

Three Realms 1581

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

Chapter 1581: The Selection Concludes

Everyone was stunned by the sudden change taking place before them. Not by the dragon image alone, nor by the amazing duel between the two images, but rather the vicious counterattack the Jiang kid managed to mount in the face of adversity.

How much more was he hiding?

It was plain to see that he'd intentionally allowed Su Hong to strike the first blow.

In a martial bout, the person to make the first attack gained a tremendous advantage that wasn't necessarily immediately obvious. Taking the initiative was extremely valuable.

Su Hong had done so quite handily here. Because of this, everyone thought that he would win for sure. Jiang Chen's brilliant reprisal had stunned his entire audience!

Turning an attack back on its owner was one of the highest forms of the art. To crush an opponent with his own favorite move – a maneuver like that was fierce and powerful indeed.

A force hammered into Su Hong's chest with the shattering of the giant eagle image. He tasted blood in his mouth, barely managing to keep everything down. He had imbued a part of his own blood essence into the image, the same way that Jiang Chen had used his bloodline to activate the true dragon image.

But Jiang Chen was clearly far more practiced in its usage. He had extremely fine control over the details.

Su Hong on the other hand, didn't have this luxury. It cost him quite a bit more blood essence to use and maintain this art. Accordingly, this increased the backlash on himself when the image was damaged.

His handsome face changed color several times before he calmed the blood welling up within his body. The structure of qi within him had been on the verge of collapse.

His proud physique instinctively flew back a few dozen steps to maintain sufficient distance from Jiang Chen. He was concerned about a follow-up.

Jiang Chen smiled coolly, his eyes as calm as still water. "I have a lot of ways to defeat you. I don't need to take advantage of a situation."

Su Hong was furious and struggled to master his emotions.

"Don't hold yourself back like that. If you don't want the injury to hurt you in the future, you better spit out that mouthful of blood." Jiang Chen was almost cheerful. His words were the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Su Hong could no longer suppress the blood welling up from his stomach. Crimson liquid spewed out from his mouth. His face paled instantly.

Jiang Chen was the image of a gentleman and didn't press his attack. He wasn't a cold-blooded killer, nor was he boorish enough to demand the blood of every man who stood in his way.

Truthfully, Su Hong had little hope of winning at this point. Though he wasn't at the end of his tether, it was better for him to concede on the spot.

He attempted to gather strength and draw on his inner qi several times over without success. He hadn't sustained a crippling injury, but he was far from being in peak condition.

The divine eagle image he had unleashed at the height of his strength had failed to defeat his opponent. For the first time in his life, Su Hong doubted his own strength. Was his opponent truly indomitable?

Obviously, Su Hong had other cards up his sleeve. However, none were particularly better than his eagle image. The fact that he could no longer bring all of his resources to bear meant that his subsequent attacks would be weaker too.

The ease that his opponent had displayed was very telling; he hadn't marshaled close to a hundred percent of his strength. Su Hong felt strangely bleak inside. Powerlessness and sorrow welled up in his heart. It was all but confirmed that he couldn't beat this opponent.

This conclusion was born out of knowledge about both himself and the other. His opponent couldn't even be bothered to follow up when Su Hong had been at an obvious disadvantage! If he were to continue the fight, he would surely be greeted by another slew of different attacks.

To put it bluntly, his opponent didn't consider him anything close to a threat. Otherwise, a tempest of attacks would've rained down the moment his image was broken. He'd be laid out cold on the stage in one fell swoop.

Su Hong's last shred of fighting spirit disintegrated. He wasn't the sort to give up easily, but he wasn't a blind fool. The understanding that the fight was over elicited a sigh.

"Forget it. No matter how good I am, there is always someone better. Your strength is a cut above us all. I've lost here. May I be so bold as to ask the name of who's defeated me?"

"Jiang Huang." This meaning behind the pseudonym was obvious: it was related to Huang'er.

"Jiang Huang, Jiang Huang!" Su Hong muttered this a few times to himself, then smiled dismally. "I suppose I've been taught a lesson in this loss. I have nothing else to do here and no face left to stay. So long!"

He raised a cupped fist salute, preparing to depart.

"Hold!" A voice brimming with authority came from the air. In the next moment, a figure emerged to land before the arena.

The entire audience was moved at the sight. "City Lord," they acknowledged respectfully.

It was no other than the lord of Sin City, Xie Wushang. Appreciation was written all over the man's face as he looked between Su Hong and Jiang Chen.

"You are both young geniuses, the kind that Sin City has desperate need for. Su Hong, despite your loss to Jiang Huang, you are assuredly top three among all the geniuses who participated in the selection. I've decided to make an exception for you. Are you willing to stay?"

Xie Wushang was one of the biggest players in Winterdraw Island. A metaphorical stomp from him would cause the island to tremble thrice.

Su Hong was flattered that such a personage was personally asking him to stay. His pride didn't prevent him from feeling shocked by the flattery of such a gesture. Though he was a genius, he needed a backer and a patron in the end. Sin City was clearly the best faction for that role, and Xie Wushang one of the most powerful existences in Su Hong's imagination.

The city lord's wise and charismatic eyes moved him. "This junior is willing to follow you, City Lord."

Xie Wushang roared with laughter. "Good, good, good! Today's selection has yielded many geniuses – a stupendous occasion for Sin City indeed. All of you will be given titles as my dignitaries, with well-paid salaries. The other geniuses making it to the elite round are eligible to become my executives, with one pay grade down. And the geniuses of the qualifiers, yet another grade down from that. Are all of you willing?"

The city lord's speech brought great honor to all the candidates. Some were originally unwilling, but the lord's charisma converted them. "We are, we are!" they shouted uniformly. "We are willing to serve you, city lord!"

Jiang Chen felt the fervor in the air. The city lord's poise made him thoughtful. A charismatic leader in the world of martial dao had a lot more pull than one would expect. The enthusiasm of these people was quite telling. It was likely that they would all eventually become Xie Wushang's diehard supporters.

"Jiang Huang." Xie Wushang's wise gaze focused on Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen didn't share in the same ardor, nor was he particularly thrilled about his success. Still, he offered a cupped fist salute. "Jiang Huang greets the city lord."

Xie Wushang chuckled. "I've seen a lot of geniuses, but someone like you is very hard to find. I predicted you would be the biggest prize in the selection this time, and it turns out my judgment was correct."

"You praise me overmuch, sir. Some luck was certainly involved in my victory against Brother Su."

Xie Wushang waved. "Alright. It's good for young people to have a bit of edge. No need to be cautious about everything, boy! You should be appropriately proud of your accomplishments. You are stronger than Su Hong, and there's no need for me to exaggerate about that. But there's also no need to despair, Su Hong. Opportunities available in the world of martial dao are different for everyone. You're weaker than him right now, but you may yet have a chance in the future to surpass him. In our world, we never know how things turn out until the very end."

"I understand, sir." Su Hong's mentality had recovered from his defeat.

Jiang Chen didn't think much of it. Whether Xie Wushang was merely comforting Su Hong or actually thought that, none of it mattered to him.

Next came the awards ceremony. The nine people granted dignitary status were overjoyed. Jiang Chen had to feign the same.

After the ceremony was complete, Xie Wushang had a few more words. "From now on, you belong to Sin City as men under my command. You represent the city in your travels. In Winterdraw, you no longer have to pay attention to anyone but the wardens. Do you understand?"

This was the confidence Sin City had in itself – and Xie Wushang, in himself.

"Yes, sir!"

"There are many things you must familiarize yourselves with. You are newcomers to the city lord's manor. You should stay here for the next few months, so that you may integrate more easily for the future. If you would like leave, you must ask for it from me alone. Let me make this clear ahead of time: as a member of my faction, you must follow the rules we have here. Brazenness, individualism, and impulsiveness are not tolerated here." Xie Wushang wasn't some kind of overly benevolent ruler.

In a place as filled with malice as this, how could any local ruler man be anything be a simple nice guy?

Still, his words passed through Jiang Chen's head from one ear through the other. There was no need for him to break the rules ordinarily, but he wasn't going to shy away from breaking them when necessary for his departure.

