

Three Realms 1471

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

Chapter 1471: Recruiting Jiang Chen

Emperor Everviolet had once seen Jiang Chen face to face when at Pillzenith's side. Both of them vividly remembered that meeting. But rather than sharing in Pillzenith's fate after Pillfire's destruction, he'd opted to defect to the Order of Wind and Cloud.

Jiang Chen glanced at him. The fellow also cultivated arts of the eye. The young man didn't mind having an eye technique showdown.

But now clearly wasn't the right time.

The young lord chuckled, his stare impassive. "It seems that the heavens created man, but has nurtured many kinds. Sir, should I call you Emperor Everviolet, or a protector king of the Wind and Cloud?"

A cold glint shone in Everviolet's eyes. Jiang Chen's derision had struck where it hurt most. The contempt, in particular, was difficult to endure. He sneered, declaiming in a mystical tone, "One of the Eight Protector Kings of the Wind and Cloud stands before you. I am crowned Holy King Shockcloud."

With a cold smile, Jiang Chen cast a sidelong glance the great emperor's way.

The latter mistook his silence for awe, and spoke with even greater pride and complacency. "Young lord Jiang Chen, I came at my supreme lord's behest to proclaim his holy decree."

"Bullshit!" Coiling Dragon could no longer endure things. "How dare you be so presumptuous in front of the young lord! Holy decree? Pah! In Veluriyam, the young lord's word is the only holy decree there is. What kind of poppycock is your Order?"

"That's right, they're mere upstarts! History is littered with countless similar sects. The higher they rise, the faster they fall!"

"That's right. Their love for war will make them sinners reviled by all of mankind!"

"It looks like reputations are definitely misleading. To think that one of the wandering titans would stoop so low!"

"Young lord, why waste time on them? Their Order is public enemy number one. Since they've delivered themselves on a silver platter, we should give them the beating they crave."

"Right. Since they'd rather be dogs, let's put them down like the rabid dogs they are!"

In the outside world, these people would shake in their boots at the mention of the Order. But here in Veluriyam, they'd found new sources of borrowed courage. The scattered shouts soon turned into a collective outcry.

With a faint smile, Jiang Chen looked Everviolet straight in the eyes. "Do you hear that? Your fellow humans have spurned you for your actions."

Everviolet laughed boisterously. “Spurned? To the victor belongs the spoils. Those hooting the loudest today may be the first ones to kneel at my feet tomorrow. Flattery and hypocrisy, isn’t that what you people most excel at?”

His unbridled defiance riled the crowd. Someone of your status should be ashamed of submitting to the Order. What gives you the balls to come here strutting?

“Young lord, let’s kill them first. After that, we’ll exterminate the nefarious Order of Wind and Cloud down to the roots!”

“Right, just say the word!”

Everviolet threw Jiang Chen a lazy glance. “Countries at war don’t kill their messengers. Jiang Chen, you’re aware of such a basic rule, I hope?”

The young lord was in fact annoyed as well. But as Veluriyam’s master, he had to keep his composure. Giving the word would be easy, but what if he failed to kill them? He’d be a laughingstock.

No matter how brash, Everviolet’s point was hard to refute. Jiang Chen loathed the man, but the sanctity of a messenger was the most basic etiquette. In any case, it wouldn’t be too late to kill him another day.

His voice loud and clear, he proclaimed, “Everyone, don’t be so anxious. We’ll see each and every one of them dead one day, but there will be many opportunities in the future. Let’s hear what this fellow has to say first.”

It would be too childish of Everviolet to come just for a mere show of strength. He had to have another objective.

Everviolet laughed heartily. “Didn’t you hear me? This king comes carrying the supreme lord’s holy decree. Jiang Chen, our lord heard of your fame and appreciates your talent. He’s of a mind to give you a chance. Surrender while there’s still time, and he’ll take you in as his personal disciple and pass on his peerless arts. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity!

“By the way, the supreme lord is a mighty empyrean master with immeasurably deep cultivation. You should feel blessed to have caught his eye.” Judging by his carefree tone, he was satisfied with his new role and seemed unapologetic about betraying mankind.

Some of the men behind him were familiar faces, while others were strangers, but each of them wore a haughty and self-conceited expression.

Jiang Chen laughed in spite of himself. “Empyrean master? I understand now why his Order’s risen so fast. For people of your status to submit willingly, he must have made you numerous promises, correct?”

Everviolet replied indifferently, “That’s none of your business. The supreme lord’s already offering out an olive branch. Grab it if you know what’s good for you. I would hate to see a young star like you fizzle out so quickly.”

"Is that so?" Jiang Chen remained impassive. "Everviolet, go back and tell your master to tuck his tail between his legs and be a good boy. An empyrean cultivator? I'll squash him all the same. I'll let you go this time, but you better lie low from now on. You're dead if I ever see you again."

There was no need to waste time with false courtesy.

The recruitment offer was nothing more than a ploy for public humiliation. How would a faction not even four years in the making dare so casually recruit Veluriyam's master?

It was merely an attempt to strike a blow at Jiang Chen's prestige and make the Order appear greater than Veluriyam. But simple and crude as this scheme was, it sometimes worked wonders.

Everviolet cackled eerily, unsurprised by the reply. "I see you don't know what's good for you."

Jiang Chen's tone hardened. "I should be the one saying this. Everviolet, it's your last chance to scram! Otherwise, none of you need to even think about leaving!"

This wasn't just a threat. His faint yet discernible murderous intent was a testament to his resolve.

Everviolet had brought many experts and come in with grand fanfare. But he was on enemy soil. He suddenly realized he'd underestimated the young man. He flushed red and white. He took in a deep breath after a long pause and spat out, a vicious fire belching from his eyes, "Good, good. Jiang Chen, remember your foolish choice today. You'll pay for it, if you don't die first that is!"

"Let's go!" Despite his arrogance, he knew when to retreat. Staying any further would be pushing the young lord one step too far. If Jiang Chen were to disregard convention and order them killed in a fit of anger, the great emperor wasn't confident he could leave unharmed, no matter how strong and bold he was.

He'd seen the young man triumph over stronger enemies too many times to count. More importantly, countless powerhouses were in attendance. He had no desire to be trapped in such a place.

With a wave of the hand, he and his men left as quickly as they'd come.

Jiang Chen didn't give chase. He simply watched their departing figures with a cold, silent smile.

"Young lord, it's a pity to let them go so easily!" the Skysword Sect's head Han Qianzhan exclaimed. The glint in his eyes betrayed his long-repressed eagerness for a fight.

"They must have come prepared. We're bound to suffer casualties if we attack them without a plan. There's no need to sacrifice lives right now." Jiang Chen's anger hadn't clouded his judgment. He glanced around him. "Gentlemen, I trust you got a taste of the Order's arrogance. Their wanton conquests have swept every obstacle in their path. None of you is safe from them!"

The crowd nodded, their faces grave. All the factions present could feel the danger breathing down their necks.

"The Order isn't our only threat. Many hidden dangers lie ahead of us. Most of you must think the Order is a local tumor. But is their mysterious supreme lord truly human? Have you thought of that?"

The sudden possibility shook the crowd like a bolt from the blue.

Not human? Everyone gasped at the thought.

“That can’t be, can it? It’d be too frightening to imagine!”

“Young lord, if not human, where else could he come from?”

Jiang Chen shook his head. “Truthfully, I haven’t seen him face to face and can’t say for certain either. But human or not, his ambitions have already pushed mankind to the brink of despair.

“The situation looks peaceful on the surface, but it’s merely the calm before the storm. The demons have begun to stir. The Boundary Steles might crack at any moment. Tomorrow, we might wake up to a demon calamity or an invasion from foreign races. Even as we speak, the Northwestern Stele is on the verge of breaking. Do any of you know which tribe lives beyond the northwestern wasteland?”

Staring, the Celestial Cicada Court’s Su Huanzhen cried out involuntarily, “The Embittered Savage Tribe!”

Ordinary cultivators knew little about the Savages, but most peak experts who’d come into contact with ancient secrets or records knew what that name entailed. For mankind, this race was the stuff of nightmares!

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Chapter 1472: Alliance Head Chen

Some that knew of the Embittered Savage Tribe colored when they heard those words. The Boundary Stele of the northwestern wastes was on the verge of being destroyed! The barbarians were at the gates!

The news was positively astounding.

If those savages were allowed to invade human lands, the disaster that ensued would be nothing short of genocide. This was no exaggeration: the Embittered Savage Tribe was a ferocious race, destroying wherever they went like a plague of locusts. Typically, nothing was left alive after their devastation, flora and fauna alike.

There was also some unrest amongst the current company. Some cultivators who hadn’t heard of the race before asked their fellows in hushed undertones. The others that did explained with somber expressions.

Jiang Chen allowed the whispering to go on for a while until conversations were largely finished. When everyone knew what the Embittered Savage Tribe meant, he carried on. “The sudden breaking of Agarwood Valley’s Boundary Stele and the endangerment of the one in the northwestern wastes... Perhaps all of you think these are coincidences. I must admit that the stability of ancient steles isn’t quite as they used to be, but who can say that there’s no malicious intent in all this?

“Before the Order of Wind and Cloud, I’ve always thought Agarwood’s stele had weakened partially on its own. That seems somewhat less plausible these days.”

Su Huanzhen furrowed her slender brows a little. “Young lord Jiang Chen, do you think that the Order of Wind and Cloud is behind this?”

Jiang Chen didn't confirm nor deny. "Friends, do you remember the northern alliance's attack on Veluriyam Capital a few years ago?"

It had been roughly four years since then. Many sects here had participated in that attack and was therefore quite familiar it.

"Emperor Pillzenith had fabricated slander wholesale about my supposed destruction of Boundary Stele. I didn't care much about his ridiculous accusations at the time, but I will explain myself today. The destruction of the stele was the work of three empyrean experts from the Southern Celestial Tribe, not mine. However, I did do my best to repair them after they left. Obviously, my work can't compare to the ancients, and neither can I guarantee that experts from the Southern Celestial Tribe won't try their hand again. The celestial demon lord is another likely candidate too, after he recovers to peak strength!"

Jiang Chen spoke honestly and plainly, his eyes reflecting that fact.

"There was another thing regarding the northern alliance: those imposters pretending to be Emperor Cloudbillow and the others. Where did they come from, hmm? Do you have an answer in mind now?"

All of the experts looked thoughtful.

