you’ve said that, I would look like a coward by backing out now. So count me in.”

Emperor Wellspring’s tone was cool. He was clearly extremely irritated by Emperor Pillzenith’s actions. His attitude represented that of multiple wandering great emperors present.

Alas, there were two or three wandering great emperors who were somewhat hesitant. They hadn’t gotten their Pinecrane Pills yet, but here they were, caught between Pillfire and Veluriyam. Deep down,

they were a bit unhappy about the development. They were knee-deep in a swamp they hadn't signed up for.

"Friends." Jiang Chen smiled faintly once more. "The enmity between Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City has nothing to do with you." Having said this, he raised an eyebrow toward Emperor Pillzenith. "This is related to the disagreement between the two of us, Pillzenith. Why have you dragged so many others into our feud?"

"What're you going to do about it?" Emperor Pillzenith smiled faintly back, in mimicry of the young lord.

Jiang Chen pointed toward the others. "These people have nothing to do with us. Let them go. Since your target is me, I'll stay behind."

Emperor Pillzenith chuckled. "Still trying to buy people's hearts at this time?"

"A scoundrel will only think the worst of people," Jiang Chen smirked with disdain.

"What if I don't let them go?" Emperor Pillzenith sneered.

"When the fight breaks out, even if the dozen or so great emperors by my side are all vanquished, how many of yours can possibly remain?" Jiang Chen snickered at the great emperors beside Emperor Pillzenith. "Are all of you ready to sacrifice your lives in order to further Pillfire's cause? Are you willing to abandon your own sects for the sake of Pillzenith's ambition?"

"Long Baxiang, eh?" He locked onto Emperor Dragontyrant. "The Heavenly Dragon Sect is top three among the eight first rank sects. Your assistance of a villain here today... do you think that will cement a good relationship with Pillfire City in the future, hmm?"

"Don't you know that tigers are solitary hunters? Does the Heavenly Dragon Sect really think Pillfire City will keep a wolf around?"

Long Baxiang sneered back, but stayed quiet.

"Kid, stop trying to push your delusions onto others." Someone beside Pillzenith spoke up. "We gathered together to cut down a common enemy with the mandate of heaven!"

"The mandate of heaven?" Jiang Chen raised both eyebrows. "Who do you think you are? You think yourself fit to carry the mandate of heaven? Do you know what the heavenly dao is? The truth and grandeur of the world beneath? You aren't fit to mention heaven at all!"

Emperor Pillzenith waved to cease the argument. He squinted at Jiang Chen coldly. "No matter how much you talk today, you won't escape. You want fewer people to die? Sure. Give yourself up and I guarantee that I won't harm anyone else here."

His words carried great malice. He intended to push Jiang Chen into an untenable position. Why wasn't Jiang Chen giving up to save his guests?

Why wasn't he surrendering on the others' behalf?

Jiang Chen smiled. "That's a pretty trivial demand. First, open a way out for my guests."

“Don’t fall for it, young lord,” Han Qianzhan hurriedly interjected. “Pillzenith is an ambitious villain. Without you, the human domain will have no one to stop him.”

“Young lord, Sect Head Han is right. Pillzenith’s promises are as good as wind. They’re worth about as much as they weigh,” the Jiao brothers chimed in.

Chapter 1365: A Surprising Decision

Stepping forward, Su Huanzhen uttered a soft plea. “Young lord Jiang Chen, you were chosen by Emperor Peafowl. You bear his hopes and dreams and shouldn’t simply throw yourself to the wolves. We can fight them. They have a lot of people, but a battle between great emperors isn’t necessarily desirable for either party.”

A battle between great emperors was usually fierce and brutal. The only way the other side could win was through a pyrrhic victory. A war of attrition wasn’t desirable for the other factions, even if it might have been for Pillzenith.

Emperor Wellspring chuckled. “Pillzenith, you should’ve used only Pillfire’s own to fight Jiang Chen. Bringing the others to take the brunt of the assault with you is a wonderful plan. If all of these sect elites die, you can go take over their factions afterward. Half the Upper Eight Regions will be yours! Wonderful, truly wonderful.”

The emperor was clever enough to do the same as Emperor Pillzenith had done: psychological warfare to divide and conquer the other side. The coalition of Pillfire and the first rank sects wasn’t ironclad. They had divergent interests.

Emperor Wellspring’s words rang a cautionary bell in the other sect heads’ hearts. If there was a bloody battle, they shouldn’t be at the front. If they died, their sects would be left without its strongest pillar. Once that happened, assimilation by Pillfire City was assured.

Even without the threat of Pillfire City, the sect would weaken drastically by losing even one of its great emperors. It was quite likely that it would lose its first rank status to another.

“Your Majesty Pillzenith, if that kid wants to play hero, we should fulfill his wishes.”

“That’s right, Your Majesty. Our goal is just that kid. It doesn’t matter much whether the others leave or stay.”

“Your Majesty, there’s sure to be accidental deaths in a full-out brawl. I don’t think we should suffer casualties for nothing. As long as we take out Jiang Chen now, we have plenty of future opportunities to take care of the others.” Several people spoke up with words of advice.

Emperor Pillzenith personally wanted to cut everyone down in one swift stroke, but he knew how difficult actually accomplishing that was. Pillfire’s great emperors were unquestionably loyal, but the other sects – the Eternal Celestial Capital aside – had questionable allegiances.

Even so, the Eternal Celestial Capital cared only about Jiang Chen. The lord of the Capital wasn’t necessarily willing to fight anyone else tooth and nail.

Emperor Pillzenith considered the proposal for a moment. “I can let them go, kid,” he glared at Jiang Chen. “But what if you pull some trick after?”

“What can I do if you’re this scared of me?” Jiang Chen smiled serenely.

Emperor Pillzenith was at a loss for words.

“No need to waste time talking, kid. Your errant ways have angered many factions in the Upper Eight Regions and you’re public enemy number one. Regardless of how flowery your language today might be, you won’t escape death!” The lord of the Eternal Celestial Capital finally spoke up.

Emperor Pillzenith nodded in agreement. “Daoist Luo is right. Today, we kill only Jiang Chen. The others have merely been beguiled by him. If you depart now, I promise I won’t stop you. However, if you insist on helping the tyrant, I don’t mind taking out some extras as collateral damage.”

On Jiang Chen’s side, Han Qianzhan and the others wanted to speak, but were stopped by a wave of his hand.

“Don’t try to convince me of anything, my friends. This is a private matter and should be dealt with privately by myself alone. I don’t want to drag you into it. Don’t worry. As long as I manage to leave this place, our agreement earlier will remain in effect. Today’s events will have no impact on that whatsoever.” Jiang Chen knew that a majority of the reason the wandering great emperors hadn’t left yet was because of the Pinecrane Pill.

No matter how valuable the pill was though, it wasn’t more valuable than one’s own life. Several of the great emperors were already planning to excuse themselves out of timidity.