Xie Wushang followed up the warning with a few more words of encouragement before he dismissed them to their own business.

Immediately afterwards, he immediately sent a messenger to the chief warden with a letter. In it, he reported that the selection in Sin City had just concluded. Many young talents had been chosen, perhaps more excellent ones than usual.

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

Chapter 1582: Collecting Information

The chief warden's headquarters was located in the most mysterious part of Winterdraw. There were many formations and restrictions around it, forbidding any strangers from entering.

Anyone who approached would trigger all the traps. Even if they were fortunate enough to evade one, the same wouldn't be true for the ensuing ones.

Moreover, the formations were reinforced by many guards that the chief warden had personally trained. They were masters of concealment, assassination, and assault. Unless one had an overwhelming advantage in strength, it was suicide to venture in unprepared.

The chief warden's men and many subordinates were all gathered within the headquarter's grand hall, awaiting their leader's orders.

The chief himself wasn't a large man, but his eyes were uncommonly sharp. A single look from him seemed it could flay open a man's soul; it was virtually impossible to hide any thoughts from him.

Behind the chief were four deathsworn. They were evidently his personal guard. They gave off a wraithlike impression, even though they were standing still. His subordinates sat to the chief warden's sides, separated neatly down the middle.

“Shen Zhi, you’re responsible for liaising with the imperial family. Is there anything specific from them? When will the honored guests descend upon the Rejuvenation Isles? When will they come to Winterdraw?”

The chief warden’s eyes lay on an advisor to the left. He was an important subordinate, named Shen Zhi.

The advisor wore a wispy beard and a rather clean face. He quite looked the part of a strategist.

“Chief Warden, the imperial family’s latest news is that the honored guests have already started arriving in the Rejuvenation Isles. Our own royalty will welcome them with a banquet, but there’s no accurate word yet as to when specifically they’re coming. The honored guests’ itineraries can’t be swayed even by the imperial family. It’s entirely up to them.”

Zhen Shi then added something extra. “However, the imperial family did give a concrete answer that the guests will absolutely visit Winterdraw. It seems they have a great deal of interest in the island, a fact that the imperial family have taken note of. I hope that Winterdraw will sufficiently satisfy our guests’ appetites.”

The chief warden became serious. “I’m sure everyone has heard that this reception means a great deal for the entirety of the Rejuvenation Isles. In Myriad Abyss Island, we’ve never been considered a remotely major player. Second to third-rate at the best of times.

“This time, the imperial family has gone to great pains and spent many favors to invite aristocratic scions of the major factions. If we can satisfy them, only then will they be able to put a good word in for the Isles. Perhaps then the Rejuvenation Isles may slowly creep into Myriad Abyss’s mainstream! Perhaps then we will be accepted!”

All of the assembled nodded.

It was obvious that everyone knew the difficulty of inviting the guests. This was an opportunity for Winterdraw as well. If they could handle the reception well, the imperial family would richly reward everyone involved.

“No need to keep be so on edge. Everything is going according to plan. As long as we execute according to what we’ve planned, nothing will go wrong.” The chief warden glanced toward a man on the right. “Zong Han, how are the factions progressing?”

Zong Han was a middle-aged cultivator. His eyes were keen, honed by the finesse of experience.

He raised a cupped fist salute at the chief warden’s question. “Sir, all the factions are working hard to select geniuses according to your command. I’ve sent messengers to remind them a couple times. They won’t dare slack on the job. According to the return messages, the factions really are doing all they can.”

The chief warden nodded with some satisfaction. “These guys need a different kind of persuasion.”

There was suddenly news from outside the door.

Zong Hang picked up one of the reports, unfurling it and exclaiming with joy, “Chief warden, sir! Sin City has finished the selection with pretty amazing results, several superb geniuses among them. There are some excellent seeds brimming with the hint of empyrean aura and strength despite being great emperors. Rare! Very rare! Here is the more detailed report.”

The chief warden took it with a smile, perusing it in great detail. "Very good, very good. Xie Wushang is very capable. He can do an amazingly good job if he puts his mind to it."

The chief warden was noticeably very pleased.

"Have Xie Wushang keep a close eye on those geniuses. Don't allow them to leave Sin City for the next while. They should be prepared to receive a summons at any moment."

Zong Han smiled. "I've already hinted to him about this kind of conclusion. Xie Wushang won't be ignorant about the issue."

"Indeed. He's done well enough. Have Nefarious Vale and Terminus Place finished their selections as well?" the chief warden inquired coolly.

"We sent people to urge them to pick up the pace last time. Things should be done in a few more days.

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After getting Sin City's dignitary medallion, Jiang Chen found the biggest benefit to be free rein in the city lord's residence. Aside from the most secure parts, everywhere else was open to him.

He'd had no intention of venturing into the most core parts in the first place. Rather than going out, he was entirely devoted to the residence's library.

Though Winterdraw was a barbaric place, it wasn't entirely devoid of civilization. Large factions like Sin City especially, had their own libraries.

Sin City's library was very large and well-stocked, and Jiang Chen perfectly at home in such an environment. After entering the city lord's residence, he spent almost the entirety of his time in the library.

He had little interest in martial dao books. Instead, he was interested in any books that was even tangentially related to the island. Its history, culture, rumors, and secrets... all these were of far more import to him.

After several days' time spent on these things, he had collected an extremely valuable trove of information. He now possessed a mental map of the island and understood its general structure.

"Tsk, tsk. Winterdraw occupies a lot of space. It's a small island, but it has so many dangers! The restrictions on the island's shores aside, it is quite challenging to make it from the heart of the island to the outskirts. I wonder how many dangers there are along the way."

The more he understood about the island, the more Jiang Chen had to remark about it.

"I must understand Winterdraw better if I am to leave. If I blunder about aimlessly, perhaps I'll die in a painful way one day soon.

"There are three important factions on Winterdraw, as well as an abundance of second and third-rate factions. However, they're all pawns in the end. The chief warden and the ones from the Rejuvenation Isles are the real ones in charge of the fate of the island.

“Winterdraw has five major danger zones. Hmm... as long as I want to get the outer parts, I’ll have to pass through one of them. And even if I do reach the outskirts, many formations and restrictions exist to alert the chief warden and his cronies. Plus, some other formations will detonate themselves in the process. It seems to be a very tough course to chart.

“And then we’d need special flying treasures or boats designed to get over water. There are even more beasts hidden in the water. To get out by swimming is to basically to commit suicide.”

Given the circumstances on the island, it was exceedingly difficult to leave. He summed up three major requirements:

One, successfully braving at least one of the five danger zones to reach the border;

Two, breaking through the formation restriction around the border; and

Three, possessing a treasure that could fly through spatial turbulence or an extraordinary boat specifically for marine travel. Swimming wasn’t really an option because of the manifold lethal beasts in the water.

A few dozen miles would be manageable if one swam, but the waters were dangerous for thousands of miles on end. There were no obstacles if one flew, but the spatial turbulence introduced a whole new variable into the equation. It would take more than three days to pass through a fraction of these difficult conditions.

Though an incredibly hard prospect, Jiang Chen didn’t give up. At least things were much better than before and he knew a bit about the island.

“According to records, there’ve been a few escapees from Winterdraw. Though the men who have escaped can be counted on one hand, they were still successful. If there were a lucky few earlier, why can’t I be the next one?”

The records contained many secrets of Winterdraw. In fact, they recorded the revolutions and riots that had occurred. Because those imprisoned on the island had lost their freedom and all hope, cultivators here had majorly rioted several times in the past.

But every riot had failed in the end. The chief warden had harshly quashed every single one. Each riot led to the deaths of millions of cultivators. The most serious occasion saw the slaughter of a full six million.

It was evident from this that the chief warden could tolerate all malice and sin here except rebellion and escape. Any who wished to rebel against the wardens were met with crushing reprisal and incredible retaliation.