"So, the Order of Wind and Cloud's rise was premeditated after all?" Su Huanzhen mused. "Their actions only look recent on the surface, and the Order has had a covert hand in all of these other problems too?"

"Truly, there was mass confusion at the origin of those imposters. But now, the Order of Wind and Cloud clearly seems to be the culprit," Han Tianzhan agreed.

"I must admit that I've underestimated them. Back in Agarwood, I thought no one else other than us human cultivators had gone inside. Now, it seems that the Order had a handle on events all along! That's why they could create the imposters in the first place and use Agarwood's details to their advantage. It was a clever provocation of the relations between Veluriyam and the other factions!" The questions that had puzzled Jiang Chen for a long time were finally becoming being answered.

He was certain that the Order of Wind and Cloud was behind all recent events. The people that had been stationed at Agarwood's entrance were doubtless still in the Order's captivity.

Su Huanzhen was solemn. "The Order of Wind and Cloud isn't picky about its methods, it seems. That faction's existence is something very bad for humanity at large."

"Yes. Who knows what kind of trouble they will bring us?"

"These bastards! Aren't they human cultivators as well? What's the point of breaking these Boundary Steles? Won't an alien invasion trouble them too?"

The cultivators present were uniformly indignant. There was tremendous displeasure at the Order of Wind and Cloud's actions. This was a grand matter of right and wrong, one that concerned the survival of humanity.

"Young lord Jiang Chen, we can't let the Order of Wind and Cloud do as they wish any more! They're utterly ruthless!"

“That’s right, we must band together!”

“Veluriyam Capital is the leader of the human race. We are all willing to fight to the death under your command!”

“Exactly. If not for us, then for our descendants! The Order of Wind and Cloud is going against the natural order. The human domain will be dragged into the abyss sooner or later!”

“Please give us orders, young lord Jiang Chen!”

All the sects and factions expressed their willingness to comply after hearing Jiang Chen’s explanation.

“Young lord Jiang Chen,” Han Tianzhan proclaimed, “only Veluriyam Capital has the right to don the mantle of leadership for the whole of the human domain. Please, don’t be too modest.”

Su Huanzhen nodded as well. “If Emperor Peafowl were here, he would shoulder this heavy responsibility as his own.”

“The people expect your leadership, young lord Jiang Chen,” the Ninesuns Sky Sect’s Shangguan Yanqing chimed in. “Ninesuns is at your command.”

“The Moon God Sect is willing to listen to the young lord’s orders.” Though the sect had only sent a representative here today, its attitude was nevertheless conveyed firmly.

The heads of the Sublime Chord Temple and the Empyrean River Palace traded a look. They were internally conflicted, but the present circumstances were clear. Either they listened to Veluriyam Capital and accepted Jiang Chen as the leader of the human alliance, or they joined the Order of Wind and Cloud as its dogs.

After weighing the two, they preferred the former. The Order of Wind and Cloud had wind in its sails, but it was too brutal and heartless for their tastes.

If they joined the Order, they would gain a bad reputation as inconstant subordinates without being assigned much value by their new leader. They wouldn’t necessarily even be able to keep their own sect’s heritage – consolidation into the larger Order was quite possible.

At least the sects in Jiang Chen’s alliance were given sufficient independence. It was just a loose coalition. After some consideration, the sect heads for the Temple and Palace made their stances clear too.

“We welcome young lord Jiang Chen as the leader of the alliance in the unified front against the Order of Wind and Cloud!”

“May our alliance be sealed with an oath of blood, persisting unto death!” These two sects suggested a blood oath in order to prove their resolve. An oath like that was no joke. When broken, they typically resulted in well, rather bloody consequences.

The first rank sects having made their positions known, the second and third rank sects had no issues following suit. They could only survive in these trying times by depending on their stronger peers.

It was difficult to succeed in the pursuit of self-preservation in the current scene. There was mass concurrence at the suggestion. Veluriyam Capital was unquestionably selected as the leading faction of the alliance and Jiang Chen as its leader.

The young man saw no reason to refuse. He understood very well that no one else was suited if he didn't step up. His position required much more than cultivation level. It needed both reputation and overwhelming backing from one's faction. He fulfilled both requirements.

As the author and prime mover of many earth-shattering events over the past few years, he'd never lacked in prestige. Any individual deed would have qualified him in this respect. As for the strength of his faction, Veluriyam was naturally the strongest in the lands after Pillfire's downfall.

Even if Emperor Peafowl were to come back this very day, he wouldn't necessarily be as well supported as Jiang Chen was currently.

"Alliance Head Jiang Chen, Alliance Head Jiang Chen!"

"Please make a speech, Alliance Head Jiang Chen!"

"Yes, yes, say a few words at this momentous time!"

The crowd's excitement was tangible. There had been a lot of excitement at the prospect of forming an alliance. The existence of an alliance meant that each individual faction now had many allies to rely on, and no attack to any one member would have to be weathered alone.

The Ninesuns Sky Sect was the happiest of all. It was the sect most threatened by the Order of Wind and Cloud right now.

Jiang Chen didn't shirk his responsibilities.

"Alright, then," he nodded, "I'll add a few words. Today's alliance is not a joke. I don't really care about my status as a leader of some alliance. The only thing I will emphasize is that everyone should figure out for themselves why we're forming this alliance in the first place. This alliance was not formed solely to take on the Order of Wind and Cloud! We must also take on any future dangers to the human domain head on.

"Now that we are joined together in an alliance, we must consider whether we can truly act for the public good. It's natural for humans to be selfish, but the alliance may force us to make some painful sacrifices on our own and our sect's behalf. Can everyone manage that kind of selflessness?"

This was key to the success of the alliance. If the alliance was all form and no substance, there was no point to having it.

It didn't demand unconditional giving, but neither could it tolerate any penny-pinching behavior. The alliance was instituted for humanity's sake, and sacrifices sometimes had to be made for the greater good. The inability for the alliance's members to make those sacrifices was Jiang Chen's primary concern.

Han Tianzhan was the first to speak. "The Skysword Sect won't boast too much, but we'll send out as much money and manpower as we can! Whenever and wherever that may be needed. We won't hold anyone else back!"

The Great Yu Skysword Sect seemed more and more like the pinnacle of first rank sects by the day.

The Heavenly Dragon Sect had surrendered and the Ninesuns Sky Sect was in grave danger. Because the Skysword Sect had the best relationship with Veluriyam among the three strongest first rank sects, it had also received the most benefits. The sect's development in recent years had proceeded the quickest, giving it an edge in both strength and status.

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Chapter 1473: What Is Empty Will Be Replenished, What Is Substantial Shall Be Lacking

The Skysword Sect's proclamation was very convincing.

Su Huanzhen agreed in earnest. "Though the Celestial Cicada Court has many women, there is no reason we should do any worse than our fellow male members of the alliance. We know as well as anyone that when a land suffers, so too does all its people. It's all our duty to defend humanity!"

Her words moved all the other sects. When a land suffers, so does its people!

These words hit everyone head on. If the land suffered, how could any singular resident truly remain separate?

It was a simple principle in hindsight.

The Order of Wind and Cloud clearly wanted to subjugate all of the human domain. Every sect and faction either existed under its banner, or not at all. Furthermore, its ambitions weren't limited to the human domain. Its hand in the destruction of the Boundary Steles were a blatant sign of its true intentions.

This was where the suspicion about the supreme lord's race had come from. It was common opinion that something like that didn't seem quite possible from a normal human. No matter how ambitious a man was, he would never toy with the safety of his own race like that.

Opening up the Boundary Stele realms offered paramount glory or absolute destruction. If the head of the Order was capable of any rational thought, there was no way he wouldn't have thought of that. Still, he had proceeded against all opposition.

This threw his true identity and race into great doubt. This was the primary reason why Jiang Chen considered it unlikely for the supreme lord not to be a human hermit.

A human hermit wouldn't ignore humanity's fortunes so brazenly.

Well, there were some who reached a certain point where their loved ones died due to the passage of time. Because of this, they tended to become unusually cold and impassive. Their actions also became callous and unfettered. However, most never reached absolute nihilism.

All of the first rank sects expressed their willingness to pursue altruism for the sake of the greater good. Jiang Chen found no problem with them in terms of attitude.

"Young lord, now that our alliance has formed, is it time to raise an army and attack the Order of Wind and Cloud?"

“That’s right, the Order has been too overbearing recently! It needs a harsh lesson.”

“If they’re allowed to go on like this, the entire human domain will be stirred up!”

Recently, the Order of Wind and Cloud had indeed been too tyrannical. It was making ready to attack the Ninesuns Sky Sect while also sending out letters to almost every sect demanding their surrender.

Everyone was unmentionably wary of the Order of Wind and Cloud. One or two sects couldn’t take it on individually, but now that everyone was in an alliance, wasn’t this the best time to do so?

All expectant eyes trained upon Jiang Chen, waiting for him to speak.

He mused for a while before responding. “The Order of Wind and Cloud must be punished for its misdeeds. Unfortunately, it’s too mysterious right now. We have almost no understanding of its methods and capabilities. If we attack now, we might walk right into a trap.”

He wasn’t afraid of the Order. No faction in the human domain could cow him. However, he was also long past the age to be hot-blooded.

Why was the Order of Wind and Cloud so overbearing and arrogant? Didn’t they know that that kind of attitude would draw public ire?

But it acted with wanton disregard on that issue, never making an attempt to hide its insolence. It seemed that the Order of Wind and Cloud was unafraid of consequences from other factions. That meant it must have some kind of backing.

It was potentially their own tactic, done to provoke the other factions.

Because Jiang Chen had been chosen as the alliance leader, he couldn’t think as simply as the rest. He needed to be steady for now. Any rash decision he made would affect the human domain and race as a whole, and potential the fortunes of the entire human race.

“Everyone, have some patience!” Su Huanzhen exclaimed. “I think young lord Jiang Chen has a point. Victory can only come after knowing one’s enemy. How much do we really know about the Order of Wind and Cloud? If not for Emperor Everviolet’s boasting, we wouldn’t even have known that their supreme lord was an empyrean expert.”

It was true. The Order of Wind and Cloud’s rise had been meteoric and common knowledge about it sparse.

“Young lord Jiang Chen, we’re all ears. Our entire sect will be mobilized against the Order of the Wind and Cloud whenever you give the word!”

“Yes, we will defer to you in all things.”