Han Qianzhan wanted to interrupt, but Jiang Chen put a stop to it once again. “Sect Head Han, I appreciate the gesture. But if we do fight here today, the human domain would suffer a heavy blow. Many of our great emperors will die and the Upper Eight Regions will be broken. I don’t want to see that happen.”

Jiang Chen’s words were close to the truth.

Aside from the Moon God Sect and the Ninesuns Sky Sect, every other first rank sect was present. Out of the wandering cultivator’s six titans, four stood at today’s battle – all save for Emperors Peerless and Sabledeep.

If a fight like this was allowed to play out, a great many great emperors were sure to fall.

Jiang Chen was wholly intent on preventing such a thing. With the demonic invasion about to break out at any moment, the human domain couldn’t bear the potential damage to its first rank sects.

He wasn’t a man that abused the public good for the sake of private vengeance. He didn’t care much about the great emperors on the other side since they deserved to die for causing him trouble. But it was tremendously painful to lose even one of his own helpers. They had come to help him, after all.

Emperor Pillzenith’s patience was at an end. Jiang Chen’s muttering was a waste of time. “Last call, kid. Those who want to go should do so now. Anyone who doesn’t, I’ll consider them willing to stay!”

The only ones who particularly wanted to stay were the Skysword Sect and the Celestial Cicada Court’s two sect heads, the Jiao brothers, and a few select wandering great emperors like Emperor Wellspring. The remainder of the wandering great emperors didn’t have such steely resolution.

Emperor Pillzenith's warning elicited many of them to salute Jiang Chen with cupped fists. "If that's the case, young lord Jiang Chen, then we shall go on ahead. Hopefully, we'll see each other again at Veluriyam Capital."

"Good fortune, young lord Jiang Chen. I hope you can return home safely." The wandering great emperors uninterested in fighting left one by one.

Emperor Wellspring sighed softly. "Young lord Jiang Chen, I respect and pale in comparison to your honor and integrity. Principled young men like you are rare nowadays, and I haven't seen another in a very long time. Without your request for me to leave, I would certainly have stayed to party."

Jiang Chen smiled slightly. "Thank you very much for the high praise. But I do assure you sir, that we'll get another chance like this."

"Truly?" Emperor Wellspring was moved.

"Definitely. I promise!" Jiang Chen's tone was serious.

Emperor Wellspring sighed softly. "Alright, I'll put my trust in you. Time for me to be off."

Emperors Wellspring, Inferno, and Reliance left the battlefield in succession.

Emperor Pillzenith's group made no gesture to block their departure. They disliked the great emperors as much as anyone else, but their priority was Jiang Chen. They had no interest in creating unwanted developments.

The Jiao brothers, Han Qianzhan, and Su Huanzhen were still present.

"Sect Head Han, Sect Head Su, it's time for you to go." Jiang Chen sighed quietly. "I appreciate the sentiment, but you should escape now to fight another day."

"There was no need for us to be afraid." Han Qianzhan lamented the three wandering cultivator titans' exit. "As long as we take a few more risks, a dozen against twenty-something is quite winnable. But I suppose it's too late now."

"Han Qianzhan, Su Huanzhen, it seems that neither of you is leaving?" Emperor Pillzenith's frigid voice echoed across the space once more.

Neither sect head was pretentiously emotional. Given how resolute Jiang Chen's attitude was toward sending them off, it was safe to assume Jiang Chen had a plan of his own. They tossed an icy look at Emperor Pillzenith before darting away on two streams of light.

The leader of Pillfire City was irritated by the perceived slight towards him. He harrumphed internally. How dare they be so condescending to me! Sooner or later, I'll crush the Skysword Sect and the Celestial Cicada Court under my heel.

With Han Qianzhan and Su Huanzhen gone, only the Jiao brothers remained. Though they hadn't been with Jiang Chen long, they had long been won over by his knowledge, methods, and charisma. Strangely, they were the last ones to leave in this hour of danger.

“Jiao Yun, Jiao Feng, you should go back to Veluriyam Capital as well. Tell the great emperors there to guard the city zealously until my return. Don’t be concerned for my safety. Keeping our city safe should be your first priority. Return to the young lord residence and defend it with the Nine Sparks Petalstorm Formation. I’ll have further instructions when we see each other again.” Jiang Chen messaged the brothers.

“Young lord, you...”

“Don’t worry. A scoundrel like Pillzenith won’t be able to do anything to me.” Jiang Chen sounded supremely confident.

The young lord’s determination was infectious. The two brothers traded a look, then followed Han Qianzhan and Su Huanzhen without further ceremony.

Emperor Pillzenith glared after them with killing intent in his eyes. The Jiao brothers had been sent as Shura’s helpers in Jiang Chen’s assassination! Their switch of allegiances to Veluriyam was a slap to his face. He felt hurt, betrayed, and murderous.

“I thought your target was me, Pillzenith? Those so-called discarded pawns seem to matter a lot more than you said they do.” Jiang Chen mocked the hostile emperor derisively.

Emperor Pillzenith grinned in fury. “If you wanted to provoke me, Jiang Chen, then congratulations. You pulled that off a long time ago!”

“Provoke you?” Jiang Chen roared with laughter. “You’re thinking too much. Someone like you is unfit of my specific attention. Alright, now that everyone’s gone, we can dispense with the niceties. You ambushed me because you both fear me and want my goodies. Let’s see what tricks you have up your sleeve, hmm?”

“Ah, and the lord of the Eternal Celestial Capital, was it? Clever enough to borrow Pillfire City’s strength. Do you think that that will protect your sect from being destroyed, however? How naïve of you.

“Long Baxiang, why is the Heavenly Dragon Sect participating in this dastardly plot? Let me guess, a true dragon bloodline? Or is it something else?

“Empyrean River Palace, Sublime Chord Temple. It seems that pretending to be Pillfire City’s dogs is a hobby of yours. If you distinguish yourself today, how much dog food will your owner reward you with?”

Chapter 1366: Jiang Chens Trump Card

Finally, Jiang Chen’s eyes settled upon Emperor Everviolet’s undecipherable face. “Emperor Everviolet, I’m surprised that a character like you has been fooled by this idiot Pillzenith into fighting an unwinnable battle. Is your rumored haughtiness and pride all for show?”

The wandering great emperor harrumphed. “Everyone knows you’re a fast talker, kid. If you’re trying to incite me into doing anything, you’d better give up now.”

Jiang Chen waved a hand. “I don’t need to do that. Anyone who stands with Pillzenith stands as an enemy against me.”

“Enough!” Emperor Pillzenith shouted suddenly. “Jiang Chen, I let those people go already. Now you’re the only person left. Do you think that you’ll be able to turn the tables with just a silver tongue? If you know what’s good for you, surrender now!”

“That’s right. What are you waiting for? Just give up already.”

“Your Majesty, I’ll lead the attack. Let me capture that kid and present him before you.”