Jiang Chen mulled things over to himself. He still decided that he needed to try his best at fleeing the island, no matter how much abuse he would potentially receive. He didn’t have too much time to waste here on Winterdraw. Neither Huang’er nor Veluriyam Capital could afford it!

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

Chapter 1583: The Blackraith Mountains

One day during Jiang Chen's perusal in the library, he received a summons from the city lord himself. All the geniuses who'd been selected were called together.

The selection had yielded three hundred odd people through the qualifiers and the elite round. Of those, two hundred or so were staying at the city lord manor. Jiang Chen and Su Hong were some of the finest among their ranks.

Xie Wushang personally received them all. A broad smile was drawn over his face. "My friends, I know you've been familiarizing yourself with the manor over the past few days. That's why I didn't call you together to speak with you. Today, I have an important piece of news that you should know about!"

Everyone perked their ears in curiosity.

Xie Wushang's expression didn't seem to indicate anything bad, Jiang Chen noted.

"I've just received good news from the chief warden. One of the dangerous zones in Winterdraw will be opened to us for use as a trial. This is an opportunity to distinguish yourself. If you're lucky to be chosen by the chief, then congratulations: you'll have advanced from prisoners to becoming his deathsworn. You may not think that that's a big difference, but following the chief warden means you'll receive freedom. Freedom, and the ability to leave Winterdraw!"

All cultivators on Winterdraw, young and old, shared the same dream. Freedom was the word that hung in their collective hearts.

Deep down, even someone as prominent as Xie Wushang desired freedom. No matter how powerful and important they were on Winterdraw, the prospect of being the master of one's own destiny was more tantalizing still.

If anyone was offered to exchange their authority on the island with personal freedom, none of the factions' leaders would hesitate for a moment.

Perhaps authority would bring them short-term happiness, but perpetual imprisonment quickly caused that to lose its flavor. The chief was a towering presence that always loomed over them.

Even Jiang Chen was moved when by what Xie Wushang said.

Why was the chief so attentive to all of the proceedings? Was the selection possibly related to him? So, were the Rejuvenation Isles were going to pick deathsworn from Winterdraw again?

He found the prospect mildly interesting. If he could gain the freedom to leave the island alive, he wouldn't mind displaying his true strength. After all, leaving was his foremost priority. However, he didn't display his eagerness despite that. Quietly listening to Xie Wushang's speech in order to gather more information was a wiser course of action.

Unfortunately, the city lord didn't reveal anything further.

"In the last selection, some of you may feel that you didn't get to show off everything you can do. You've got another shot at it. Remember, the chief has very high standards. You may not be able to win his favor as easily as you did mine. Everything will depend on what you can do. You weren't in control of your destinies before, but you have a golden opportunity now. It's up to you to take hold of it!"

Xie Wushang didn't make a particular effort at stoking the geniuses' emotions. Nonetheless, they became quite enthusiastic.

"Go rest and prepare. Make sure to gather here on time tomorrow. I'll personally lead you into the Blackwraith Mountains."

The Blackwraith Mountains? Surprise jolted Jiang Chen. He hadn't studied in vain for the past couple of days. He remembered clearly that those mountains composed one of the five most dangerous areas on Winterdraw.

Of its peers, it was the largest and most mysterious. Even the island's strongest factions didn't dare lightly venture into its core. Why was the trial located in the Blackwraith Mountains?

Still, the chief had to have his reasons for making such arrangements. It wasn't his place to question things.

"You are dismissed. Remember to be on time tomorrow. Any absent tomorrow will be treated as traitors."

Though Jiang Chen hadn't planned on skipping, he was even more astonished at the warning. Wasn't this only a trial? Why was everything about it so serious?

He wasn't really acquainted with anyone here on the island, and thus had little to put in order in terms of affairs. In fact, he'd deliberately avoided making connections with anyone after joining the city lord's manor. He'd kept a healthy distance even from Commander Yong, unwilling to contact him more than absolutely necessary.

If he escaped one day, those closest to him would be affected by his departure. He didn't want to harm the innocent.

In the same vein, he'd refrained from going back to find Xing Hui and his daughter. They were casual acquaintances, and Jiang Chen had done a rather trivial thing in his eyes. There was no need to drag things out, or he would do more harm than good.

Thus, he didn't go anywhere that night. He remained in the manor, focused on cultivation and meditation.

Great emperor realm had opened a door to another world, which filled Jiang Chen with even more desire to gain strength. He was initial great emperor, not far off from mid rank. If there was an opportunity of some sort, advanced great emperor wasn't impossible.

Jiang Chen was very confident in the pace of his cultivation. The chain seal in his consciousness had been especially active lately and he'd gained a great deal from it. He felt that he was more than handling well both cultivation and battle. He had plenty of room to spare even against an empyrean expert. There was nothing worth panicking over; every possibility was under control.

But I can't relax cultivating even here. Myriad Abyss Island is many times stronger than the human domain. Winterdraw is a test, and many more daunting tasks are sure to ensue. Only through gradual improvement can I find success.

The thought compelled Jiang Chen to throw himself into serious cultivation once more.

The night passed. The morning of the next day, he woke up early and lightly prepared before heading to the gathering place. Quite a few of the other geniuses had arrived before him.

All were present within fifteen minutes. Xie Wushang was the last one to arrive. A throng of elites trailed behind him.

The gathered geniuses were extremely enthusiastic at the sight. The city lord must have received explicit orders from the chief about the importance of the event. The fact that the chief found the trial so important proved that it was very likely a chance at freedom.

Everyone's blood began to boil.

Jiang Chen warned himself internally to remain calm. There was no appropriate time to overheat his brain. So what if it was an opportunity? It was far better to treat it calmly. Only then could he react appropriately to sudden situations that arose.

"Attendance!" Xie Wushang called out.

The roll call began, and everyone named was present.

The city lord nodded approvingly. "Very good. As expected of chosen elites. You're certainly a punctual bunch. Well, then! Let's not waste any more words. Here's a chance at changing your destiny. Prepare yourselves! We depart!"

A wave of his hand heralded the beginning of the march. The city lord's elites and a large retinue of accompanying guards moved towards the Blackwraith Mountains.

The surprise on Jiang Chen's face was even more pronounced at the mobilization of almost the entire city lord manor.

Does the chief warden really place so much importance on this trial? Are many deathsworn going to be picked from the Rejuvenation Isles?

His perspective differed from the others'. In addition to natural optimism, he became mildly wary about the situation. His knowledge about Winterdraw so far had taught him that the purpose of the selection was far from benevolent. There would be a hefty price to pay for being chosen, and thus no reason to be overly happy about any of this.

Getting a chance for departure was a good thing, but he wasn't interested in becoming cannon fodder or a puppet. So what if he could leave if that was the end goal? As opposed to going somewhere else for some suicidal mission, it was better to stay on Winterdraw.

Some opportunism would be necessary here. If the deathsworn weren't subject to overly harsh conditions, he wouldn't mind making it into their ranks. But if they were going to be treated like puppets, Jiang Chen would never agree to that. That ran completely counter to his interests.

The Blackwraith Mountains were quite distant. The entourage took eight days to get to the foothills. From a distance, a blackish-grey mist enshrouded the peaks, and did so all year round. The sight was mysterious and otherworldly.

The mountain ranges stretched on for thousands of miles. Rumored to contain endless nightmares, it was ranked one of the most dangerous places on Winterdraw.

On a patch of flat ground outside a valley, Xie Wushang ordered his men to stop and make camp.

“It looks like we’re early.” The city lord glanced around, noting the conspicuous absence of the other factions.”

There was a strange shriek from the distance before he finished speaking. “Oldie Xie, Sin City isn’t much earlier than Nefarious Vale!” At the end of the voice was a roiling column of black clouds. A large swathe of cultivators jumped out one by one, landing on the ground.

There was approximately the same number on either side. The leader of the Vale party wore a ferocious appearance and a tumorous growth jutted out from his head. He was vicious-looking all around. It was none other than the lord of the Nefarious Vale!

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

Chapter 1584: Honored Guests Arrive

Nefarious Vale had brought just as many men as Sin City. Evidently, they considered the trial just as important. The lord of the Vale had come himself, bringing all his best experts. The commotion alone was incredible.