“There’s too many here,” Jiang Chen smiled, “so we can’t make a battle plan right away. Otherwise, word might immediately get to the Order. Even if we are going to attack right away, the bigger sects will need to discuss the matter first to figure out the gist of our strategy.”

In the world of martial dao, it was rare to mobilize a horde of troops like one might in wars between ordinary kingdoms.

"Let's wait and see before the strategy is drafted."

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Emperor Everviolet was gone as quick as he'd come. After he left Veluriyam's territory, he grabbed a message glyph from the air. He grinned oddly when he saw what it contained. "An alliance? Absurd!"

There was disdain in his tone.

"Still, I'm surprised that Jiang Chen was able to maintain calm despite his youth. He didn't order an attack on us straight away. Even though we're putting so much pressure on him, he didn't use the formation of the alliance as an impetus... an astute leader, it seems."

Emperor Everviolet's entourage returned very quickly to the Order's headquarters in Unbounded Mid Region.

"Supreme Lord, that Jiang Chen brat doesn't know what's good for him. He publicly refused your invitation, and insulted us several times besides!" Emperor Everviolet had never held Jiang Chen to be in high regard. He was adding as much fuel to the fire as he could.

But Jiang Chen's refusal didn't defy the supreme lord's expectations. After hearing Everviolet's recounting, he nodded a little in reply.

"Protector King Shockcloud, you represented the Order of Wind and Cloud well on your trip. Good job."

Protector King Shockcloud was Emperor Everviolet's title; he was slightly surprised that the supreme lord had no admonishment. Instead, it almost seemed that he had expected all of this.

"Supreme Lord, shouldn't we teach that kid a lesson for his rudeness?" Everviolet was one to hold a grudge. He felt deeply wounded by Jiang Chen's disrespect.

"We have plenty of time to teach him a lesson in the future. Emotions will only make the whole plan go awry." The supreme lord spoke with meaning and depth. A strange smile playing at the corner of his mouth, he turned to another. "Protector King Stormwind, how are things in the northwestern wastes going?"

Stormwind was a big man with a covering over his face. "Supreme Lord," he stepped forth respectfully. "The foundations of the Boundary Steles in the northwest have been shaken. If the Embittered Savage Tribe senses the wavering, and if they're still as bloodthirsty as they once were, then they should smell the blood in the water."

The supreme lord flashed a pleased smile when he heard this. "Good, very good!" he clapped. "Don't worry about the Embittered Savage Tribe's senses! They're sharks and desert wolves. They naturally lust for blood, and their instinct for bloodshed is almost supernatural."

"You are very wise, Supreme Lord," bowed Stormwind. "However, I'm still a bit worried. It's been far too many years since ancient times. Can a race like the Embittered Savage Tribe really last until now, given how starved they were for resources? Even if they still exist, can they fight as fiercely as their ancestors did?"

Most people's first impression of the Embittered Savage Tribe was their poverty and starvation. How could a race survive under those incredibly adverse circumstances for such a long time?

"Don't worry. You don't know the nature of the Embittered Savage Tribe. Perhaps a comfortable life would wear away their fighting spirit and dull their senses. Theirs are only honed under the razor of adversity. They are like that down to their bone. Therefore, I'm almost certain that the Embittered Savage Tribe is ravenous for battle."

The supreme lord had a natural charisma that inspired trust from others. It was difficult for anyone to question his authority.

"What do we do next, Supreme Lord?"

"Everyone is ready to attack the Ninesuns Sky Sect, Supreme Lord!"

The supreme lord smiled once more, his expression full of wisdom.

"We shall practice deception in this campaign. Hold off on the attack on Ninesuns for now." The supreme lord's words greatly took everyone aback.

The seventy-two elders in reserve weren't even qualified to attend the meeting today. It was a very high-level affair.

That the supreme lord would say something so astonishing floored everyone. Hadn't they spent all this time preparing solely to take down the Ninesuns Sky Sect? So that they would have two first rank sects beneath their heels?

This was what the supreme lord had led them to think. And so the announcement to refrain from attacking Ninesuns was quite unexpected.

"Supreme Lord, are we attacking another sect? The Moon God Sect instead, maybe?"

The Moon God Sect was located in the northwest. If they went through former Heavenly Dragon territory, it wouldn't be a long way there; west and northwest weren't too far apart.

Going from the Heavenly Dragon Sect to the Moon God Sect was drastically different from starting out from Veluriyam. The former was more advantageous in several ways.

The supreme lord smiled, but said nothing.

"Not the Moon God Sect? It must be the Empyrean River Palace or Sublime Chord Temple then. I think the Palace is a bit far though."

"Your guesses are too far off. Maybe the supreme lord wants to go for the Veluriyam Capital directly?" Someone ventured something more daring.

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Chapter 1474: The Mysterious Protector King Scourcloud

An awe-inspiring aura exuded from the mysterious supreme lord's every word, giving one the feeling of looking up to a towering mountain. Even great figures like Everviolet couldn't fathom his meaning.

Instead of explaining himself, the supreme lord ordered, "Attend to me, Ardentwind, Gentlewind."

"At your order!"

"Take four Celestial Stars, eight Earth Fiends, and a group of skilled disciples to the Celestial Cicada Court. Pretend you're doing so covertly, but make sure you're discovered. Make them think you're going to attack."

"But should we really attack or not?" Ardentwind needed exact clarification.

"Don't. Simply surround them and create some panic."

"Shockcloud, Howlcloud, attend," the supreme lord commanded once more. "Take eight Celestial Stars, sixteen Earthly Fiends, and twice as many disciples. Your destination is the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Likewise encircle them but don't attack."

Encircle but don't attack?

A disgruntled Everviolet protested, "Supreme Lord, I guarantee I can overwhelm the Ninesuns Sky Sect with so many men!"

Two kings, eight Celestial Stars, and sixteen Earthly Fiends was indeed an overwhelming force.

The supreme lord's face darkened. "Shockcloud, are you questioning me?"

Everviolet shivered at the chill in the supreme lord's tone. Cold sweat trickled down his back. He'd just returned from Veluriyam and hadn't been reprimanded despite his failure to recruit Jiang Chen. The relief had made him forget himself.

The warning made him realize how impetuous he'd been. Questioning the supreme lord's order? Wasn't that suicide?

"I dare not. Your subordinate will obey your holy decree." Everviolet had obviously suffered a great deal at the supreme lord's hands, or else he wouldn't have remained so loyally docile after the rebuke.

"Protector Kings Stormwind and Galewind, continue observing the Moon God Sect. Hmph, trying to hold back impending disaster and repair the Stele? That trivial sect truly doesn't know its place!"

The derision in his voice made clear how little he thought of the Moon God Sect trying to bite off more than they could chew. Jiang Chen was the only one he feared. No one else was worth his attention in the entire human domain. The Moon God Sect, Skysword Sect... none of these first rank sects were a threat. Right now, all his plans were directed at Veluriyam and its young lord!

"The others are to stay in the headquarters and remain available for future missions." The supreme lord dismissed the gathering after this last order.

Those assigned a task went back to prepare before setting off. The others remained within the sect. No one dared leave without permission. The Order of Wind and Cloud was a young faction, but its discipline was unusually strict. Despite their status, even protector kings didn't dare violate the rules.

Inside a certain palace, a cultivator sat, back not long ago from the gathering. He wasn't among those sent off on a mission. His attire impressively marked him as one of the eight lords, titled Protector King Scourcloud.

His origins were mysterious. Some said he had been a wandering cultivator once, but even a wandering titan like Everviolet had never heard of him.

As a fellow protector king, Everviolet had previously attempted to rope the other to his side.

There was no clear-cut ranking among the eight lords. But inside the Order, it was public knowledge the eight lords were split into two camps, Wind and Cloud, either of which had its own leader.

Ardentwind headed the Wind camp, while the Cloud camp's leader was none other than Shockcloud, also known as Everviolet. For that reason, the latter naturally wanted for all four Cloud kings to be united. But Scourcloud had continuously turned a blind eye to his hints.

Like a woman scorned, hell hath no fury like Everviolet scorned. He couldn't rein in his anger at his gestures of goodwill being rejected. So he'd resorted to force and underhanded tactics.

But throughout it all, he realized that he couldn't gain any ground. His opponent matched him move for move. He'd even felt vaguely powerless. His instincts told him that, in a real all-out battle, his life would be at risk.

This experience had taught him to keep a respectful distance. He became mindful of staying amiable and not offending his fellow protector king if possible.

As time went on, most people had also come to realize the taciturn Scourcloud was a fierce character not to be trifled with, despite always keeping a low-profile.

As a man neither Ardentwind nor Shockcloud could order around, Scourcloud was an independent entity unto himself. He obeyed only the supreme lord, and no one else dared provoke him. The supreme lord also seemed to admire him very much and didn't even bother him for small errands.

As Scourcloud sat there, a profound glint flashed in the depth of his eyes.

"The supreme lord is as mysterious as ever. What's his objective this time? A diversion? To confuse the enemy? Or does he have some other agenda?"

Many questions whirled in his mind.

"He's pulling out all stops before he reaches his goal. He doesn't even think twice about damaging the Boundary Steles. How can he be a secluded human empyrean master? He's roped in the protector kings with the possibility of breaking through to empyrean realm. But even now, it's impossible to see if that's true or not."

Scourcloud had been one of the first to join the order. He'd coolly observed everything from the sidelines. But to his surprise, he still couldn't unravel the core of the Order after so many years.

The Order had grown year after year, expanding at a speed defying imagination. More and more experts had swollen its ranks, especially wandering cultivators. Much of the latter were given to blind obedience.

They were attracted by the Order's aura or had come to abhor their wandering lives. The sect's ambition and unstoppable momentum resonated with them. They felt that they'd finally found their rightful home. Thus, wandering cultivators had been the basis of the Order's expansion.

In fact, wanderers made up the bulk of the cultivation world. Sects were strong, but their numbers were limited. Moreover, few great sect members would choose to defect, unless the Order destroyed their former sect. Thanks to this almost savage growth, the Order's power had inflated explosively!

Lost in thought, Scourcloud suddenly received notice of someone paying a call.

"You again?" To his surprise, the one he saw outside once he'd lifted his residence's restrictions was Everviolet.

The latter smiled insincerely. "Daoist Scourcloud, I'm envious of your good life but also sympathize with you. The supreme lord is so fond of you that he's reluctant to send you away on missions, whether big or small. As to myself, I'm sadly destined to be a beast of burden. I've barely returned from Veluriyam before I have to leave again for the Ninesuns Sky Sect."