“Allow me, Your Majesty!”

Emperor Pillzenith laughed viciously. “Don’t get ahead of yourselves. I’m going to take him down myself. I’d like to see what a so-called genius that managed to foil Emperor Shura can do!”

Everyone was surprised at his declaration.

“Don’t forget our agreement, Emperor Pillzenith,” Long Baxiang called out immediately. “We don’t need anything else except that true dragon.”

Emperor Pillzenith had only been able to mobilize the Heavenly Dragon Sect on account of said dragon. He’d made an important sacrifice in the distribution of the spoils. There was no other way the Heavenly Dragon Sect would have willingly listened to the emperor’s commands.

Pillzenith cursed to himself. Long Baxiang is a humongous killjoy. He liked to put everything under the table in the open; his careless transparency made even the ruler of Pillfire City blush. The enemy hadn’t yet been vanquished and he was already talking about divvying up the goods?

“We need the Longevity Pill’s recipe.” The lord of the Eternal Celestial Capital was not to be outdone.

“The Sublime Chord Temple would like the Emperor Ascension Pill’s recipe. I don’t think that’s asking for too much, hmm?” A great emperor belonging to the Sublime Chord Temple spoke up.

The head of the Empyrean River Palace stayed silent, but his eyes glittered with desire. He was just as interested in the valuables from this battle as the rest. It was merely out of habitual subservience to Pillfire City that he hadn’t made any demands.

“Friends, we don’t even have the owner of these things in our grasp yet,” Emperor Pillzenith voiced his displeasure. “Why are you discussing the spoils now?”

Thankfully, the only people present were on their side. It would be tremendously embarrassing for news to get out about this.

Opposite them, Jiang Chen barked strangely in laughter. “Feel free to discuss as much as you like. Let me know when you’re done, alright?”

A talisman activated as soon as his sentence finished. It was the ancient Skyclearer Talisman from before. Once activated, it had the power to break through formations and escape through a crack in space.

Emperor Pillzenith had set a layered formation that encompassed the entire mountainous region surrounding them. All the nearby lands were included within and controlled by it. They hadn’t thought

of the possibility of Jiang Chen escaping. How could a young genius escape from under the noses of so many great emperors?

Alas, they came to the realization too late upon the activation of the Skyclearer Talisman that Jiang Chen hadn't been caught yet. Talking about what they were going to do with the winnings was really a bit early.

"Uh, he's running away. After him!"

"Don't let that kid escape. Get him!"

Many of the great emperors beat their chests with regret. They hadn't expected Jiang Chen to use such a powerful talisman.

Emperor Pillzenith was also a tiny bit surprised. He huffed coldly as he saw Jiang Chen fly towards the west. "What's the rush? This whole mountain range is within the range of our formation. He has nowhere to run to or hide this time!"

The emperor was supremely confident. He had set up a superb snare this time. He was sure that his mark was trapped regardless of any escape glyphs or other means of travel.

As long as the formation remained intact, the territory for thousands of miles around was locked down. Jiang Chen couldn't flee merely by turning himself into light.

The others had been allowed to leave only because he had wanted to avoid extra trouble. His main goal was Veluriyam's young lord and he would stop at nothing to achieve victory.

Emperor Pillzenith was completely unconcerned with the development. Instead, he felt the thrill of a predator hunting his prey.

"That kid won't escape this deathtrap today even if he sprouts wings!" snickering to himself internally, Emperor Pillzenith waved to the rest. "Let's go."

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Thanks to the opening created by the Talisman, Jiang Chen shot out of the area under his enemies' direct control. But when he looked around, it all seemed to be in a state of nebulous fog. Mists and clouds obscured his vision, making it impossible to determine the cardinal directions.

"Hmm? What's this?" Jiang Chen opened up his consciousness to scout around. As soon as he did so, he saw the clear obstacle before him.

"This is an ensnaring formation. There is a formation within a formation!" He was no stranger to formations in general. This one in particular had been constructed as a chain, a series of unbroken loops.

The Skyclearer Talisman had only broken a single link of the formation. Escaping one link only exposed another outer link. Furthermore, it was very likely that there were multiple of these outer links stacked upon one another. The chained nature of the formation awed Jiang Chen.

“That old bastard Pillzenith. As expected of one of the top men in the Upper Eight Regions, his skill at formations is incredible as well.” The young lord fully extended his consciousness in order to seek out a way out of the formation.

Alas, it was watertight wherever he looked. The formation’s fabric behaved like a literal link of chains, one lock fastened to another. Like an excessively complicated knot, it was difficult to solve or sort through.

“Is it the will of heaven for me to stand and fight?” Jiang Chen had originally planned on taking instant flight. He was perfectly happy to marshal his forces to fight another day; vengeance on Pillzenith could wait.

However, the surrounding mountains were enshrouded in a burdensome formation. It would take him quite a bit of time to break it – a resource that he didn’t actually have, at least not if Pillzenith had anything to say about it.

Of course, Jiang Chen had numerous other ways of leaving. The spacetime seal from Veluriyam Pagoda’s six palaces of heritage, for example. If he were to trigger it, he could vanish in the next second, transported back to the safety of the six palaces.

He was simply uninterested in using any of his trump cards at the moment.

If he were to disappear now and leave a furious Emperor Pillzenith behind, the leader of Pillfire City would set his sights on the others. Sect heads Han Qianzhan and Su Huanzhen perhaps, or the Jiao brothers.

They did have a head start, but the chance of Emperor Pillzenith’s success despite that was too high. Not much time had passed since their evacuation.

Jiang Chen suddenly stopped in his steps, his eyes landing upon the heart of a valley. There was a tranquil place within this valley in particular. He turned into a ray of escaping light, descending in a radiant pulse.

“This is the place.” Jiang Chen tossed something into the air without delay. In the next instant, the mid empyrean senior Guo Ran’s palatial residence appeared within the valley.

Turning into a ball of light, the young lord shot inside the building. There was a powerful restriction around the palatial residence set by its former owner. Once triggered, it could demolish even great emperors in moments.

The thousand-year battle between the Ninesuns Sky Sect and the Eternal Celestial Capital over Myriad Domain was nominally to pursue Emperor Featherflight, but both sects were actually after this senior’s – Guo Ran’s – ancient empyrean heritage. They were far more interested in the heritage itself than Emperor Featherflight, who had merely been a recipient and disciple.

Within the Paramount Realm, Jiang Chen had used the restriction once before against Great Scarlet’s pursuing great emperor. There was only one use remaining.

“If Emperor Pillzenith runs into this trap, I don’t mind sending him to the next life.” The leader of Pillfire City was on Jiang Chen’s hit list. If he had the chance to kill the emperor now, that would be ideal.

Veluriyam's young lord was as secure as the mountains around him. Even if all twenty of the great emperors came in all at once, an active restriction could likely slay all of them on the spot.