Terminus Place’s men arrived not long after as well.

The three major factions now accounted for, the second and third-rate factions of Winterdraw slowly poured in.

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At the chief warden’s headquarters, the chief and his subordinates stood at the side of a road in welcome. Everyone in attendance was very neatly dressed and somber.

The latest news from the Isles was that the imperial family had descended upon Winterdraw, honored guests from more important factions in tow. Moreover, they were all about to arrive very soon.

The chief found it hard to remain calm. This was a glowing moment of history for Winterdraw, probably more important than any before! Those who’d come in the past had been from the local imperial family at most. But this time, important guests from the Ten Divine Nations were descending!

Their own royals seemed the accessories in this situation.

“Look sharp and keep your wits about you. Remember, everything about this reception must be flawless!” The chief warden repeated for emphasis.

“Don’t worry, milord. We’ll do our best.”

The chief nodded. He suddenly raised an eyebrow and looked the distance. “They’re here. Look alive, everyone!” he warned in a low voice.

A storm of light erupted at the end of the horizon. Flying vehicles broke through the fabric of space like soaring arks, landing on a patch of space close by the warden headquarters.

The chief strode up hastily.

There were seven airboats in all. None were of tremendous size, but it was reasonable for one to hold a few dozen. Seven airboats made for several hundred passengers in all.

The two at the front and back opened first. A group of luxuriously dressed people disembarked from the front, their bearings imperious. These were the Rejuvenation Isles' imperial representatives.

The ones at the back were the elite guard of the imperial family, part of the security detail for the journey. The guardsmen were uniformly vigorous, strong, and empyrean realm. Some had especially unreadable cultivation levels, obvious from one look that they were nothing short of remarkable.

The imperial guard spread out in a very principled way as soon as they disembarked. They set up perimeter around the key avenues of access immediately.

Only when security was sufficiently shored up did the middle three airboats open. The local imperial representatives rushed up ingratiatingly, plainly highly concerned about the guests on these three arks.

When the vehicles opened, another group of ferocious guardsmen surged forward. The aura of these guards was colder and harsher than the first batch. It was immediately apparent that they were from a major faction. They surpassed the first group of guardsmen in both raw strength and bearing.

The guards clustered a group of well-dressed nobles with an air of superiority. Young, middle-aged, old – a rather large variety emerged from the airboats.

On the locals' side, a middle-aged man in the lead approached with a wide smile. "Everyone, this is Winterdraw Island. It is thankful to be graced with your presence."

The imperial representative almost wanted to lick these honored guests' toes. He was stooping to an incredibly abject depth of humility.

The chief and his subordinates stood deferentially on the outskirts. "Welcome, honored guests! I am the chief warden and these are my men. We are flattered by your presence."

The guests were probably from the same place, though they were also likely split further divided into a number of smaller factions. Their feigned intimacy couldn't obscure the hidden divisions between them. There was some mutual hostility, albeit rather light.

"Imperial Prince Huo, there's no need for so much courtesy. You already know why we've come. If everything is ready, then let us proceed according to plan." An old man at the guests' vanguard uttered a cool response.

The representative of the Isles' imperials was the prince who had just been named. "Everything is ready," he smiled compliantly. "However, why not take an opportunity to rest and have some refreshments first? Let Winterdraw treat you, however modest its means."

The chief warden came forward, smiling in rather the same way. "Yes. My headquarters has prepared all. We've done everything we can, and more than our best. The Blackwraith Mountains aren't far from here. A breather could do all of us some good, no?"

The guests conferred among themselves, then nodded in consensus. "Let us rest for today then, and set off tomorrow."

The hosting side was universally pleased. "Please do."

The chief warden headquarters' hospitality was very solid.

Though the guests came from lofty origins and overall quite picky, they were unable to find any fault with the chief warden's arrangements.

Still, they were clearly loath to give up all their haughtiness. Any thanks they expressed were faint, and they didn't make too much contact with the chief and his men. Their reaction to the banquet was similarly dispassionate. The superiority radiating from deep within was self-evident.

For Rejuvenation Isles' imperials, the honored guests were behaving in a completely reasonable manner. After the banquet ended, Imperial Prince Huo called the chief warden to his tent.

"Old Ding, is everything ready over at the Blackwraith Mountains?"

"Don't worry, Your Highness. Everything is prepared. My men tell me that all the factions have arrived."

The chief thumped his chest. "I have this much confidence in my command, at least. Here on Winterdraw, they wouldn't dare leave without my word even if they had to wait for a fortnight."

The imperial prince nodded approvingly. "Old Ding, you've worked very hard this time. The results you've yielded are very good. I will definitely ask His Majesty to reward you. But don't relax yet; the honored guests have just arrived. Only when they return totally satisfied does your mission end. You've a lot left to do still, Old Ding."

"Imperial Prince Huo," the chief warden replied seriously. "I've done everything in my power. Still, it seems that the guests are rather reticent. I can't read their attitudes. Because of that, I'm a bit concerned myself. Are they satisfied with everything here?"

The imperial prince smiled. "Don't worry. If they're not satisfied, they wouldn't attend your banquet in the first place. These honored guests are much more important than anyone in the Rejuvenation Isles. It is normal for them to be a bit more overbearing."

The chief warden nodded with some relief at that. "If I may ask, who..."

Imperial Prince Huo darkened. "Old Ding, you're usually a reliable sort. You shouldn't ask about things that you don't need to know. These guests are from one of the top factions. If they are happy and willing to back the Rejuvenation Isles, we will finally have a patron in the wider world!"

"I don't know anything, which is why I'm still quite troubled. Can these guests be from one of the Ten Divine Nations?"

The Ten Divine Nations were publicly agreed upon strongest first-rate factions in Myriad Abyss. They were the highest authorities in all the realm, equivalent to the Upper Eight Regions in the human domain.

“Since you’re so curious, I’ll enlighten you a little. These aristocrats are from Polylore Divine Nation’s most important noble families. Their houses control much of the true power in their nation.”

Polylore Divine Nation!

One of the Ten Divine Nations and definitely top five among its peers.

The chief warden braced himself at the mention of these people’s origins. A hint of wariness crept into his face.

It went without saying that Polylore was an existence that towered above the Rejuvenation Isles. The former’s willingness to back the latter would instantly propel the weaker party to prominence among its neighbors.

“Old Ding, you’re the only one to know these things. There’s no need for your subordinates to be privy to the same. Remember: as long as you’re successful in this, your future will hold limitless potential.”

“Understood.” The chief warden was a bit excited.

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Inside a large tent within the chief warden’s headquarters, Polylore’s aristocratic representatives gathered together. A white-haired old man sat in the most prominent position. Everyone else sat to either side of him, looking back with deference.

“Elder Tong, we’re all at Winterdraw now. Presiding over the situation must go to you,” the other representatives claimed in virtual unison.

“That’s right, Elder Tong. We asked you to come because of your character and seniority. Please give us a proper order of affairs. We will all defer to you.”

The old man smiled. “Winterdraw is a pretty interesting place. You wanted me to come to bear witness, yes? To ensure fairness. Shall I set a few rules then and make an itinerary?”

“As it should be. What would we do without those? There would be no point in coming here.”

“Exactly, exactly. You should be the one to decide all!” All the others in attendance awaited the old man’s opinion.

“I see. There are eight houses present here, with almost thirty young geniuses. All of them are pillars of your respective houses, yes? I will treat all of you equally. You have a tradition of competition, and we can make a spectacle of it this time. The Rejuvenation Isles has prepared a nice place for us. I hear the imperial family here wants to butter us up and has made many preparations to that end. The attention being paid here is obvious.”

“Heh, Elder Tong, aren’t these things being done willingly?”

“That’s true. The Isles want a favor from us. It’s only fair that some contributions are made from their end as well. The Rejuvenation Isles’ attitude has been more than satisfactory. If our experience on the trip is good, I see no harm in praising this place before our emperor.”