Scourcloud said indifferently, "So why are you here blabbering instead of following the supreme lord's holy decree?"

Everviolet stretched lazily, a mischievous smile on his lips. "I will of course carry out my mission without fail. But why should I be worried? I won't even need to fight, I just need to scare them."

"Are you telling me all this just so I can repeat it to the supreme lord?" Scourcloud turned frosty.

"Haha, give me some credit. I know you're not that type of man." Everviolet laughed as if it were a joke.

Scourcloud scrunched his face imperceptibly at his visitor's shenanigans. He wasn't duped at all. Would someone who'd once ranked among the three strongest wandering titans clown around? Of course not.

Annoyance welled once again in Everviolet. Thankfully, he was already accustomed to Scourcloud's standoffish character. He chuckled. "Hehe, fellow daoist, let me be frank. I really wonder if you're a wandering cultivator as you say. I used to be someone in the wandering world and knew everyone, especially the elites, but I've never heard of someone like you."

"So? There are many things you've never heard of. Are you going to investigate them all one by one?" Scourcloud wouldn't have any of it.

"Why do you reject me? I genuinely want to be your friend. It's hard to get close to you when you're so aloof."

Scourcloud smiled coldly. "We have little in common. There's no reason for us to become close."

"Little in common? Don't we both serve the supreme lord?" Everviolet took exception at his words.

Scourcloud remained silent, refusing to explain.

Like a dog trying to bite a hedgehog, Everviolet didn't even know where to begin with the man.

"Fellow daoist, do you perhaps disapprove of the supreme lord's actions?" These were treasonous words!

Scourcloud remained indifferent to Everviolet's sinister goading. "You seem fond of your own voice, so just talk to yourself. I won't be wasting time with you any further."

Everviolet seethed with rage. He'd come to rope in the man once again, but as always, he seemed to be talking to a brick wall.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1475: Doubts And Suspicions Swirl

Everviolet would have lost his temper at Scourcloud's attitude and exploded in a pitched battle if they weren't currently within the headquarters.

But sadly, they were, so he reined in his anger and didn't blow his top. In any case, he might have once again come out the worse for wear in a battle. Not because of the fighting, but because he had no justification for taking action.

The Order forbade internal fighting and he was in Scourcloud's residence. Trespassing on someone else's house? The fault would be entirely his if a dispute were to erupt.

Everviolet kept a tight hold on his anger and stomped away in a huff.

Scourcloud watched the departing figure, as cool as ever to Everviolet's moods. Everviolet was a leader of the wandering cultivators, yet he's so unwavering in his submission to the supreme lord. Has humanity's fortunes truly fallen so low?

This mysterious protector king had his own bottom line. Unlike his peer, he didn't drift with the waves, blindly following orders and committing distasteful acts. He even wondered whether the supreme lord was wary of him, or truly valued him too much to send him on small errands.

"A fake siege on the Ninesuns Skysect on one side, another fake siege on the Celestial Cicada Court on the other. What can he be up to?

"Perhaps he's gotten word from the assembly that the grand alliance is aimed at him. Perhaps he knows the Ninesuns Sky Sect will be a hard bone to pick with Veluriyam's backing. Is that why he's revised his plans? Or does he have something else in mind? Are the pretend attacks simple diversions?"

When it came to the supreme lord, Scourcloud's bold guesses were as good as anyone else's. Common sense didn't apply to the man. There was surely a mad scheme behind these actions.

"He still doesn't fully trust his protector kings, even if all of them have taken his Exultation Pill of Wind and Order."

The pill was one of the ways the supreme lord controlled his protector kings. It enhanced their cultivation, but it also contained a unique poison that would be lethal without regular doses of antidote.

It was a very cruel, even insidious move. But it was common practice for the supreme lord. Bluntly put, one had to follow his rules if one wanted to enjoy the benefits he provided. Otherwise, one wasn't even qualified to join his faction.

In fact, such behavior was understandable from a man in his position. What ruler didn't wish for obedient, untroublesome subjects?

Not to mention that these were subordinates he'd taken in along the way. There was naturally a clear difference in loyalty compared to the firm bonds between genuine sect peers. So he indeed required the Exultation Pill.

Scourcloud felt restless. Though a member of the Order, he didn't approve of its actions. Destroying the Boundary Steles in particular, went against his beliefs. He'd voiced his opposition many times.

Alas, the supreme lord had been determined to see it through, remaining impervious to the protector king's urgings. Moreover, he'd been the only one among all eight kings to have stood firm in his opposition. A couple others had been doubtful, but they'd quickly given in to the supreme lord's resolve and had firmly supported the decision instead.

Perhaps herein lay the reason why the supreme lord had never sent him on missions. If not for his outstanding cultivation, he might already have been stripped of his title of protector king.

I wonder if Veluriyam Capital already knows about the northwest? The faction's young lord Jiang Chen was now the only one who could reverse the situation. How I might send him word of this development?

Scourcloud had become unnerved by the supreme lord's inscrutable plans. Worry and confusion were growing inside his heart.

"The Exultation Pill will flare up sooner or later if I leave. I don't mind dying, but my death should at least be meaningful. I've stayed here for so many years, but I haven't unearthed any secrets yet. What a waste of four years spent in painful isolation!"

He gently stroked his disguised face, slowly removing the mask. Inside the mirror, a horrifying face leered back at him. A cold, firm smile appeared on his lips. "I even changed my martial path and disfigured myself. Wouldn't it be laughable if I had nothing to show for it?"

As it turned out, the protector king's heart didn't belong to the Order.

Everyone had to use their true guise in order to attain the status of a protector king. His unwavering resolve and courage to conceal his own and resort to self-mutilation was something that not everyone could do.

The supreme lord hadn't imposed such a harsh requirement on the lower ranked Celestial Stars and Earthly Fiends. But the stricter scrutiny was mere common sense. After all, protector kings were involved with the highest level of decision-making.

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Veluriyam Capital.

"Young lord, we've found a group of men skulking their way towards the Celestial Cicada Court. They're aiming for the sect's rear."

"Young lord, followers of the Order are gathering inside the Ninesuns Sky Sect's borders as if readying for a siege. They're commanded by Emperor Everviolet."

"Young lord, the Moon God Sect has proof the Order is behind the northwestern troubles. They await your decision!"

Bits of intelligence filtered to Jiang Chen one after another. He'd done his level best to filter out fake information over the past few days. Yet, many happenings still reached his ears, each more pressing than the last.

"Surrounding the Celestial Cicada Court's rear?" Jiang Chen frowned. The Court was Su Huanzhen's sect, Veluriyam's close companion and its staunchest ally. With the Court's main force still in Veluriyam, a sudden attack might spell untold damage, harming all of the sect's fortunes.

"What is the Order up to now?" he puzzled.

Sounding east to strike west instead?

But where was east and where was west? Who was the Order's real goal?

It was impossible to tell with the information at his disposal. The Celestial Cicada Court seemed the least likely target. But in war, nothing could be ruled out. Perhaps this least likely target was precisely the Order's next goal.

"This supreme lord is a master tactician. We're like puppets dancing in his palm."

Jiang Chen was a tad irked. In so many years in the the human domain, even his most fearsome opponent Pillzenith had never backed him so tightly into a corner.

With so many allies, a direct assault on the Order seemed the best choice.

Yet, in the depths of his mind, there was a voice telling him this wasn't a wise choice.

By the time his forces reached his target, the Order might have already vacated the premises, turning around to attack Veluriyam instead or a first rank sect. The alliance might find its ancestral homes under siege. Anything was possible.

Meanwhile, the Order clearly had little attachment to the Unbounded Region. It was merely a temporary springboard for them. If they could truly invade Veluriyam or a first rank sect, would they be hurting for another land to occupy?

Even the Heavenly Dragon Sect's domain was vastly superior to their current location. This was the sorest issue for Jiang Chen.

The Order was young yet and unweighed down by baggage, affording them greater flexibility. They could abandon the Unbounded Range at the drop of a hat. However, not even the lowest third rank sect in the alliance could abandon its home. Away from their roots, they would wither and die.

"Young lord, this supreme lord seems to be reading our actions like an open book!" Emperor Wellspring voiced his doubts.

Jiang Chen blinked. "What do you mean?"

"They seem aware that we've decided to bide our time for now. That's why they're sending their troops everywhere and putting us under pressure. There must be moles inside our alliance."

Jiang Chen had also come to this conclusion. It was impossible to prevent spies in such a large gathering.

Many wandering powerhouses had attended the grand assembly. Moreover, no one could guarantee the Order hadn't infiltrated one sect or another.

"Old Brother Hui, the Order is crafty and cunning. All of their troop movements are decoys. They must be forcing us to spread ourselves thin so they can take us down on all sides."

Jiang Chen had his own guesses as to the supreme lord's plans.

Emperor Wellspring muttered, "It's a real possibility. Or perhaps they have a main target in mind, while everything else is a smokescreen?"

A main target?

That was the most troublesome part. Which was the main target? No matter which sect it was, if they couldn't react in time, it would invariably weaken such a freshly born alliance.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1476: Sir Xiahou

The Order of Wind and Cloud's erratic movements were a source of restlessness for Jiang Chen. Even if he wanted to settle the score immediately, it was doubtful the Order would comply with that intention.

They willing to resort to as much underhandedness as possible, and to do some truly disgusting things. An opponent like this was much harder to handle than an exasperated Pillfire City had been.

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The supreme lord's residence within the Order's headquarters was a mysterious and shrouded place. Even the eight protector kings weren't permitted to approach without a summons.

Within the residence, two figures flanked the supreme lord like twin shadows. Their posture signified utmost respect to their dear leader.

"Elder Peng, Elder Mo, you two have been with me for a long time. There's no need for such formalities." The supreme lord waved a hand dismissively.

These two old men were the experts most intimate to the lord. Barely anyone else even knew they existed at all. In fact, Peng and Mo were the most capable of his subordinates – and the most trustworthy, of course. He held these two in much higher esteem than the eight protector kings.

The protector kings were largely people that he'd managed to gather from various places in the human domain. They were natives of the place. These two on the other hand, had always been his retainers.

"Seventh Master, we assist you at the house's orders. You are our master and we must reflect that in our attitude toward you. We dare not overstep our bounds." The speaker was the slightly chubbier Elder Peng.