Others may not know the strength of empyrean cultivators, but Jiang Chen knew it well. They were reasonably average from the viewpoint of his previous life, but great emperors and empyrean experts were simply incomparable.

Jiang Chen entered the residence and sat down cross-legged.

He waited a few moments for Emperor Wellspring and the rest to get a bit further away. Now, Emperor Pillzenith and his gang wouldn't have much success even if they decided to turn on them.

"Still, the more time I can wring out of them, the better. If they venture in here, I don't mind using the restriction to send them all to kingdom come."

Jiang Chen didn't want to weaken the human domain as a whole, but he felt no compassion or mercy for these great emperors. Their behavior today was no better than banditry.

He wasn't one to infringe upon the rights or domain of others. However, any offense against him would receive retribution tenfold!

That was Jiang Chen's personal principle. These ambushers had stepped past his bottom line for tolerance.

Within the mists, Emperor Everviolet's Everviolet Eye pierced into a certain deep valley. "There!"

Though the wandering great emperor was slightly weaker than Emperor Pillzenith in terms of pure strength, his sight and eye abilities were second to none. He didn't know anyone that he would lose to, at least.

Emperor Pillzenith waved in the direction Everviolet scoped out. "Come, let's go that way!"

The twenty-odd great emperors dropped one by one into the empty valley like a hail of stones.

"Hmm? Where'd this palace come from? This is strange!"

"Daoist Luo Jue, did the Eternal Celestial Capital build this palace in the middle of nowhere?"

"This temple looks quite extraordinary. I'm surprised that you were hiding something like this!"

The lord of the Eternal Celestial Capital looked grim. "These mountains are a place of trials for the sect's disciples. What palace could there be? We would've discovered it if there was one," he muttered.

Emperor Everviolet harrumphed. "This land belongs to the Eternal Celestial Capital. Shouldn't you know it better than anyone?"

The sect head didn't know what to say.

"Could it be an unrevealed secret realm?" ventured another. "Appearing with the disintegration of a seal of some sort?"

Emperor Pillzenith led the charge. He stood outside the residence, carefully examining the place all over. After a while, he sank into deep thought.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1367: A Bold Plan

The crowd stood behind Emperor Pillzenith, casting hesitant looks at the palace that had appeared out of nowhere. Not even the locals knew what was going on. Its sudden appearance was simply too suspicious. They were all peerless experts in the human domain, but fear of death was only human nature.

“Who’s willing to go in and take a look?” Emperor Pillzenith asked coldly.

The great emperors looked at one another, but no one volunteered.

“Daoist Luo Jue, since this is your territory, why don’t you go in and have a look? Perhaps this residence is actually an ancient secret realm that’s recently emerged.” Emperor Pillzenith glanced at the faction leader.

His target frowned. “There’s no past record of this place. Its sudden emergence is simply too suspicious. I’m afraid nothing good will come out of this if we enter. This is a setup!”

Send me in first? Luo Jue was no fool. He wouldn't have hesitated if this encounter had been with a past Jiang Chen, but the one now was no longer someone to be underestimated.

Emperor Shura, Old Ma, and even Big Horn had been slain by that brat. He clearly had the ability to kill great emperors. Luo Jue was a very confident man, but he didn’t think he was any stronger than Emperor Shura.

Naturally, he wouldn’t want to be on the front lines.

Emperor Pillzenith frowned. “Daoist Jue Luo, don’t forget that you’re the one who gains the most from that brat’s death. Moreover, this is your territory. You have first pick of any treasure or heritage within. If we go in first, you’ll have to relinquish your rights.”

The holy emperor shook his head without hesitation. “So be it.”

Emperor Pillzenith was rendered speechless by the faction leader’s timidity. He turned his head towards the crowd. “Any volunteers?”

Nobody volunteered despite his expectant gaze. This wasn’t child’s play. Nobody was dumb enough to enter the residence alone.

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At this very moment, Jiang Chen was sitting cross-legged in a hidden corner within the palace. The dwelling that Guo Ran had left behind was extremely well-designed. Jiang Chen could see everything that was happening around the palace.

The effects of one’s cultivation was also enhanced compared to the outside world. Moreover, it was built like a maze. If Jiang Chen wanted to play hide and seek, those bastards would never be able to find him.

It was equipped not only with a disorientating formation, but also an empyrean slaughter formation that would easily decimate great emperors into dust.

Jiang Chen would never want to use this trump card unless there was no other option. He was meditating as every passing second was inexplicably precious. He'd been travelling across multiple regions for the past few months, but never forgot to cultivate.

Despite being so diligent, he wasn't able to achieve the desired results due to constant traveling. Fortunately, his talents were far beyond the common person. Even though he hadn't entered closed door cultivation, his cultivation speed was still incredibly quick.

All of a sudden, his expression changed. Somebody had entered the palace!

Through his consciousness, he noticed a figure probing through the entrance vigilantly. The man took each and every step with extreme caution as though he was walking through a mountain of daggers and a sea of fire.

It was Pillfire City's Emperor Heartcloud. He was one of Emperor Pillzenith's loyal deathsworn. Since nobody had volunteered, he offered to be the first to scout the unknown palace.

Only one? Jiang Chen was a little disappointed. He didn't want to waste the a charge of the restriction on a single person.

Unless there was a supreme spatial art expert amongst the group, they would have an extremely hard time locating him if he didn't voluntarily reveal himself. Moreover, he'd already fully refined the abode. He was the overlord of the territory and could set the rules within this finite space. A bold thought suddenly appeared in his mind.

I was only able to kill Emperor Shura, Old Ma, and Big Horn with the aid of others. Come to think of it, I've yet to kill one with my own strength.

He then shifted his glance towards the palace. This is my territory. I'm the one who sets the rules! Even a great emperor won't have a chance against me here!

Even the person in question was shocked by his own thoughts. There was simply no way an initial emperor realm cultivator could kill a great emperor. But such thoughts have surfaced nonetheless.

It was like a swarm of ants crawling around in his mind. The itch was almost unbearable. He wanted to give it a try!

Mm. I mustn't be hasty. There needs to be a plan first. One could only imagine how difficult it'd be to kill a great emperor without the restriction. Everything would fall apart with a single mistake.

Granted, there was no need for him to be afraid of failure because he could easily get away thanks to the numerous mazes found within. There's no harm trying since there's little risk!

Jiang Chen took inventory of his many trump cards. The magnetic golden mountain, Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, Featherflight Mirror, Pentecolor Divine Swords, Imperial Advent Defense and Onslaught Talisman... to name just a few.

He could also call upon powerful formations such the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation, Great Dream of Spring and Autumn Formation, as well as the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation.

After a brief but thorough contemplation, he had a plan.

Mm. I'll incorporate formations into my attacks and when he least expects it, finish him off with the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation. His most powerful attack method was currently the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation. He hadn't fully mastered it yet, but there was no doubt of its lethality.