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1585: Polylore Divine Nation

A small smile crossed Elder Tong’s face. “Myriad Abyss Island is being stirred into chaos right now. There’s no need to lord our superiority over them too much. They’re already taking a very humble position. I advise all of you to apply a certain amount of courtesy in return.

“There’s no need to be frigid and take things for granted all the time. Though the Rejuvenation Isles may not say anything about it, they may be discouraged by our attitude. They may think that we from Polylore are hard to deal with. They’re already buttering us up, so it’s quite cold not to get a response otherwise.”

“Why do you say that, Elder Tong? Think about the difference between Polylore and the Isles! They feel honored to grovel before us. Are we supposed to respond with a smile and a kind look?”

“Yes, there’s no need to be excessive about it. There are countless smaller entities like the Rejuvenation Isles in Myriad Abyss. It’s too tiresome to treat all of them with niceness.”

These Polylore aristocrats were intrinsically proud. They felt that their nation’s position didn’t require giving unimportant factions much face. Wasn’t the diligence they were receiving a matter of fact?

Elder Tong sighed when he heard the tone of the responses. “I’m merely a judge that you’ve appointed. That was just advice, nothing more. I don’t intend to force you to do anything. That said, let’s talk a bit about the affairs of your houses instead.

“There are eight houses whose young geniuses are gathered here. I’m sure you’ve set the rules already, yes? Those older than thirty are barred, as are those who are not yet great emperors.”

“Yes. A genius who takes more than thirty years to attain great emperor isn’t really a top rate one.”

“Quite so. Thirty is a boundary line. Someone who can’t become a great emperor by then is no longer considered a house’s best.”

The eight houses had extremely high requirements. Great emperor before thirty?

The human domain’s great emperors would be furious if they heard this. Most needed a thousand years or more. In fact, those who took only a few centuries were considered remarkable geniuses in their own right.

Even for those who lived in the Rejuvenation Isles and on Winterdraw, great emperor was an endeavor that typically took a hundred years. Thus, Winterdraw’s selection had had a similar standard. Great emperor or more, but not empyrean or over a hundred.

The best geniuses on Winterdraw generally became great emperors between the ages of sixty to a hundred. And yet the eight houses had a standard that cut the minimum in half. A few decades’

difference didn't seem large on the surface, but was a tremendous gap to bridge at the beginning of one's life.

Elder Tong smiled faintly. "The information you provided has already given me a rough idea. There are twenty-four total participants, three from each house. Why not decide the ranking according to individual score?"

"How should the score be calculated?" someone asked.

"Why, by the fruits of one's labor, of course. Any questions?" The elder's eyes glittered as he looked at everyone.

There was some consideration from his rapt audience, then a flurry of nods. "Of course. The most basic method is also the most direct and appropriate. It's hardest to game the system this way."

"Then that's settled."

Elder Tong got up with a wave. "It's getting late. Go rest. Tomorrow, we make for the Blackwraith Mountains."

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The guests from Polylore gathered very early the next morning. Besides the two dozen geniuses about to be tried, there were elders and guards from the various houses as well. It was quite a sizable group.

Elder Tong traded a few quick words with Imperial Prince Huo, then turned to those of the eight houses. "Prepare yourselves. We leave immediately!"

The chief warden and his men personally in the lead, the expedition rolled out towards the Blackwraith Mountains. In four hours, a fleet of airboats landed in the mountain range's outskirts.

The men of the various Winterdraw factions had awaited the guests for a long time. They were shocked to see the vehicles descending from the sky, awed at the commotion.

Important personages had come.

Even the chief himself couldn't have commanded this kind of parade. A single airboat cost an unimaginable amount of wealth, so naturally he didn't use such a device. Their collective gazes considered the airboats with full respect.

The chief led his men forth first, walking at the head of the pack. The imperial family's guard and Polylore's honored guests followed behind them.

The faction leaders all walked up hurriedly. "Greetings to the chief warden and noble masters."

The chief warden nodded, significantly less proud than his normal self. "We've kept you waiting, everyone," he stated coolly. "However, the imperial family aren't the only ones here to watch your performance. There are other honored guests here as well. Even to the imperial family, their importance cannot be understated. You must perform to the best of your abilities. Don't lose face for the Rejuvenation Isles. Do you understand?"

“Yes, sir!” All of them were the very picture of respect. The chief was already someone they had to look up to, and the imperial family and honored guests only accentuated this.

The factions’ leaders were all extremely excited. The sheer scale of the trial and the value of its participants meant something important was taking place. Perhaps this really was a chance to shine?

The chief nodded. “Alright. Have your geniuses prepare themselves. When the forbidden grounds open, the trial will begin.”

“Yes, sir.” The leaders cupped their fists and returned to their respective camps.

“Everyone, I’ve just gotten notice that the imperial representatives are here,” announced Xie Wushuang. “They’re accompanied by honored guests of an even higher caliber, who will be observing the trial as well. This is a golden opportunity for you. I can’t promise anything, but I can imagine with my toes alone that this is a chance at greatness. If one of you displays incredible potential, you may be picked by one of the honored guests. Think of what kind of a change in your fates it would be then!”

Xie Wushuang’s words hyped up the selected geniuses.

Jiang Chen observed quietly to the side. He’d seen the airboats descend himself. The remarkability of those who’d come out of them was evident despite the distance. Their local imperial family was licking their chops to fawn over the visitors. Perhaps the honored guests were from the Ten Divine Nations?

While Jiang Chen was curious about where they’d come from, he didn’t delve too deeply into the subject. He was more interested in why they’d come.

In theory, guests from the Ten Divine Nations shouldn’t have come to a place for exiles like Winterdraw. There was no notable scenery here worthy of inspection.

Are these honored guests here simply out of boredom? He noticed that there was a mixture of young and old among those guests. The young ones looked even younger than him at first glance!

Some were only teenagers. The older ones were twenty-somethings.

Are these nobles from large factions, journeying with their faction’s young geniuses? Did they pass by the Rejuvenation Isles by chance? This was the only explanation Jiang Chen had.

Even from afar, he could sense that these so-called ‘honored guests’ were an arrogant bunch. They didn’t seem to care much about the people of the Rejuvenation Isles. The egotism within their bones seeped out without realization. The distance didn’t do much to dull the sensation.

Jiang Chen didn’t really care about the guests’ attitude though. Whether it was possible for him to leave through this trial was far more important.

For the time being, he was a tiny bit hopeful, and still perfectly calm, of course. Calmness was especially compulsory in this situation.

The chief warden came over, his advisors in tow.

“All geniuses attending the trial, prepare yourselves. The entrance to the forbidden grounds will be open soon. You are permitted to stay within sixteen hundred miles from the outside in. Trespassing past that is expressly forbidden. If you break this rule, you will certainly die.

“Remember, sixteen hundred miles. There will be clear markers and reminders about the boundary.”

The prohibition was stated twice for extra emphasis.

Everyone quietly memorized this fact. It didn't sound like a lot, but it was much more expansive in practice. There could be uncountable dangers in a single square mile in the vast mountains, and a stretch of sixteen hundred... well, it was large enough to consume a hundred thousand men, much less one or two thousand.

“Representatives, come forth with your lists of participants.”

Sin City had about two hundred in this game. As the city lord's closest attendants, Jiang Chen and company were undoubtedly the most elite. The same number came from Nefarious Vale and Terminus Place as well.

Added together, the three factions numbered some seven hundred. The second-rate factions had about the same, after all their men were added up.

The list of names was quite weighty. The elites in it had been undoubtedly hand-picked by the respective leaders. Jiang Chen's name was among those elites, in the form of 'Jiang Huang'.

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

Chapter 1586: A Stunning Secre

The chief warden nodded after spending a moment on the list. “Prepare yourselves,” he waved. “The formation opens very soon!”

A group of formation masters under the chief's command started unlocking the formation on the outskirts of the Blackwraith Mountains, heralding the inception of the trial.