Beside him, Elder Mo was a thinner, darker-skinned man who nodded in agreement. He seemed naturally averse to talking much. The 'seventh master' on their tongue was none other than the Order of Wind and Cloud's supreme lord.

“Elder Peng, you’ve spied everywhere in the human domain these days. You should have enough information by now, yes? Do you have any clues?” The supreme lord looked toward the bigger subordinate.

“I’ve found out a lot, yes,” Elder Peng responded quickly. “As a whole, the human domain is the weakest it’s ever been since the ancient times. Still, its weakness is superficial to a degree. There’s a group of empyrean experts hidden within the human domain, though they habitually feign death through hibernation. The mainstream view here is that peak great emperor is the strongest one can be. Most cultivators believe that no empyrean experts exist in the human domain.

“Of course, it’s hard to say they’re wrong. Not many empyrean experts exist anymore at all, and the ones that do don’t care about human affairs. One could say there’s little difference between the two.”

The supreme lord nodded slightly. “The human domain has fallen so low. Not even a tenth of the ancient spirit veins remain as they once were. It is wise for the empyrean experts not to show themselves, because they will only accelerate their deaths if they do.”

“Haha, waiting won’t make much of a difference in their inevitable fates either. They’re only fooling themselves! They’ll die sooner or later. If the human domain’s spirit veins can’t recover to their old states, they’ll only slowly wither away in their faltering dreams.” Elder Peng’s tone held a hint of mockery. Clearly, he didn’t hold the hidden empyrean experts of the human domain in high regard.

“Nevertheless, their attitude is understandable.” The supreme lord inclined his head. “It’s good for us that they’re not willing to move out. That’s one less potential obstacle to our plans.”

“Seventh master, we can scoff at these people, but we can’t ignore them. If they realize our goal, they might mobilize like mad dogs against us. Our best choice is to keep our true intentions from them.”

The supreme lord thought about this for a few moments, then assented. “You’re right. We can’t reveal our goal. Instead, we must hasten its completion. When other factions from Myriad Abyss shrug off the taboo and surge in, House Xiahou’s advantage will not be as pronounced. Currently, House Xiahou is ahead of everyone else in our return to the human domain.”

The supreme lord of the Order of Wind and Cloud was the seventh master of Myriad Abyss Island’s House Xiahou. If Jiang Chen were present, he would have noticed instantly that the Order belonged to Huang’er’s worst enemy.

Of course, this seventh master wasn’t the house’s most core disciple – ergo, not the one that was supposed to have Huang’er as his cultivation vessel. However, the fact that he was of the same house was reason enough to oppose him.

The seventh master of House Xiahou had snuck into the human domain using a variety of arts, bringing a small retinue with him. Just as Elder Shun had slipped into the human domain with Huang’er all those years ago, House Xiahou’s seventh master had necessitated the same kind of secrecy.

There was a taboo imposed on the entirety of Myriad Abyss Island, forbidding anyone to return to the human domain without express permission. It had once been very strict. Because it had been almost two hundred thousand years since the ancient era, it was slowly being forgotten.

It was said that when the taboo had first been announced, an oath had been sworn that two hundred thousand years needed to pass before its reconsideration was possible. This meant that Myriad Abyss Island's forebears had the foresight to realize that things wouldn't change very much in the two hundred thousand years in their future.

Past that, things were much more uncertain.

Regardless, the taboo wasn't yet removed at present time. Though there were many loud voices clamoring for its removal, anyone that returned to the human domain from Myriad Abyss Island before it was actually removed infringed upon the rules.

This was also the reason for Elder Shun's excessively harsh punishment upon his return to his homeland, quite a few years back.

Obviously, the passage of time meant that the taboo had little actual force. The difference was in how people chose to enforce it.

If a group gathered together to make a big deal of it, the taboo could be the basis to dole out trouble. If there wasn't anyone that cared much about it however, the taboo was a superb tool for personal gain.

House Xiahou had a clear upper hand thanks to their precedence. Perhaps they'd been inspired by Elder Shun and Xi's trips to the human domain.

"Seventh Master," Elder Peng remarked seriously, "we can't reveal our identities yet right now no matter what. House Xiahou can't give its enemies ammunition back on Myriad Abyss Island."

The supreme lord nodded in agreement, then laughed. "Didn't you say you would investigate the young lord of Veluriyam Capital last time, Elder Peng? Do you have any results yet?"

The question piqued Elder Peng's passion. "He's not a simple kid! I went out of my way to gather up every little tidbit about this kid's rise. His path from a commoner to greatness would be remarkable even in back home.

"He started out as the son of some duke of a mundane kingdom. Who knows what kind of amazing insight he'd received to become the leader of the human domain! Apparently, he cured that chit from House Yan of her poison."

The elder related Jiang Chen's exploits with a great deal of interest.

"Heheh, he's certainly brave to touch third brother's chosen woman. I guess she wouldn't have been of much use to him anyway if her poison hadn't been cured, so he's done something helpful in that regard. Still... after touching third brother's woman, his life is as good as over!"

Elder Peng widened his eyes. "Seventh master, you're going to move against Jiang Chen?"

"I might as well do third brother a favor. Nothing wrong with that, eh? No matter how he cured that chit from House Yan, he's punishable by death for even nominally associating himself with a woman chosen by House Xiahou." The supreme lord responded, rather matter-of-factly. He radiated a kind of aloofness that reflected House Xiahou's self-styled supremacy.

"He's pretty capable," Elder Peng smiled. "The Order isn't well established yet, and we have a long way to go before we can find what we're looking for. It doesn't seem like a good use of resources to spend our time and energy on fighting Jiang Chen."

"Inappropriate." The silent Elder Mo finally proffered a single word.

"What's so inappropriate about it?" The supreme lord frowned a little.

"Cart before horse." Three more words were all that the elder was willing to part with.

Elder Peng elaborated helpfully. "Seventh Master, we have all the time in the world to do battle against Jiang Chen later. Right now, our foremost goal should be to complete the house's task of excavating the human domain's ancient sites. We must find the heavenly secret orders that pertain to a primordial secret. That secret has never been cracked, even in ancient times.

"Back in the day, all seven secret orders came close to being collected together. Alas, there was a failure at the eleventh hour. Because the seven heavenly secret orders have never been gathered, the primordial secret has never been divulged. It's been two hundred thousand years, and Divine Abyss Continent is about to enter into another period of turmoil. We have to take advantage of this opportunity before the storm, and make use of what little time we have left!"

Elder Peng had the best of intentions. He knew that House Xiahou was a uniformly prideful family. They could not accept a woman they felt they owned being defiled by another. This was the reason for the Order of Wind and Cloud's recent opposition to Veluriyam Capital.

The only reason for it had been the seventh master's displeasure with Jiang Chen, leading to a deep-seated desire to make trouble for the latter. Unfortunately, covert observation has revealed that it wasn't an easy task to deal with Jiang Chen.

Back in Agarwood's secret realm, the seventh master and the two elders had been hidden during the entire sequence of events. The method they'd hid themselves with was so clever that neither the Vermilion Bird nor the celestial demon lord had noticed them.

Not that either ancient being had been at the peak of its strength, to be completely fair. The separation of both from the outside world had severely weakened them.

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

Chapter 1477: Admiration, Envy, Hate

At their peaks, the celestial demon lord and the Vermilion Bird would've easily found the group from the Myriad Abyss Island. After all, the former had been at the top of the food chain during the ancient era.

The seventh master of House Xiahou and his two retainers were only the descendants of an ancient people. It was uncertain exactly how much of their ancestors' abilities had been inherited after two hundred thousand years.

The seventh master's silence made the two elders feel that they'd possibly spoken too harshly.

"Seventh Master," Elder Peng advised, "there's no conflict between our search for the heavenly secret orders and our fight against Jiang Chen. Plus, that kid looks like he really does enjoy great fortune. Maybe we'll be able to use him to find the orders?"

“Him?” The supreme lord sneered with scorn. “A commoner kid will only have so much fortune to him. He’s only lucky because the human domain around him is so poor. In Myriad Abyss Island, there are countless geniuses like him.”

Deep down, the seventh master retained House Xiahou’s diffidence and pride. He both hated and abhorred Jiang Chen, but had no way to consume him in one bite.

Elder Mo shook his head, dissatisfied with the young master’s judgment. “Jiang Chen cannot be underestimated.” This was his opinion on the matter.

“Seventh Master,” Elder Peng chimed in, “you definitely can’t belittle that kid. Otherwise, the Order of Wind and Cloud may eat a severe loss from him in the future.”

“Oi, aren’t you two over exaggerating his abilities?” The supreme lord was a hundred twenty percent unconvinced.

“Not at all. I’ve collected a lot of information about him. His deeds in the human domain are utterly earth-shaking. Everyone in the outside world believes that he was able to do all this because he has backing from Myriad Abyss Island.

“The truth of the matter is that the only people related to him come from House Yan. Elder Shun and that Huang’er girl. We know how much House Yan is worth, and none of the pills that Jiang Chen has refined could’ve come from them. The Pinecrane Pill, the Longevity Pill, the Emperor Ascension Pill, the Emperor Supremacy Pill... there must be more to his story than that, much more!” Elder Peng’s tone was thoughtful and full of meaning.

Elder Mo nodded as well. “These pills are very high level indeed. An empyrean pill immortal in Myriad Abyss Island would have trouble coming up with them.”

It was rare for the tight-lipped elder to utter such a lengthy sentence.

The supreme lord grew thoughtful. “That Jiang Chen kid has had some ridiculous luck,” he sighed softly. “I’m curious where he got those pills from. Elder Peng, what do you think?”

Elder Peng had no answer to that conundrum. He couldn’t understand it at all; such amazing pills would have been explosive even in Myriad Abyss Island. How could they have come out of the human domain? Especially one in such a sorry state?

Was there such a thing as communicating with the gods? Had one really been summoned? Had Jiang Chen’s beating back in the Eastern Kingdom given him an invisible patron?

Such a sentiment seemed preposterous and absurd. Elder Peng didn’t believe it himself. But if not that, how were the pill recipes to be explained otherwise? Was a commoner child remotely capable of coming up with so many miraculous recipes all by himself?

That was even more illogical.

“I’m guessing that he really did receive tutelage from some senior or other at a young age. Maybe he wandered into a secret realm of some sort, and got the recipes from there?”

The elder didn't quite believe his own hypothesis. It was a huge stretch to assign improbability to this degree.