He was also in the possession of the Pentecolor Divine Swords. He hadn't fully mastered the sword technique either. Even if he had, it would still be weaker than the formation. After all, the addition of strength from a formation added power that ordinary weapon attacks couldn't measure up to.

Within one of the many spaces, Jiang Chen began to lay down the Great Dream of Spring and Autumn Formation, an extremely powerful restrictive formation. He completed it as quickly as he could and moved on to the Eight Trigram Boulder Formation.

A formation within a formation!

He wanted to restrict his enemy and attack when least expected. He was unable to fight a great emperor head-on at his current cultivation level. He could only resort to sneak attacks. Moreover, it would only work if the enemy's guard was down. This opportunity may or may not appear, but if it did, it would only last for a fraction of a second.

Jiang Chen had to make complete use of that brief timing. As long as his timing was correct, the Heavenly Sword Chalice Formation would most definitely kill the enemy.

After all preparations were made, he turned into a flash of light and moved towards Emperor Heartcloud.

Right now, he needed to lure the enemy into the trap. Moreover, he had to be subtle or the enemy might not take the bait. The enemy was clearly an overly cautious old fox who would never pounce unless he had complete confidence.

Jiang Chen didn't seek Emperor Heartcloud out. Instead, he calculated the opponent's route and continued cross-legged meditation while waiting for his opponent's arrival. He was trying to make it seem like a chance encounter.

Emperor Heartcloud was indeed an extremely cautious and vigilant man. His heart was filled with regret after volunteering. He found the palace a little eerie after some exploration, but hadn't found any lethal traps just yet.

However, he didn't let his guard down because of that. Quite the opposite in fact. How could there be no traps in a palace as suspicious as this?

As he walked, he noticed a tiny sliver of consciousness in front of him. It was such a weak and tiny ripple that he almost failed to notice it. His heart sunk. As expected, there's someone in the palace! Is that brat hiding in here?

He remained vigilant and didn't rush forward. Instead, he slowed down his movements and analyzed the consciousness in detail. As he slowly made his way forward, the strength of the consciousness only became stronger.

Suddenly, he heard a low gasp as though the person in question was startled by something. *Whoosh!* The person turned into a flash of light and shot away.

Hmm? Did the brat notice me? Emperor Heartcloud hesitated for a second but quickly gave chase.

"Brat! You're surrounded! You won't escape fate even if you grow wings!" Emperor Heartcloud growled deeply and dashed towards the beam of light.

He was still a little anxious but couldn't afford to hesitate any longer. He'd finally found the brat after such a long search. His trip into the palace would've been for naught if he let the brat flee.

Eager to please his superior, Emperor Heartcloud's vigilance had dropped by a great half.

[Sovereign of the Three Realms \(WN\)](#)

Chapter 1368: Emperor Heartcloud

Jiang Chen's Kunpeng Meteoric Escape was faster than the average great emperor in absolute terms. Within the residence, his speed was increased even more.

Because Emperor Heartcloud was in enemy territory, he could barely use eighty percent of his cultivation. Therefore, Jiang Chen intentionally slowed himself down a bit to allow Emperor Heartcloud to catch up.

From the outside, the residence didn't look particularly big. However, its internals hid a whole new world. Veluriyam's young lord led Emperor Heartcloud in panicked circles all around the space.

He didn't lead the emperor into his trap immediately because he saw the man's natural caution. If he had led the enemy to a predetermined place immediately, the great emperor would surely have doubts about what he was doing.

A bit of a circuitous movement was needed to gain his enemy's trust first. Jiang Chen wanted Emperor Heartcloud to believe that his prey was in a pinch, and there was a very real chance for him to land the catch. Only then could the hunter and hunted reverse roles.

"Jiang Chen, do you think your strange residence will save you?" The lengthy chase was exasperating Emperor Heartcloud.

"Hmph, even if it can't save me, someone as weak as you will never be able to kill me." Jiang Chen intentionally provoked the emperor on his tail.

"How arrogant of you!" Emperor Heartcloud was extremely displeased, pushing himself to accelerate even further. Clearly, he was still partially observing and testing the waters. Jiang Chen's lack of a next move was gradually relieving his worries.

"Maybe this kid really doesn't have any more solutions. He managed to kill those three emperors through a numbers advantage, but his minions have all been sent off because of false generosity. What can he possibly do to me by himself?" This was what Emperor Heartcloud reaffirmed to himself.

With his goal in sight, Emperor Heartcloud's ambition blossomed.

"If I can catch that kid and get the recipes for the Pinecrane and Emperor Supremacy Pills, what need do I have for following Emperor Pillzenith's orders? Why can't I be the decider of my own fate?" Emperor Heartcloud was one of Emperor Pillzenith's closest loyalists, but he wasn't free of his own desires and aspirations.

The more palpable said ambitions were, the stronger his lust to achieve it.

"I need to take down that kid, caution be damned!" Emperor Heartcloud sped up suddenly once more. With a vicious cackle, he materialized a long silver chain in his hand.

At the end of the chain was an enormous claw.

"Soul-Gripping Chain, go!" Without hesitation, the emperor delivered a lightning-fast swing at the young man in front of him.

The Soul-Gripping Chain was his favorite treasure. It could extend or retract at will. It would suddenly appear out of thin air to capture its target and rarely missed.

With its lightning speed, it arrived behind Jiang Chen in the blink of an eye.

The young lord seemed to sense the danger behind him as well and suddenly increased his speed, avoiding the first attack.

"Hmph! Do you think you can escape?" Emperor Heartcloud shook his arm and emitted a series of ghastly cracking sounds from the chain. Its speed increased as well, as if a mythical python emerging mightily from a mountain.

Just when he thought victory was at hand, light suddenly flashed in front of him and eight bizarre stone sculptures appeared around him.

The sculptures confined him solidly within the center of the area.

"What the hell is this?" In his great surprise, the great emperor energetically swept sideways with his chain and brought it crashing down with the force of great army on the sculptures. "Break!"

Clang, clang, clang!

The chain kicked up a series of eye-piercing sparks on the statues, sending out fearsome ripples as if it'd clashed against metal.

The sweep of the chain didn't shake the statues at all, much less deal any fatal hits to them. The terrible blow had only left moderate scratches on them. What was most depressing of all was that the statues seemed to have self-recovery skills.

By the time the chain followed up with a maddened second assault, the scratches had noticeably filled in. It once again smashed onto the eight statues with the same awe-inspiring, harmless momentum.

"How are these things so tough?" Even one as strong as Emperor Heartcloud was losing his cool. He'd never thought that his pursuit of Jiang Chen would be blocked by eight stone statues!

But after forcing himself to calm down, he noticed that the eight seemed to correspond with some sort of formation. The formation was outwardly defensive and inwardly restraining. It was a terrifying dual purpose formation.