“The Blackwraith Mountains have been sealed off for three hundred years. No doubt countless beasts and evil presences have cropped up during that time. You have two goals for this trial: one, survival, and two, harvest. You have half a month ahead of you. Those that fail to last that long are considered to have failed. Only those who manage to persist the entire term are eligible for ranking.

“We will tabulate the top hundred geniuses with precise scores. You will be ranked according to what you harvest. Remember, everything within the Blackwraith Mountains carries its own unique mark. Don't bother trying to pretend with your own belongings. Any would-be cheaters will have their scores summarily canceled!”

The rules governing the trial were quite simple and in fact, crude.

Jiang Chen was a bit surprised. He expected something more complicated, with a intricate and detailed ruleset. These particular rules were so simple and had been announced so abruptly. What was up with all this?

This contest was obviously an important one. The sheer number of important players made that more than clear. And yet, shouldn't the rules have been set far ahead of time if that were the case? Why were they being announced only now?

Though Jiang Chen didn't understand this, the perplexity didn't cause him to lose himself. He remained his cool in the middle of the crowd.

The formation masters quickly unlocked the restriction. Jets of black radiance soared into the clouds like spirits out of hell. It was an altogether fearsome sight.

The entrance stabilized after a fit of violent shaking.

"Now that the entrance is open, come collect your numbers and enter in order!" The chief warden gave the command that signified the beginning of the trial.

Jiang Chen and his fellow elites had numbers that were comparatively lower – and thus closer to the front. After receiving '17', he disappeared into the entry after his compatriots.

His heart skipped a beat when he did so. There was a disturbance in his consciousness, as if he had been pricked by an invisible needle. This premonition mildly surprised him. What did that mean? Are the Blackwraith Mountains exceptionally dangerous?

He was sure that it meant something. Very likely, it was to warn him of some undetected risk. No matter what, I should prioritize my own safety.

The space within the Blackwraith Mountains was a dark abyss without sunlight. The surrounding temperature dropped ten to fifteen degrees, filling the air with an eerie chill. Jiang Chen saw dark forest wherever he could see. Mist permeated the air.

The place had been sealed away for three hundred years. Its isolation from the world added to the element of inhuman terror.

It's not surprising that this place is touted to be a birthplace of nightmares. I doubt it'll be anything close to a playground. It's only half a month, but I should be careful.

Jiang Chen never forgot about self-preservation regardless of where he was.

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Outside the mountain range, all of the contestants had entered the restriction.

The chief warden gave a list of names to Imperial Prince Huo. "Your Highness, this is the collated list of all participants. There is information about everyone of them in there, including which ones are elite."

The imperial prince smiled. "Very well done."

He strode toward the white-haired elder, list in hand. "Elder Tong, this is a list of the participants' names and profiles. Are they worthy, in your eyes?"

"Let me see," the old man stroked his beard cheerfully. After reviewing the file for a while, he nodded with some satisfaction. "The talent here is excellent, and the quality, even more so. I observed them

before they went in. There are some real geniuses in there. The Rejuvenation Isles has worked hard for this occasion, and Winterdraw has its fair share of geniuses.”

Imperial Prince Huo was overjoyed. “To receive such praise from you is these prisoners’ highest glory. They should be pleased to die after this.”

It was appropriate to call Winterdraw’s residents prisoners, given that this was a place of exile.

Elder Tong smiled, handing the list over to the eight houses’ representatives. “Take a look. These contestants are really quite good. Some elites will be especially hard to deal with. You all should be quite satisfied.”

The representatives took the list unceremoniously, riffling through them with abandon. After every man had done so, the list was handed back to the elderly man.

“As you said, Elder Tong, they’re passable.”

“Yes. Those so-called elites might be as good as second-rate geniuses in the divine nations, though they can’t compare to the geniuses of our own houses.”

“Quite, quite,” the imperial prince laughed ingratiatingly off to the side. “How can these prisoners possibly compare to geniuses from the divine nations?”

“We don’t have a lot of time. The scions of the eight houses should prepare themselves too. Shall the entrance be temporarily sealed off after they enter, or should it remain open?” Elder Tong asked the representatives.

“Temporarily sealed off, of course,” the representatives stated in unison. “If not, what if the prey realizes the danger and runs out?”

“That’s right. It would ruin the hunt if that were to happen. Now that the game is afoot, we should make sure the youngsters enjoy themselves to the fullest.”

“Absolutely right. The formation can’t be opened until half a month is complete.” No representative supported allowing the restriction to remain open.

Elder Tong smiled a little. “Remember, if you seal the entrance and your scions encounter danger...”

“Haha, you’re too cautious, Elder Tong.” The representatives interrupted before he could finish.

“How could these pathetic mountains threaten our young geniuses? You underestimate our nation’s geniuses, elder!”

“There’s definitely no need to worry about that.”

“A bit too circumspect, Elder Tong.” The confidence of the representatives meant there was nothing more for Elder Tong to say.

“I was invited here by all of you,” he smiled. “Thus, I have to warn you about whatever I can. If you’re so confident, I hope you can take care of any accidents that occur.”

“Don’t worry, Elder Tong. Even if there’s an accident, we wouldn’t possibly blame you.”

“Honestly, who would? Not that we expect accidents to be possible, of course.”

The imperial prince didn't think much of their arrogance. Truthfully, he was none too pleased about the fact they were so full of themselves despite the flattery prior. Furthermore, he was slightly worried that what Elder Tong said would come to pass. A good thing would fully morph into a bad thing then. Their attempt at winning favor would result in ire.

“I hope the eight houses' scions are really as strong as they say. It's best if nothing happens,” prayed the imperial prince. Sometimes, the one-in-a-million tended to be the absolute worst cases.

If some tragedy were to occur, the Rejuvenation Isles would be in big trouble. The eight houses were sure to utterly destroy Winterdraw if something happened to one of their own.

The prince could only comfort himself over and over with their apparent boldness. The eight houses had come to Winterdraw for their trial, which meant they had to have a few extra cards up their respective sleeves.

And true, what young genius of Vividlore's eight houses wouldn't have a defensive treasure of some sort? Even if they did encounter unanticipated danger, making it out alive shouldn't be too hard.

The geniuses that Winterdraw had picked out at least, wouldn't be able to hurt them.

Elder Tong looked at the list again. “I see that there are sixty elites on this list who are somewhat stronger than the others,” he smiled. “The rest are around the same level. Why not score things this way? One of the sixty will count for five points, and the others, one point each. How about it?”

The eight houses' scions all laughed. “Sounds good. We'll listen to you, Elder Tong.”

The imperial prince was wholly unsurprised at this, but the chief warden's heart sank when he heard. The dots connected for him. So these people really are using the selected geniuses as their prey?

The imperial family's prodding earlier had given him some hunches, but they hadn't been proven until now. He snuck a glance at Xie Wushang and the rest, an apologetic thought flickering across his mind.

Never mind that. We'll keep it a secret from those guys. They are subjects of Winterdraw, and as such the island owns them. They live if we want them to live, they die if we want them to die.

The chief warden wasn't the sentimental sort. It was a bit of a waste to use those geniuses as prey, but nothing more than that.

He was focused more about the benefits available to him personally, and the Rejuvenation Isles generally. After all, the point of Winterdraw's existence was to serve the Isles. The lives here were but pawns in his hand.

The chief warden had no need to explain anything even to the faction leaders. So what if they knew that they were being toyed with after the fact? They couldn't and wouldn't dare possibly resist.

“It's your time, young geniuses.” Elder Tong's voice echoed forth crisply. “This is a new journey. I wish you the best of luck on it!”

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1587: Goldensable Fleeceflower

Though Jiang Chen had gone deep into the mountains, he was just as in the dark as everyone else about the true purpose of the trial. He didn't know that the conspiracy that brewed just outside, and that a killing net had begun to close.

Having been locked away for centuries, the mountains' foothills were filled with vegetation. There was often nowhere to stand in the dense forest and underbrush. Some of the trees were girthy enough to require many people to span.

The spirit energy within the mountains was dense and plentiful, filled with a sinister, depressive element. It was a veritable breeding ground for all kinds of spirit entities.