"If he got the recipes from a secret realm, how could he have refined the actual pills? He's just some kid. I think only an empyrean pill immortal could perfectly manage the techniques needed for them, no? Even pill emperors would have a hard time."

"That's why we say he's full of secrets."

"Back then in Agarwood Valley, his luck shone through again, right? He received the heritage of the Primosanct Sect! His fortune knows no bounds!"

Both master and servants had plenty to complain about. Their trip from Myriad Abyss Island to the human domain had been extremely smooth. Because of that, they'd expected similar ease for their exploits after arriving. But right now, Jiang Chen and Veluriyam Capital were a huge obstacle in their path, preventing them from doing as they wished in this new land.

They had come solely in order to seek out ancient secrets, with the heavenly secret orders at the top of their list. Besides this ultimate goal, they had other delusions of grandeur as well.

There had been countless powerful human sects in ancient times. Any powerful sect had its own suite of treasures, tomes, and resources.

The deserters who'd fled to Myriad Abyss Island had brought many resources and treasures with them, but what they'd managed to bring was certainly a far cry from everything. Much had remained in the human domain. The two hundred thousand years that had passed were enough to cover anything in the sands of time; for example, if Agarwood's secret realm hadn't opened and the celestial demon lord hadn't helped things along, who would've managed to get into the sealed Primosanct Sect under the guardianship of the Vermilion Bird?

"Hmph! That kid is an odd one. How come the Vermilion Bird likes him so much? I thought it was supposed to have a fiery temper."

This was a very perplexing point.

The Vermilion Bird had clearly been a divine creature protecting the sacred grounds of the Primosanct Sect. Any other intruder would have been ferociously attacked, these unwelcome guests from Myriad Abyss Island included.

Many human cultivators had been slain at the bird's talons, in fact. And yet, this Jiang Chen kid seemed to have some kind of magic that allowed him to coexist harmoniously with an entity as unreasonable as the Vermilion Bird. They spoke and laughed as if they were long-lost family.

The incomprehensible state of affairs upset the Seventh Master immensely and made him rather jealous. He was from Myriad Abyss Island! Shouldn't he be much nobler than some backwater lout like Jiang Chen? He deserved that kind of treatment much more!

Alas, things didn't always turn out the way everyone wanted. It had been inconvenient to even show themselves in the presence of the bird. Not that they were afraid of it, but revealing themselves would have been foolhardy.

Thinking back on this still made the seventh master mildly disgruntled.

The fact that Jiang Chen had managed to gain the bird's friendship only added fuel to the fires of jealousy and envy. Wouldn't it have been amazing if he had tamed a Vermilion Bird, and had been able to ride it back to House Xiahou as a mount?

The bird was an ancient sacred fowl! One of the four ancient sacred beast bloodlines. The regality of its line far exceeded these ancient human descendants.

"The Primosanct Sect was once one of the ten great factions in ancient times. By all means, it was one of the leaders among humanity. That kid is immensely lucky." Elder Peng couldn't refrain from his contemplative observations.

If he had been permitted to show himself, the Primosanct Sect's heritage could have been theirs. Unfortunately, things hadn't quite panned out that way. Jiang Chen was the one who'd benefited in the end.

"Heheh... if we let out word that this kid got the Primosanct Sect's heritage, won't the others on Myriad Abyss Island start rampaging? The descendants of that sect's disciples most of all?"

The ancient Primosanct Sect had been a just and righteous sect. They had been at the vanguard of the defense against the demonic invasion, all of them fighting tooth and nail against the invaders.

However, even a noble bunch like that had its cowards. Fearing for their lives, a small contingent had slithered off to Myriad Abyss Island.

For a sect as large so large, even its wimps were reasonably proficient. Additionally, there had been a series of agreements establishing hierarchy between those fleeing to Divine Abyss in the first place.

Primosanct's deserters had managed to establish a base on Myriad Abyss Island, with some continuation of their old heritage there. If the seventh master were to release news of the sect's old grounds and treasures reappearing, the descendants of that sect would undoubtedly enter into a frenzy.

The human domain would certainly be livelier then!

"We cannot allow that, Seventh Master. Right now, we cannot afford to alert the enemy."

"Haha, I'm just joking around. I'll take all he has of course, when he falls into my hands. Hahahaha!"

As they conversed, a message glyph shot in from outside the residence.

The seventh master picked it up casually.

"Haha, Overlord Shockcloud is efficient alright! He's already encircled the Ninesuns Sky Sect. No attacks, of course, just skirmishes and intimidation. Rumor has it that Veluriyam is preparing a combined army against him."

The seventh master burst into laughter when he came to this part. "Maybe that kid thinks I'll be there personally. Did he want to take a decisive victory over me?" His laughter was extremely exaggerated, as if he were especially pleased with his stratagem.

“Seventh Master,” Elder Peng reminded, “that Jiang Chen is a master of warfare! Both military and psychological. We shouldn’t take him lightly.”

“Haha, this isn’t about taking him lightly. I’m going to give him a big surprise this time!”

Elder Peng’s eyes lit up. “Do you have a plan?”

“Yes!” The seventh master made no move to hide it.

Both elders looked to their young master, waiting for him to continue.

“The core of my plan is to bait Jiang Chen out of Veluriyam Capital. We can then lead the bulk of our forces in a sneak attack on the city. I hear that Veluriyam Capital was built by an ancient Veluriyam king. He was one of the three leaders of humanity back then. The city he built surely holds the secret to his life’s work as well as a rich heritage. How can we not try our luck there?”

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1478: A Tremendous Appetite

The Veluriyam Sect was also one of the ten great factions of the ancient times. It was on par with the Primosanct and even more. Their lingering heritages was indirect proof of that.

Supported by the Veluriyam Pagoda, Veluriyam Capital had persisted to the present day. Because it hadn’t inherited most of the other facets of the ancient Veluriyam Sect, Veluriyam Capital wasn’t a real successor. This was true in both public perception and fact.

Still, there was an undeniable connection between the two. The Pagoda was on Capital land after all. The city retained ownership rights to the complex as additional evidence.

“Attack Veluriyam Capital?” Elder Peng’s facial muscles tensed. “Seventh Master, are you planning to break with Jiang Chen completely?”

The two elders’ conservative natures didn’t allow them to support that course of action. Unfortunately, they’d been brainwashed into following the seventh master’s word as law.

This was despite conventional wisdom informing them of the foolishness in entering this conflict now; after all, the human domain openly supported Jiang Chen’s leadership. There was no buffer of forgiveness between the attack on the city and public opinion.

Truthfully, Elder Peng hadn’t supported such actions from the start. Alas, the seventh master couldn’t be swayed. Their young charge’s mind made up, they couldn’t actively voice their opposition at the present time.

“Elder Peng, what do you think my chances are in attacking on Veluriyam Capital?” The seventh master smiled. “In recent years, I’ve gathered quite a few human great emperors to my side. If I push the numerical advantage by deploying all of them at once, I think I’ll have a pretty good shot – as long as Jiang Chen brings his main force to reinforce the Ninesuns Sky Sect.”

“They’ve just formed the alliance. They can’t abandon Ninesuns just like that. What would be the point of the alliance at all otherwise?”

“Yes, Jiang Chen has no choice.”

The seventh master clapped cheerfully. “When I take over Veluriyam Capital and seize control of it, that kid’ll be too late even if he runs back!”

He was excited just thinking about occupying the core of the human domain.

Veluriyam Capital was a place of ancient heritage, containing a sacred place as legendary as the Pagodas. Most importantly, they had heard that Veluriyam Capital had a tradition of holding Veluriyam Pagoda Meetings every sixty years.

Regrettably, no genius from Veluriyam had achieved a breakthrough at the meeting, leaving the ancient sect’s heritage buried still. This meant that there was plenty of virgin ground for them to uncover!

Even though the seventh master and his two servants came from Myriad Abyss Island, the heritage of the ancient Veluriyam Sect was quite alluring to them.

He’d delegated six of his eight Protector Kings out on various tasks. Two remained at headquarters. There were plenty of Celestial Stars and Earthly Fiends available, though. He had stationed them close by in order to attack Veluriyam Capital together. He was avoiding a direct attack in the open in order to provoke Jiang Chen.

When Veluriyam’s young lord foolishly believed that the battlefield would be at the Ninesuns Sky Sect, the young master would be off elsewhere demolishing Veluriyam Capital’s base of operations.

“Elder Peng, Elder Mo, I must rely on your assistance for our sortie on Veluriyam Capital.” Though the seventh master was displeased by everything about Jiang Chen, he had to concede that the other youth was the only one who posed a threat in the human domain.

In particular, the eight stone golems and the Vermilion Bird near him were extremely recent advantages – a fact that made the seventh master exceedingly upset. Those opportunities belonged to him!

“We will do everything we can. If Veluriyam doesn’t have the stone golems and the Vermilion Bird, the great emperors garrisoned there won’t be worth much. We can strike them down with ease.”

“However...”

‘However’ was a word anathema to most plans in the world. It tended to be followed by difficult problems.

“However what? Out with it.” The seventh master couldn’t resist urging.

“However, no one has been able to fully comprehend the Veluriyam Pagoda since time immemorial. Maybe it really is waiting for that fated someone. It may not be wise to brute force our way in.” Elder Peng was being perfectly honest. It would be a crime if harm were to befall the seventh master in the process.

“We descendants of the ancients are superior to these native pigs ten times over! With our talents, how could we not be the fated ones?”

The seventh master's tone was steeped in confidence. It was as if he was some kind of destined ruler, descending upon the human domain. The two elders kept their mouths shut in the presence of their master's determination. He was liable to get mad if they opposed him any further.

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The Order of the Wind and Cloud mobilized once more.

Every high ranking member still within the headquarters appeared within ten breaths of the command. They were all curious what important matter the supreme lord had to announce this time.

"My friends, it is time for us to put our skills to the test." The supreme lord spoke forth. "There is an opportunity before us, one that can enrich each and every one of you if we take advantage of it. I guarantee that after this sortie, you will have passed the test of loyalty. The Exultation Pill of Wind and Order will be removed from your bodies once it is complete. From now on, you will be considered my most trusted subordinates!"

The removal of the Exultation Pill garnered everyone's interests.

Protector King Scourcloud's eyes moved around when he heard what the supreme lord had said. He was rather curious what the leader had in mind this time.