“This brat has a lot of tricks up his sleeve alright!” Despite his surprise, the great emperor wasn’t afraid. He’d heard of how Emperor Shura had ended up in a draw against the young lord during the Veluriyam Vassal Meeting. Shura had possessed absolute advantage then, but even he hadn’t been able to immediately break through the kid’s defensive formations.

“Can this eight statue and formation combination be the one that Jiang Chen used against Shura? This brat is a well-rounded genius alright! He’s greatly skilled in both pill and formation dao. He’ll be a great threat to Pillfire if not taken care of.”

Though Heartcloud was surprised, he wasn’t scrambling. He wrapped his chain around one of the statues and flung it into the air. He wanted to crush it to pieces and create an opening.

But when he did so, the other seven also began to move, hurtling towards the great emperor like cannonballs. They had the momentum of meteoric mountains, greatly shocking their opponent.

“Damn it! I fell into the brat’s trap!” Rage boiled in the great emperor. He thought he’d been as careful as possible, that there couldn’t possibly be any more traps lying in wait. But still he’d fallen into a trap!

“Kid, do you think you can keep me down with these things?” In his fury, the Soul-Gripping Chain in hand danced even more wildly.

Each sweep sent a statue flying, but they would boomerang back tirelessly whenever they were launched into the air.

“Ah forget it, I can’t keep single-mindedly fighting in a formation.” Though the great emperor was infuriated, he still maintained reason. He knew that it was highly likely he’d end off worse for the wear if he wanted to keep fighting.

The best of the thirty-six stratagems was to flee!

His chain extended in the air, folding back on itself to form several dozen chains and a passage through the air. Heartcloud folded in on himself and prepared to flee.

But at this moment, countless vines suddenly appeared beneath his feet. They were in two colors of red and blue and seemed to have spontaneously grown from the earth.

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice roiled furiously towards the great emperor. Its form had continuously evolved as Jiang Chen reached new heights in cultivation. In its current state, it was making full use of all the advantages of an ancient lifeform. Thousands of vines snaked forward like tentacles.

“Pathetic little trick!” The great emperor wasn’t impressed and raised his hand, forming a sharp blade of qi in the air and sweeping it downwards.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

The vines were cut through cleanly like a field of wheat being reaped. But at the same time, the eight statues crowded forward together, with one of them smashing right into Heartcloud’s ribcage.

Even with his cultivation level, the impact sent him reeling.

“I can’t keep fighting, I can’t keep fighting like this!” The man wasn’t made of steel. His resolve from earlier weakened further and he shouted and hollered inside the residence, wanting those outside to come in and helped him. But naturally, his efforts were all futile.

This was Jiang Chen’s palace and all was under his control. Heartcloud’s voice didn’t travel outside at all.

A hint of a smile clung to the young lord’s lips as he observed the panicking great emperor. Everything was proceeding according to plan. The stronger the great emperor resisted, the slower his consciousness would be under the effects of the Great Dream of Spring and Autumn Formation.

This wasn’t just a formation to trap enemies. At their highest levels, trap formations would make their targets forget they were trapped and convince them they were in a dream. The targets would ultimately fall into a deep, senseless sleep.

So although this formation seemed harmless, it was a sophisticated construct that many formation masters wouldn’t be able to learn had they wanted to.

Heartcloud didn’t have much of a reaction at first, but he felt a twinge of alarm after the continued torment of the statues and Eight Trigram Formation. He felt that his sea of consciousness was a pot of glue — sluggish, heavy, and wanting to drift off to sleep.

He was a great emperor after all. The innate sense of alarm belonging to such an expert subtly clanged bells of danger for him during this confused state.

“Now is the time!” Jiang Chen could sense that the great emperor’s thoughts were beginning to hesitate. This was the perfect time for him to attack! If he delayed and his enemy recovered his clarity, his attack would much less effective than he wanted.

It would be immensely difficult to take down Heartcloud if Jiang Chen didn’t land an extraordinarily effective attack.

The Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation was ready! Sword light surged as if an opening hand formed in the Milky Way. Countless celestial bodies released terrifying power, pouring out over the lands.

Sixteen flying swords howled and soared like enormous dragons that could swallow suns and moons, calling upon boundless momentum. The terrifying power condensed to a singular, explosive point and pummeled Emperor Heartcloud.

[Sovereign of the Three Realms \(WN\)](#)

Chapter 1369: Pouring In

Emperor Heartcloud’s consciousness was caught only for a moment. He reacted as soon as the mighty attack from the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation hurtled down at him. But in the Great Dream of Spring and Autumn Formation, he only had that split second’s worth of instinct to maneuver in to react and dodge the attack in time.

It was a pity that his reflexes were still a beat too slow.

The explosive point blasted into him with power enough to destroy heaven and earth.

Bam!

The entire residence shook as Heartcloud's body was churned into nothingness by this terrifying might, leaving not a single trace behind.

Jiang Chen was awed by how thoroughly the former great emperor had been destroyed. He knew that the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation was strong, but hadn't known just how strong.

"I'm just at 'minor achievement' right now and can utilize such power with sixteen flying swords. What happens when I can control twenty-five, thirty-six, or all eighty-one swords? Won't my attacks strengthen incredibly with each level of mastery?"

Still, he kept his head after a bout of gleeful celebrating. He knew that it wasn't just to the sword formation's credit that he'd been able to kill a great emperor, the other two formations had been a great part of the reason why.

In addition, his opponent's cultivation had been impacted by the palace and he hadn't deployed his full strength.

If it'd been in the outside world with no place for tricks or schemes, Jiang Chen knew full well that minor achievement mastery over a formation wouldn't be enough to beat a great emperor at all.

Having vanquished his foe, the young lord made a grasping motion and plucked away the great emperor's storage ring and Soul-Gripping Chain. Apart from vast sums of spirit stones, there were also some pills and other items in his ring. The presence of an Imperial Advent Defense and Onslaught Talisman was a pleasant surprise.

"My my. Emperor Heartcloud is a great emperor, so why would he have these kinds of talismans? Did he want to give it to his juniors? Well, it's mine now!"

What naturally pleased him the most was the amount of spirit stones he'd gained.

"Emperor Heartcloud seriously has a good sum of money. He brought three billion spirit stones with him on a random excursion! Tsk tsk..."

Jiang Chen had a great need of spirit stones everywhere. Three billion was close to the auction price of two Pinecrane Pills! Most great emperors wouldn't carry so much wealth on themselves. Likely only an affluent faction like Pillfire City would have such indifferently generous great emperors, with even greater fortunes at home.

The young lord cleaned up the premises and returned to his secluded corner, setting up a watch. He had all the patience in the world now.

"That bastard Pillzenith didn't want to come in himself and sent one of his men to die. I hope the next one to enter is him!" Jiang Chen would activate the restriction without hesitation if Pillzenith was the next one in.