Jiang Chen reaped a fair number of prizes along the way. Many of the rather unassuming flora had uses that were largely unknown. Though none were particularly amazing spirit herbs, all were rare enough to have distinct support purposes.

"The variety of spirit herbs in the Blackwraith Mountains is pretty amazing. There are many spirit herbs here missing from the human domain, and all specimens are of high quality. The ground here is extremely fertile. I suppose the lack of human disturbance for centuries helps too."

Jiang Chen had entered a veritable holy land of spirit herbs.

For others, the mountains teemed with nightmarish dangers. For Jiang Chen, they teemed with opportunity. His advantage in the area of spirit herbs was on show front and center. Many plants had medicinal properties while still remaining toxic in some way. Some were superb ingredients for specific pills.

For three days in a row, he did little else but pick spirit herbs.

"The Blackwraith Mountains are a treasure trove alright! Most wouldn't recognize many of these spirit herbs." Admittedly, Jiang Chen himself found it difficult to pick a few of the spirit herbs too.

On the afternoon of the third day, he took a nap in a relatively quiet area. In the Blackwraith Mountains, one couldn't let down one's guard even when resting.

He summoned Long Xiaoxuan and Little White to keep watch for him. The Vermilion Bird, on the other hand, remained stowed away. The bird didn't enjoy such a dark and ominous locale, so Jiang Chen saw no reason to bring it out.

Back to his usual vigor after the rest, he leapt to his feet once again. Some more walking placed him in a quiet valley. He sniffed the air, finding a scent that he was rather familiar with. It was a scent from the memories of his previous life.

His mind whirred into action, attempting to recall what it corresponded to.

"Hmm? Could it be a Goldensable Fleeceflower?" Jiang Chen brightened at a shocking possibility. His blood quickened.

The Goldensable Fleeceflower was a spirit herb surpassing sky rank. Having obtained the heavenly dao's approval, it was a true heavenly rank spirit herb; a spirit herb that could lengthen anyone's lifespan.

A high-quality Goldensable Fleeceflower was rumored to be able to extend an ordinary man's life to that of a great emperor's. In the hands of a great emperor, it would extend life tenfold or more!

Though this herb wasn't the best of the best in the heavenly planes, one that was of surpassing quality was nevertheless extremely valuable. On an ordinary plane, this herb certainly was a cut above the competition.

Jiang Chen sniffed at the air once more. The scent's familiarity clarified his mind more and more.

"Yes, this really does belong to the Goldensable Fleeceflower!" Jiang Chen was shaken. He already anticipated getting his hands on the herb.

The spirit herb had more than a singular benefit of extending one's life. Otherwise, it wouldn't be fit to be called a heavenly rank herb. It was even more potent at fortifying cultivation. Used in pills, it guaranteed a level increase for empyrean experts.

"I didn't expect the Blackwraith Mountains to contain something as valuable as this!" Taking surprise in stride, Jiang Chen followed the trail of the fragrance.

The further he went, the darker things became. The road became harder and more arduous to follow, until there was almost no room to set his feet. He weaved between sheer cliffs in order to get to his destination. Thankfully, that wasn't too hard a task for a skilled cultivator.

He didn't allow himself to lower his guard too much. Experience told him that heavenly rank spirit herbs were quite difficult to pick. There was invariably danger behind each and every one.

Risk and opportunity coexisted side by side.

"The Goldensable Fleeceflower itself is rather inoffensive, but Golden Vines always grow near it. The vines bind onto whatever they touches. It's more resilient than the most supple of snakes and has extremely sharp senses to boot. It will go on the attack if it notices something out of place."

The vine wasn't the biggest concern either. Golden Pythons often made its home near the spirit herb too. This serpent was a corrosively toxic beast. The slightest contact from its fangs was lethal to most. The strength and intensity of the poison was shocking, to say the least.

The python and vine were symbiotic in their partnership. It was difficult to distinguish between flora and fauna in an entangled mass, further complicating defense against them.

Moreover, the python was a master of disguise. It was almost impossible to distinguish it from the vine if it disguised itself, even probing via consciousness. The moment of non-detection was the deadliest. Mistaking a python for a vine was frequently fatal. Thus, it was uncommonly difficult to actually get one's hands on the Fleeceflower.

Jiang Chen traversed through some more peaks and valleys towards the source of the fragrance. Suddenly, a breeze whipped into his face with a particularly refreshing burst of smell. He was mildly intoxicated by it.

He paused, God's Eye locking onto a spot upon the cliffs. There really was a mass of Golden Vines growing there. Like a cluster of ancient roots, they jutted out of the cliffs in a messy knot. Order was somehow present in the craziness.

A glimpse of the Goldensable Fleeceflower was visible inside, shimmering with ochre radiance. Its overwhelming aroma couldn't be obscured, regardless of how hard the vines may have tried.

From faraway, the mass shimmered like an unpolished piece of jade. Though it didn't have a particularly stunning iridescence, its value was apparent upon a closer look. Jiang Chen was overcome with desire for the treasured herb.

The Goldensable Fleeceflower was very tempting, pending the removal of the vines around it. He wasn't particularly concerned with the Golden Python, thanks to his immunity to poisons. More than half the threat the snake posed was through its toxins, not its speed.

Ordinarily, a python defended its own territory with excessive aggression. A Goldensable Fleeceflower was typically seen as a private possession.

Jiang Chen examined the sight before him closely. There were four layers of defense around the Golden Vines. None of the defensive layers appeared particularly remarkable, but intrepid entry would only result in death.

There were four varieties of plants around the vines. Three of them were fatal thanks to poison, while one was very powerful physically.

Jiang Chen sank into silence for a moment before unleashing his Pentecolor Divine Swords. His sword aura harvested the space around vines mercilessly, cutting away at the growth.

Multicolored light whirled in quick slicing motions. It didn't take long to get rid of the plants all around the vine. However, when the light attempted to attack the vines themselves, Jiang Chen noticed that the vines were astonishingly tough.

Cutting the vines were like slicing metal or rock. It was difficult to leave a significant scar, much less slice tendrils away.

"How solid are these vines, eh?" Jiang Chen blinked in confusion. It was almost impossible to destroy the vines like this.

Not to mention, the fearsome Golden Python was still laying low somewhere. Jiang Chen took a deep breath, expanding his consciousness in an attempt to find the snake. No matter how good it was at hiding, his consciousness should be sufficiently powerful to sniff out its vitality and actual location.

Under the stimulation of the chain seal, Jiang Chen's consciousness had advanced a great deal over the past few years. The advantages now showed themselves. His consciousness was able to scan the entire area and found a python in the midst of a complicated knot of vines, just like any other vine to the naked eye.

"What a monster!" Jiang Chen exclaimed. He decided to try another attack on the python.

With it came the need to defend himself. Once a Golden Python was angered, it would work itself into a frenzy of rapid and potent attacks.

Refraining from using the Pentecolor Divine Swords once more, Jiang Chen resorted to the Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation instead. The latter was more powerful than the former.

This time, he activated sixteen flying swords at once.

The blades of light gathered once more, causing a burst of radiance to fill the air in a kaleidoscopic array of steel. Suddenly, its center flared with brilliance.

In the next moment, countless coils of serpentine light scythed toward where the Golden Python lay.

Jiang Chen's sudden attack was quite effective. The python's body was tough, but not tougher than the vines.

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

Chapter 1588: To Profit Off Of Others

Jiang Chen's sword formation appeared to be a scattered attack, but every sword struck the same point with incredible frequency and concentration. This potency was one of the defining characteristics of the formation. The sword lights formed a surprisingly concentrated cloud of radiant assault.

The Golden Python sensed the threat as soon as Jiang Chen approached within a few thousand meters. It remained in disguise to attempt a lethal sneak attack.

But Jiang Chen was much wiser than the average impulsive cultivator as he happened to know the Goldensable Fleeceflower's tendencies far better than most. He was more than prepared for the dangers surrounding the herb. Rather than blindly approach it, he chose the most advantageous path after lengthy consideration.