"I will give you half a day to prepare. This afternoon, we will embark at the appointed time. There is a tough battle ahead of us. Prepare yourselves both physically and mentally!"

"Supreme Lord, what are we..."

"Yes, Supreme Lord. Where are we going?"

There were plenty of questions in the crowd to go around. The people wanted to know more.

The supreme lord smiled. He wanted to keep his subordinates guessing. "I'll tell you when we're almost there. This time, I'm leading the charge personally. Besides all of you, I have asked two empyrean experts to accompany us."

The so-called accompanying experts were Elders Mo and Peng, of course. They were his finest lieutenants, and absolutely necessary in his attack on Veluriyam. The ordinary Order members murmured amongst themselves when they heard the announcement about their too-capable helpers.

As expected of the supreme lord. Two empyrean experts backing them up? There was no way they would fail this time, whatever they set out to do!

"Devourcloud, Scourcloud, on my orders! I command you to lead our troops on the expedition this day!"

The two protector kings stood up one after the other.

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The Order's forces secretly embarked right after noon.

Because their target today was Veluriyam Capital, the seventh master repeatedly instructed his soldiers to take care in concealing themselves on the way.

Scourcloud was the vanguard of the expedition. He and Devourcloud took to the group's forefront along with a few Celestial Stars. It was quite obvious that the latter's loyalties laid strictly with the Order's supreme lord.

"The supreme lord is being rather mysterious this time. Our mission is presumably of great importance," remarked Devourcloud.

Scourcloud was silent. He too wanted to know where the supreme lord intended to attack this time, too. The other, more capable protector kings had been sent out on other missions.

He and Devourcloud were the two protector kings ordinarily given the fewest tasks. Strangely, they'd been picked to participate in this covert operation.

The route seemed a bit directionless, but more careful perusal revealed a chilling conclusion. "Is the supreme lord going to attack Veluriyam Capital?"

Protector King Scourcloud considered the details a bit more. Though they constantly took detours, the aim of the expedition was unmistakable. It was definitely Veluriyam Capital they were heading towards!

The astonishing thought made the protector king very anxious.

No, anywhere but Veluriyam Capital! Scourcloud was thoroughly distressed. I must think of a way to notify the city so that they can prepare in advance!

The more he thought about it, the more things became clear.

The reason the other protector kings had been sent out was to attract Jiang Chen's attention. More specifically, the supreme lord intended everyone to think that the Order was aiming for the Ninesuns Sky Sect in a concerted strike. His real goal was Veluriyam Capital!

Protector King Scourcloud was apprehensive about the supreme lord's methods. His skillful and clever actions were essentially perfect.

It would be a lie to say that Scourcloud wasn't tense about this turn of events. Veluriyam Capital was sacred to him. He wouldn't allow others to trample on it, the Order of Wind and Cloud included!

Protector King Devourcloud seemed to notice his emotional turbulence. "Daoist Scourcloud, what are you thinking about?"

Scourcloud recovered himself. "Nothing," he smiled wryly. "I was simply thinking about matters within the Order. I lost track for a moment."

"Oh? What did you think about, fellow daoist? Can you share?" Protector King Devourcloud showed an inclination to pursue everything to the end.

"Idle thoughts not worth speaking about," Scourcloud retorted coolly.

Devourcloud cackled. "Daoist Scourcloud, many people in the order say that you are cold and aloof. According to them, you don't feel like you belong. But I think the supreme lord places a lot of expectation upon you. Clearly, this mission is a cut above the rest."

Scourcloud had no time or inclination to squabble with him. He was intent on finding out how to send a message to Veluriyam Capital instead.

A transmission via consciousness? That wasn't hard, but the supreme lord was more than attentive enough to notice right away. If that happened, his undercover identity would be done for.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1479: Protector King Scourcloud's Identity

Scourcloud was uninterested in Devourcloud's attempts to coax information out of him. This depressed the latter a little.

In fact, the entire Order was sensitive about the protector king's former identity. There were some internal rumors about it, but nobody could say anything for sure. The only prevailing sentiment was that this protector king was very mysterious indeed.

Devourcloud was mildly upset. His colleague wasn't giving him a lot of respect. They were both protector kings, weren't they? They were equal in status and position. Scourcloud should have been much more polite rather than distant.

"Daoist Scourcloud, you have a lot on your mind. Where do you think the supreme lord is taking us?" Not entirely satisfied, Devourcloud tried once more.

"The supreme lord's thoughts are beyond our knowledge. I'm not sure either. Listening to his orders is good enough." Scourcloud finally replied with a longish sentence.

Devourcloud sighed softly. "The supreme lord is unreadable indeed. I'm curious... I wonder if the supreme lord spoke true in his promise about empyrean opportunities?"

Scourcloud smiled, but didn't pick up the conversation.

Another order came from the back as they walked onwards. "Protector Kings, the Supreme Lord commands you to take to the southeast."

Devourcloud blinked. "Southeast again? This... we're heading toward..."

His tone and expression both froze. The objective was almost immediately obvious once he thought about it! "Daoist Scourcloud, we... we're going to Veluriyam Capital, huh?"

Veluriyam Capital was the only major city to the southeast.

"Whatever the supreme lord says," Scourcloud retorted coolly.

Devourcloud took a deep breath, a glimmer of keenness appearing in his eyes. Finally, he nodded. "Yes, as the supreme lord commands."

He'd actually been observing Scourcloud all this time. The latter had maintained undisturbed calmness throughout. Though Devourcloud was a bit angry, he also found reason enough to respect the man. The other protector king's composure was first-rate. Every protector king had his own personality, but most were impulsive and tooted their own horn far more than Protector King Scourcloud.

There was mutual competition between the eight protector kings for the sake of gaining the supreme lord's favor. More favor meant more of a chance at the empyrean opportunity promised.

This rivalry for approval meant that there was plenty of unseen strife between the protector kings. This was the main reason for Devourcloud's endless questioning along the way.

Scourcloud's composure was unrivaled, however. Was he really this calm or was he pretending? Devourcloud found the other man's indifference to power and glory incredible.

"Daoist Scourcloud..." he made to speak once more.

"Daoist Devourcloud, we are leading the vanguard. We have a lot of responsibility to prepare the way for the supreme lord. It would be very bad if we miss any scouting details due to idle conversation." Scourcloud evidently had no interest in chit chat.

Devourcloud laughed dryly despite the curt response he received. "Yes, yes, fellow daoist. You're absolutely right."

Scourcloud actually wanted to propose that they split up, but he was concerned about the possibility of suspicion from his colleague. The supreme lord was far more paranoid about such things as well. He could only restrain himself and slowly press on.

What a pity that the two brothers aren't in the vanguard. Otherwise, I could have sent them to scout ahead and deliver a message. Protector King Scourcloud was bothered and irritated.

He was none other than Emperor Peerless who'd been waiting for Jiang Chen at Agarwood Valley's entrance.

The young man's trip had involved the emperor and the Jiao brothers waiting outside, disguised as wandering cultivators. Alas, Jiang Chen and company had lingered inside for a long time. Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers couldn't follow despite their worries.

While they tensely awaited his return, there had been a strange smell near Agarwood's entrance that'd put everyone waiting there to sleep. The supreme lord of the Order had brought a group of diehard loyalists from Myriad Abyss Island, capturing all of them in one fell swoop.

Because Emperor Peerless had once fallen victim to the Moon God Sect's Seven Emotions Poison, Jiang Chen had given the great emperor a little bit of his own blood essence way back when as part of the antidote.

The young man's blood had an antitoxin attribute from his golden cicada bloodline, allowing Emperor Peerless to stay conscious despite the poison. Initially, there had been a chance for the great emperor to flee. However, before he did so, he'd noticed the absurd strength of their captors.

Even if he had taken that chance, he would've had twenty percent success at most. Moreover, since the Jiao brothers had already been taken, he found it more prudent to pretend to be poisoned instead.

Thankfully, there had been no immediate probe into their identities before and during their trip back to the Order of the Wind and Cloud's headquarters.

While everyone was still unconscious, Emperor Peerless had been decisive enough to destroy his facial appearance utterly, disintegrating his former identity. Because he had refined the kunpeng blood Jiang Chen had given him, his abilities concerning that bloodline had been gradually strengthening all the while.

This gave him the necessary preconditions to hide his former martial style and make his identity undetectable.

When the Order began to investigate their identities in more detail, he styled himself as the Wandering Kunpeng Master. No one in the wandering cultivator world had heard of that name.

Emperor Everviolet hadn't managed to provide much of a clue either. Because of Emperor Peerless's unrecognizable face and strange aura provided by his kunpeng blood, the other great emperor wasn't able to figure anything out. Though the two emperors had fought many times in the past, Everviolet had experienced only the original Peerless, rather than the one enhanced by kunpeng blood.

Because of the lack of flaws in Peerless' disguise, Everviolet had never even considered his real identity as the remotest of possibilities. Using his new identity as the Wandering Kunpeng Master, Peerless had leveraged his bloodline and martial strength to become one of the eight protector kings.

As for the Jiao brothers, they'd received hints from Emperor Peerless after awakening to hide their strengths. As a result, the Order only knew them as emperor realm experts.

Because of the number of prisoners they had taken and the relative normality of the brothers, they had only been able to become Earthly Fiends – three levels below the supreme lord. Not many people paid attention to individuals at that rank.

All three were able to survive uneventfully, with no one the wiser about the true relationship between the three. Nevertheless, Emperor Peerless and the Jiao brothers had taken the Exultation Pill as well. Because of this layer of insurance, the supreme lord was unafraid of trickery or betrayal from anyone.

At the bottom of his heart, the seventh master treated the human domain with derision. He felt that everyone who lived here was disgraceful and cowardly. There was the stick of the Exultation Pill and the carrot of the empyrean opportunity, wasn't there? There was no way anyone could possibly be disloyal given these two incentives. Therefore, he'd never seriously considered the likelihood of anyone betraying him.

The only reason he was exercising caution this time was because of how important the offensive on Veluriyam was.

After realizing the supreme lord's conspiracy, Peerless was very anxious. Though they were very distant from Veluriyam Capital presently, Jiang Chen wouldn't make it back to the city in time after being pulled to Ninesuns territory.

Moreover, doing so carried the possibility of being ambushed in itself.

No, I must think of a way to deliver a message to the city. They need time to prepare! Since first meeting Jiang Chen, Emperor Peerless had formed a deep friendship with the youth. Veluriyam Capital was where he felt he belonged. Plus, his dao partner Madame Yun was still in the city.