Pillfire would scramble without their leader if Pillzenith died. Their situation would be much worse than Veluriyam without Emperor Peafowl. After all, Jiang Chen had still been there for the faction, but there was no one in Pillfire who could step forward and take over everything if Pillzenith fell.

"Let's see if that old fart has the balls to come in himself." Jiang Chen didn't go out to taunt his enemy into entering. He was going to quietly sit here and kill whoever came in. Although this method was slow, it was much more risk-free. The most important thing was, the rate of return this way was quite high. Just one Emperor Heartcloud alone had brought him such riches. Jiang Chen wished ardently for Pillzenith to send more in.

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Pillzenith and the others waited a long while outside of the palace but heard nothing.

Impatience overcame one of them. "Your Majesty, Emperor Heartcloud's gone in for about an hour. He should've come out with something by now?"

"Right. He should've finished scouting ahead already. Something must be wrong inside."

"With his cultivation level, Emperor Heartcloud shouldn't be afraid even if he runs into anything, right?"

"Ai, who knows? That Jiang Chen brat has a ton of tricks up his sleeve, more than one great emperor have eaten a loss or died at his hands." The great emperors present kept up a lively dialogue, but no one was willing to step forward and volunteer.

"Your Majesty, there's another possibility. Perhaps Emperor Heartcloud's already caught the kid and is interrogating him?"

This question reminded Pillzenith that although Heartcloud was loyal enough, that loyalty might waver when faced with absolute profit. If Jiang Chen really had been captured, then his treasures might fall into Heartcloud's hands.

When his thoughts traveled here, Pillzenith grew alarmed and regretted slightly his brash decision. How had he only sent one person in? If he'd sent two in, they could keep an eye on each other. Things might be a bit better then.

"Your Majesty, we can't keep on just waiting on like. Why don't we all charge in together? There's so many of us that if anything happens, we can still put up a good fight." Such was Emperor Tallpeak's suggestion.

Pillzenith nodded. That was the only course of action they could take now.

"Everyone, there's something odd about this palace. Emperor Heartcloud has yet to return from his trip. Now is the time to be of one heart and go in together. Is there anyone who has cold feet on the front lines?" He swept a frosty glance across everyone present.

There were no dissenting opinions if everyone was to go in together. As frightening as the palace might be, with their numbers of supreme experts, they'd be able to carve a way out even if it led to hell itself.

"Your Majesty, you're the heart of our group. We all listen to you." The Emphyrean River Palace was the first to offer flattery.

"That's right, please give the orders, Your Majesty."

Pillzenith's expression was forbidding. "Since this is the case, I want everyone on their toes. Success will be the only acceptable outcome for our operation! Those who help me capture Jiang Chen alive will be richly rewarded!"

Pillzenith couldn't actually bear to destroy Jiang Chen in one go. It wasn't that he held the young lord in any particular esteem, but that the great emperor coveted the young man's pill dao talent and foundations.

The Pinecrane Pill, Emperor Supremacy Pill, Emperor Ascension Pill...

These familiar names had upended the entire human domain and stunned Emperor Pillzenith as well. He almost doubted himself for a second. Had he become outdated? Was his era about to end?

Had this brat been sent by the heavens to end Pillzenith's time and draw the curtains on the age of Pillfire dominating the human domain?

But that notion vanished as quickly as it'd came. A defining figure of a generation would never give up until the final moments.

When he saw that everyone was chomping at the bit, Pillzenith repeated his warning. "Everyone, there must more than meets the eye if something is amiss. Emperor Heartcloud has gone in for quite a while. I'm afraid he's run into some trouble. Therefore, be careful and stay alert when you go inside. Keep to the formation at all times or you might give that brat an opening. Don't blame me for not giving you advance warning then!" He waved a hand. "Let's go!"

More than twenty great emperors poured into the palace. Their motion registered on Jiang Chen's consciousness and he took a closer look to see Pillzenith at the head of the pack!

His age-old foe was being extremely cautious. Pillzenith had caught a curious scent as soon as he entered the abode. It was a reaction that had saved his life many a time.

It was the thick scent of danger!

He wave a hand to command those behind him to halt.

"Don't rush, everyone. There's definitely something different about this palace. Its construction materials and arrangement are all very ancient, thus it must hail from the ancient times. Be careful when you move around so that you don't trigger any restrictions."

"Your Majesty, I can't seem to sense Emperor Heartcloud's consciousness." Emperor Tallpeak suddenly reported in. His words confirmed what Pillzenith had found as well.

The Pillfire leader had been searching with his mind ever since they entered, but no matter where he scanned, he couldn't sense the presence of their vanguard.

"How strange. This palace doesn't seem that big from the outside, but it seems terribly empty on the inside, as if the space stretches on for an eternity? There must be a spatial law contained within this residence, and its owner an expert from the ancient times. No modern day cultivator would be able to create something like this."

Pillzenith didn't relax his guard one bit as he sent out his consciousness again. But he came up empty handed no matter how he swept the area.

"Is it possible that Heartcloud's really fallen?" His heart spasmed without reason when he thought of this. The forbidding premonition within his mind loomed ever stronger. "Well, that's tough to say. Exceedingly sophisticated spatial techniques are employed within the palace, so maybe I just haven't come across him yet."

Much of that was just to make himself feel better. He'd already reached the preliminary conclusion that Heartcloud was dead. It was a thought that deepened the further the group entered the palace.

Suddenly, a frown creased Pillzenith's forehead and he waved a hand. "Everyone, stop."

The group immediately came to a swift halt. Pillzenith sucked a breath in because his consciousness had detected a frightening ancient restriction within!

It laid dormant for now, but brimmed with terrifying power. The level of that power made one even as strong as Pillzenith tremble with horror when he scanned it. The restriction could kill him five times over!

[Sovereign of the Three Realms \(WN\)](#)

Chapter 1370: A Wicked Plan

Great emperors, especially those of Emperor Pillzenith's level, were extremely sensitive to danger. The restriction inside the palace wasn't meant to be a trap and little effort had been put into keeping it hidden. Thus, it was much easier to notice. The group remained frozen where they were with dark expressions.

Outside, they were beings that could shake the entire human domain with a single stomp. But inside the palace, they were at a mercy of a sharp blade over their heads, one that could descend at any moment. They had to be cautious.

"Your Majesty, did you find something?" Emperor Tallpeak asked quietly.

Emperor Pillzenith was still observing the restriction with his consciousness. "We can't take a step further." He sighed gently. A dark fear flashed through his eyes.

"Is there something up front?" Alarmed, Emperor Tallpeak asked yet again.

Emperor Pillzenith's expression darkened. He raked the area with a glare and gnashed his teeth. He was almost certain that Jiang Chen had something to do with this residence. Emperor Heartcloud was most likely already dead.

Unfortunately, there was nothing he could do about it. If he entered within range of the frightening restriction, the consequences were unimaginable. He scoured the surroundings again to look for a way to bypass the restriction, but the place was a complete maze. There simply wasn't any viable paths.