He had more than enough reason to protect it with his life, both professional and personal.

Emperor Peerless was someone who cared a lot about relationships. Though he hadn't known the Jiao brothers as a wandering cultivator, they were colleagues and peers under the same Sacred Peafowl Mountain banner. Emperor Peerless couldn't just leave them to rot.

This desire to take care of his peers and investigate the mysterious individuals had kept him from leaving when he could. Still, his attention to detail hadn't helped him find out the supreme lord's identity and origins yet.

The lack of a way to send a message to Veluriyam made him suspect that Devourcloud's incessant questions had been for the sake of watching his behavior. He could very well be planted by the supreme lord.

Peerless had no intention of revealing any flaws in his disguise right now.

The army neared Veluriyam Capital with the passage of time. It finally arrived within the city's demesne one day, which meant that the walls were within another day's travel. Thankfully, the supreme lord ordered a rest and break.

"Seventh Master, why not press the attack? We're already very close, aren't we?" Elder Peng asked.

"We're not in a hurry. I'm waiting for news from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. When it is verified that Jiang Chen is indeed over there, I will give the order to besiege the city!" The supreme lord had a specific plan in mind.

He knew well that Jiang Chen's presence gave Veluriyam Capital a spine. It would be much more difficult to take the city then. Without its young lord, a leaderless city was liable to fall into chaos. There was no way it would stand against his attacks.

Elder Peng nodded. "Very wise, Seventh Master. That kid is a pillar of the city; Veluriyam Capital is nothing without him."

They weren't wary of Jiang Chen's cultivation level, but of his effect on Veluriyam Capital as a whole. Furthermore, the eight stone golem brothers and the Vermilion Bird were very dangerous as well. Though they weren't scared, the eight stone golem brothers were clearly tough opponents. It was better to avoid them if possible!

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

Chapter 1480: Utmost Urgency

Currently, Jiang Chen was indeed on his way to the Ninesuns Sky Sect. The information he'd been given was nebulous as to the Order of Wind and Cloud's intentions, but he still had to try to counteract them as best he could.

According to his analysis, there was clearly a bigger force over at Ninesuns. It seemed reasonable enough to assume that there was a full-out offensive planned there. As for the Celestial Cicada Court, Jiang Chen had sent Emperor Wellspring, the Skysword Sect's Han Qianzhan, and company there to defend it.

Aside from that, he had left half of his troops as well as the Vermilion Bird back at Veluriyam Capital. Four of the eight stone golem brothers were stationed there as well to assist the bird in defense.

Jiang Chen himself led the alliance's forces upon the path to the Ninesuns Sky Sect. He was ready for a decisive battle in their territory.

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As part of the vanguard, Devourcloud was a bit anxious. "What is the supreme lord waiting for? If we're going to attack Veluriyam Capital, we should just go for it. Hanging around aimlessly is burning a hole in my chest."

Though he couldn't show it on his face, Emperor Peerless was even more anxious than he. Suddenly, the emperor's ears moved. His consciousness detected something familiar. Judging by his reaction, Devourcloud had picked up something as well.

With a flash of movement, Peerless shot outward, grabbing towards the earth. A single motion was enough to retrieve what he was looking for.

It was a golden rat.

A Goldbiter Rat, to be precise!

The emperor was no stranger to these rats in particular. He was quite happy to see one around here as expected. Devourcloud strode over as well, curious at the commotion.

Truthfully, Emperor Peerless had had an idea when he sensed the rat's aura at the outset. He took the initiative after perceiving that Devourcloud had also noticed the beast. If the other man were to have captured the rat, it would be dead by now.

"Haha, my luck's not bad today. I caught a spirit creature." Emperor Peerless waved the rat about nonchalantly before putting it in his sleeves.

Devourcloud laughed. "What a dumb beast, running into our sights like that. What do you plan on doing with it?"

"Doing with it?" Emperor Peerless played dumb. "What do you mean? I've been a bit bored in the Unbounded Mid Region. A spirit creature should spice up my life a little. Daoist Devourcloud, you're not planning on fighting over it with me, are you?" The emperor's tone was half-joking.

Devourcloud was verbally backed into a corner. "Ah, no, you got it first," he smiled embarrassedly. "How could I take your prize from you? Still, we're in Veluriyam territory now. We must be wary about whether they were sent by Veluriyam Capital."

"Haha, it doesn't matter even if they are. Now that I have it, it only has one choice: become my contracted beast, or else!" Emperor Peerless said forcefully.

Devourcloud had nothing else to say. His investigations yielded no further movements from the surroundings.

Both men went back to their camps. Sitting down cross-legged, Emperor Peerless took out the rat and proceeded to play with it.

Devourcloud shook his head to himself. Emperor Peerless looked like he was actually making the spirit beast as his own. "Daoist Scourcloud sure has a lot of free time on his hands. That's a pretty average spirit beast on all counts. What's the point of taking it as a contracted beast?" Clearly, Devourcloud didn't hold the emperor's actions in high regard.

Emperor Peerless, on the other hand, had just begun communication with his consciousness. "Little rat, I know you're a Goldbiter Rat. Your leader is Old Gold. Remember carefully that I'm Mo Wushuang, young lord Jiang Chen's sworn brother. Right now, the supreme lord of the Order of Wind and Cloud is preparing to attack Veluriyam Capital. You have to get the news back to the city and the young lord. Otherwise, the city will be in grave danger!

"Don't fret, I'll pretend to take you as my contracted beast. If you have friends nearby, tell them immediately and then come back to me. They will suspect something is afoot if you just leave outright."

Emperor Peerless was very attentive to detail. He knew that if he let the rat go now, Devourcloud would assuredly inform others of his irregular behavior. There would then be unnecessary attention and suspicion on him.

As one of the rats designated for scouting duty, this rat in particular was quite clever and keen. It immediately expressed that it did in fact have companions nearby.

Emperor Peerless remained impassive. He secretly let the rat go when Devourcloud wasn't paying attention. Every second was precious right now. A small differential in time potentially meant the difference between life and death.

The rat was very smart. It knew to be even more cautious in the face of danger. In no time at all, it had informed its nearby peers of the looming danger. The other rats passed the message onto their king.

The rat king panicked when it heard what was currently transpiring. The Goldbiter Rats had remained in Veluriyam Capital to safeguard it. It immediately contacted the Vermilion Bird.

As they were both members of ancient bloodlines in a sense, this made communication easier. After getting wind of this, the bird's first idea was to contact Jiang Chen.

Because Veluriyam Capital was very far away from the Ninesuns Sky Sect, a remote messaging ability was required to send the message as quickly as possible.

This kind of ability was very difficult to use and control. The Vermilion Bird knew about it and was capable of using abilities of that kind, but it had insufficient vitality to do so. Instead, one of the stone golem brothers was delegated the execution.

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Faraway at the Ninesuns Sky Sect, Jiang Chen was still painstakingly poring over the battle plans with the Order of Wind and Cloud. Near him, Big Stone's consciousness twitched. His expression moved with the thoughts in his mind.

"Savior, things aren't good!"

“What isn’t?” Jiang Chen raised an eyebrow.

“I just got Third Stone’s message. He says the Goldbiter Rats have found Emperor Peerless. The emperor told them the Order’s main force is already at Veluriyam. They can attack any time! Ninesuns and Cicada Court are both tricks. The Order wants Veluriyam Capital for real!”

Big Stone’s words sounded in Jiang Chen’s ears like a thunderclap. He was stunned and stupefied. It took a few moments for him to recover himself. “Anything else?” the young man asked.

“No, that’s it.” Big Stone was quite honest.

“Emperor Peerless?” Jiang Chen muttered to himself. “Old Brother Mo’s disappeared for four years... so he was at the Order of Wind and Cloud during this time?”

He’d implicitly trusted that both Emperors Peerless and Peafowl were too fortunate to have died so casually. He was overjoyed to hear news of the former, though that was swiftly accompanied by doubt. Why had Emperor Peerless made contact right now, of all the possible timing?

However, he quickly pushed that out of mind. The news was unlikely to be false. The Goldbiter Rats were no stranger to the emperor. There was no way a fake’s aura would fool them.

Given that the rats found the man trustworthy, Emperor Peerless was probably the real deal.

The message was most likely out of extended inconvenience. It was the soonest Emperor Peerless was able to get the message out.

Jiang Chen stood up suddenly at this conclusion, his eyes filled with determination.

“Old Brother Mo, it doesn’t matter why you’re sending me the message right now. You wouldn’t lie to me. It seems that I’ve underestimated the Order. I thought it was a simple kind of misdirection, but the deception is double-layered. The real goal is my Veluriyam Capital, huh?” Jiang Chen drew a sharp breath when he came to this point. He had to admit that the supreme lord was especially wily. The stratagem was more complicated than one might have expected, which meant it was difficult to defend against. Who would’ve thought that Veluriyam was his real goal?

Jiang Chen certainly hadn’t expected such a ravenous appetite.

“The Order’s army is at our borders, ready to attack at any time. If I go back the way we came at the fastest speed possible, the trip would still take one or two days. More concerning, I’d probably be walking straight into an ambush. If the Order is smart enough, they’ll set up an expert-fueled ambush on my return route. To return like this would only leave me unprepared!”

Now that Jiang Chen knew of the Order’s conspiracy, he had to peruse what the enemy’s future plans were as well. He himself was scared by the possibilities.

If things proceeded as they currently were, wouldn’t going back be falling right into his opponent’s trap?

“No, I can’t lead the army back without alerting the Order’s spies. It would be trivial for them to lay an ambush then.”

Jiang Chen knew that speed and time were both a problem if he were to lead the alliance's army back. The biggest problem of all was the potential ambushes lying in wait for them.

After plenty of consideration, he settled on sending the army onward to the Ninesuns Sky Sect. There was no reason for them to delay.

He would split off from the group with the four stone golem brothers, his spacetime seal allowing him to instantly return. Only the spacetime seal could send him back to the city in a flash!

Because the stone golem brothers were inhuman, they could separate their bodies and consciousnesses with a secret method and thereby be brought along.

The Veluriyam Pagoda didn't allow illegal entry, but inanimate stone golems weren't banned.

Back in Agarwood Valley, Jiang Chen had studied the necessary secret method in the Primosanct Sect's sacred place. It was quite viable for him to make use of it now! There was minimal effect if the duration of separation was short.