"Your Majesty, what do we do?" Emperor Tallpeak quietly inquired.

Emperor Pillzenith pondered deeply and made a sweeping gesture. "We mustn't proceed any further. We'll sit here and wait."

The crowd was a little skeptical but didn't dare disobey. Emperor Pillzenith was incredibly wise and knowledgeable. If he believed there was something was wrong, then there must be something wrong.

Moreover, Emperor Heartcloud hadn't returned from his excursion yet. Some began to wonder if Jiang Chen was really inside the palace.

The young lord had seen everything and was rather dejected when Emperor Pillzenith stopped just a few hundred meters out of range. *Pillzenith is as patient as a wolf and sly as a fox. He's truly a difficult opponent.*

Jiang Chen was prepared to use the restriction for the final time. After eliminating Emperor Pillzenith, Pillfire City would no longer be the threat it was. Unfortunately, the sly fox had sensed the danger and decided to sit back and wait. He was clearly planning to set up camp and wait for the hare to fall into the trap.

Jiang Chen would naturally never fall for such a dumb trick. Hmph! You want to guard the entrance? What an idiotic plan! He wasn't threatened at all. He was more than willing to wait it out in the palace as he could cultivate twice as fast in here.

Sitting in here for a decade or two would absolutely be fine. The same couldn't be said about Emperor Pillzenith. It was a battle of patience now.

The days flew quietly by. Two weeks passed in the blink of an eye. Many of Emperor Pillzenith's companions were growing restless. They would've rioted already if not for his incredible reputation and presence.

Jiang Chen, however, was still relaxed as before. According to his calculations, his parents should now be well within reach of Veluriyam territory. Once they returned to the young lord residence, not even Emperor Pillzenith could do anything to them.

Freed of his worries, he was even more relaxed and spent his days cultivating and meditating. With the passage of time, he continued to make progress and inch towards third level emperor realm.

Will I break through in the palace? He wasn't really feeling the pressure. The palace was his territory and finding him wasn't going to be easy.

While he cultivated at an extremely relaxed state, the great emperors on Emperor Pillzenith's side were losing their cool, especially the two from the Heavenly Dragon Sect.

Emperor Dragontyrant was fuming. "Emperor Pillzenith! When will we stop this fruitless waiting! What can possibly be in front of us that makes you tremble in your boots?"

The Heavenly Dragon Sect was the only first rank sect that would dare speak to Emperor Pillzenith in such an insolent manner. The latter frowned. He was clearly offended by Emperor Dragontyrant's manner of speech.

"Daoist Baxiang, if you don't believe me, why don't you go and take a look yourself?" Emperor Pillzenith answered indifferently.

He'd only invited the Heavenly Dragon Sect because Jiang Chen had been in the company of many great emperors. Since that group had dispersed, there was no longer a reason to keep the sect around. Thus, he no longer felt the need to accommodate Long Baxiang.

This only made the person in question angrier.

"Take a look myself? Emperor Heartcloud isn't part of my sect. But if he was, I'd be the first to investigate why he's missing!" This was obviously a veiled insult.

"Long Baxiang! What are you implying!" A bearded emperor from Pillfire City flung back furiously. He was one of the top three great emperors in the city, widely known as Emperor Cloudsurge.

"Hmph! Nothing at all!" Emperor Dragontyrant burst into an odd cackle.

Emperor Cloudsurge remained extremely irked. "Emperor Pillzenith naturally has his plans. You may leave if you wish. No one will stop you."

"Heh. You talk as though I volunteered for this! I wouldn't be here if you hadn't sought my sect's help!" Long Baxiang continued being contrary.

"Enough!" Emperor Pillzenith glared at Emperor Dragontyrant coldly. "Long Baxiang! My patience has its limits! Cut the nonsense and scram if you want to leave! Do you think I'm scared to offend you just because you're one of the most eminent sects?"

Pillzenith was still incredibly terrifying when he lost his temper.

Color drained from Emperor Dragontyrant's face. Allowing his companion to calm him down, he silently huffed back to his seat. However, one could tell from his eyes that he was incredibly aggrieved.

"Your Majesty, I have a plan." Emperor Tallpeak suddenly stated.

"What plan?" A glint appeared in Emperor Pillzenith's eyes. Emperor Tallpeak was Pillfire City's strategist and incredibly resourceful.

"Didn't that brat go to the Moon God Sect to arrange his parents' marriage?"

"Indeed. Many years ago, the Moon God Sect lost an infant who eventually became Jiang Chen's birth mother." Emperor Pillzenith had only recently received this intelligence.

"I heard that Jiang Chen took his mother on his journey back, but his sister, Holy Maiden Xu Qingxuan was left behind at the Moon God Sect." Emperor Tallpeak smiled faintly.

"Oh? Do you mean to say..." Emperor Pillzenith seemed to have caught the gist of the plan.

"Your Majesty, hasn't Jiang Chen always billed himself as righteous and virtuous? Won't he be forced out of hiding if we take his sister hostage?"

A sinister smile instantly blossomed out of the gloom on Emperor Pillzenith's face.

"It's worth a try!" A great emperor beside Emperor Pillzenith exclaimed.

“Agreed! Jiang Chen will give up without a fight if we capture his sister. And if he chooses to be a coward, will his guilt allow him to defeat his inner demons? Once an inner demon manifests, the apex of martial dao will no longer be within his grasp!”

“Your Majesty, the plan sounds good. You can leave the task to me.”

“Me too!”

“Your Majesty, we should also take the Empyrean River Palace and Sublime Chord Temple with us just in case the Moon God Sect doesn’t cooperate!” The crowd quickly burst into raucous chatter.

A ruthless expression appeared on Emperor Pillzenith’s face after deep contemplation. In for a penny, in for a pound. The Moon God Sect had already crossed his bottom line after interacting so many times with Veluriyam.

He was clearly moved by the opportunity.

He previously had to pay heed to his reputation and status, but such things were no longer of concern since the two factions were at each other’s throats. The entire human domain was split into two sides by now.

One with Veluriyam, the other under Pillfire’s banner.

Of course, there were also a few neutral parties, but with the escalation of the enmity, those parties would have to pick a side, sooner or later. Since the situation was beyond redeeming, there was no longer a reason to hold back.

He swept his gaze across the crowd. “There needs to be at least six fellow daoists to put my mind at ease.”

The Moon God Sect had three great emperors. When taking home-field advantage into account, any less than six great emperors would be inadequate to contend with the sect itself, much less come away with Xu Qingxuan.

Emperor Cloudsurge was the first to volunteer. “Your Majesty, I wish to join the cause.”

“Me too!” another great emperor exclaimed.

“Count me in as well.”

“Me too.”

Idling in the palace was too boring. Kidnapping a disciple of the Moon God Sect wasn’t exactly glamorous, but it gave them an opportunity to release pent up stress.