The python could only rely on its instinctive cunning and natural penchant for concealment. In terms of intelligence, it had a rather basic mind that didn't compare to a human cultivator's. Despite this, its disguise ensured that it wouldn't be threatened too much on home territory.

Alas, its natural counter had shown up today in the form of Jiang Chen. The Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation's attacks hit the python's weak point, where they hurt the most.

The powerful lights delivered a flurry of cuts, covering the python in blood. More concerningly than the ghastly surface wounds, the strike had damaged the python's vitality and cleaved apart its qi ocean.

There was nothing scarier. Wailing in pain, the python twisted and writhed on its symbiotic vines. It began to constrict the plants it lived with.

Jiang Chen found the harmful gesture rather wasteful. The Golden Python was abusing rare specimens!

However, its recklessness did allow him to react. His blow just now had been a critical one, making future efforts much easier. It'd reduced the python to its death throes.

Jiang Chen held no compassion for the spirit creature. His mind was set. "I'll keep attacking until I kill the python. The Fleeceflower is very valuable, and I can use the python's gall as supporting ingredients in pill refinement, and its blood as medicinal catalyst."

All spirit organisms that lived alongside the Goldensable Fleeceflower were born of its essence. It would be criminal for him not to take them all.

The python was quite upset at being hurt several times, hissing incessantly in frustration. Unfortunately, it had lost ninety percent of its strength after being hit. While its dexterity ordinarily meant that even Jiang Chen would have a difficult time dealing with it, the preemptive strike had dealt with that possibility quite handily.

“The Golden Python is at the end of its rope. But those vines... they’re still rather concerning.”

Though the python was near death, Jiang Chen’s heart was crystal clear. The creature had no way to recover, and there was another trial ahead of him for the Fleeceflower itself.

How was he going to get past the vines?

Jiang Chen didn’t have the raw power to destroy the vines altogether. They were far too resilient and durable for that. It was time for a smarter approach again.

His Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice could deal with it. It’d been a while since Jiang Chen had last used it, but the Bewitching Lotus had grown admirably in the meantime. It was incredibly flexible and tenacious.

“This is just a numbers game, isn’t it?” Jiang Chen had much finer control over the Lotus than his old self had.

Several hundred vines shot out from the Bewitching Lotus, their tendrils reaching for the Goldensable Fleeceflower. The act instantly provoked a reaction from the other plant. The Golden Vines had been knotted together before now, but the attack from the Bewitching Lotus quickly made them raise themselves in defense.

A large scale battle between the two plants began.

The Golden Vines had a multitude of curls. Like a thousand-handed Buddha, it spun forth its appendages in an endless surge.

However, Jiang Chen could send out that many and more from his Bewitching Lotus. There was a manic momentum behind his plant’s limbs.

No matter how many vines the Golden Vine added, the Bewitching Lotus always sprung up to match. It wasn’t long until the latter’s appendices outnumbered the former.

“It’s time!” Jiang Chen’s heart soared. He sent out two dozen more vines from the Lotus, displaying his extremely fine control as he manipulated them as responsively as his own arms.

The Goldensable Fleeceflower was now stranded at the center of the former vine cluster. It was solitary and defenseless. But just as the Lotus’s three dozen vines were about to bear upon it, there was a whooshing sound!

A trail of light sliced across the air.

Out of nowhere, a terrifying sword light severed the fire and ice vines. A ghostly form rushed towards the Fleeceflower, clearly intent on taking advantage of an easy situation.

Jiang Chen had noticed something was awry the instant the vines were severed. The rapidity of this newcomer's stride told him that it was a bit late to fight for possession. Instead, he threw a Confounding Puppet into the air that tailed the interloper very closely.

Boom!

As blunt as ever, the Confounding Puppet slammed a fist into the direction of that newcomer's back. If he wanted to pick the Fleeceflower, he would eat the impact rather squarely. But if he didn't, he would lose his fleeting opportunity.

Survival instincts informed the stranger as to the wisest course of action. He abandoned any delusions of acquiring the Fleeceflower, disappearing to perch slightly further away.

"How dare you ruin my enterprise, kid?" The stranger's voice was sharp and aloof. There was an odd sense of superiority behind it.

Jiang Chen didn't care for pointless talk. Now that his Confounding Puppet had priority and also grasp of the Fleeceflower, he sent out another Puppet to charge the would-be bandit. A precaution like this was entirely necessary to ward off a potential counterattack and accident.

Acting in harmony, the two Confounding Puppets were able to get the Fleeceflower into Jiang Chen's own grubby hands very quickly. Though his eyes glowed at the acquisition, he knew it wasn't time to gloat yet.

There was a tough enemy nearby still!

A hand seal released the Bewitching Lotus from locked combat with Golden Vines. Despite their pliancy, the Lotus had quite a ways to go before it could actually defeat the Vines. Thankfully, that hadn't been the goal in the first place. Its sole objective had been to delay the Golden Vines.

It was time for Jiang Chen to abscond. A wave of his hand dismissed the two Confounding Puppets like a magic trick.

The adversary opposite him wore a black, mysterious cloak. There was a special seal upon it that radiated a strangely murderous intent.

Jiang Chen wasn't about to start something else since he'd gotten his hands on the prize. "Farewell," he cupped his fist.

"You want to leave?" The man who'd attempted to steal his prize demanded frigidly.

Jiang Chen's step slowed. "What, you wanted to treat me to dinner?" he sneered. He wasn't dumb; the other man's desire for the Fleeceflower was palpably obvious. At the same time, there was no way he would give up something he'd gone to such lengths to acquire without a fight.

"Leave the item," the stranger intoned darkly, "and you can scam."

Jiang Chen grinned in spite of his fury. He knew that robberies frequently took place during trials, but he wasn't going to agree to such a thing.

"What, you want this?" He waved the Fleeceflower in hand about. "Come and get it then."

He didn't want to waste any more words with the fellow. They were standing where the Fleeceflower had been, and its associated vines hadn't been annihilated yet.

If the vines suddenly mutated, things could go south for both of them very quickly. Whether they were going to fight or not, it was best to leave the scene of the original scuffle.

His Kunpeng Meteoric Escape active, he was several thousand miles away in the blink of an eye.

"Let's see where you're going to run to." The stranger wasn't an easy one to shake off. He seemed completely self-satisfied in his pursuit. Furthermore, his speed was unusually fast – capable of tailing the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape rather closely.

Jiang Chen was rarely rivaled by anyone in that department since learning the technique. But he'd met just such an enemy today! The pursuit began to burn white-hot.

He had plenty of ways to get rid of his pursuer. Confounding Puppets, the Nine Labyrinth Formation, or empyrean talismans... But he refrained from using them. Having an enemy of his caliber on his tail wasn't entirely a bad thing.

In the human domain, no one had been on a level sufficient to challenge him. And now that there was a sizeable collection of geniuses in the Blackwraith Mountains, they were useful as a whetstone.

Jiang Chen decided to refrain from using any treasures. Instead, he would use his true strength and assortment of talents to duke it out with his opponent.

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

Chapter 1589: A Showdown Between Geniuses

They were both equally matched in speed, and engaged in a cat and mouse pursuit around a remote valley. Since Jiang Chen wanted to test his opponent's limits, he coolly refrained from using his other techniques. It was purely a contest of agility.

What exactly is his background? Suspicion and shock struck Jiang Chen. He couldn't recall there being such a person in the thousand-plus candidates entering the Blackwraith Mountains.

His foe was firmly enshrouded by a black cloak which added to his mysteriousness. One could only be certain that he wasn't one of the candidates.

Are there other factions in the Blackwraith Mountains? A chill travelled down Jiang Chen's spine. Who can he possibly be?

He could sense that his foe had yet to step into empyrean realm, which made him even more suspicious. He should've been able to dominate all foes beneath empyrean realm, yet this mysterious cloaked person was able to go toe-to-toe against him with raw talent alone.

Judging by the opponent's speed, this was definitely no ordinary foe. Speed was an indication of one's skill after all.

The cloaked man didn't fare any better than Jiang Chen. He was also extremely taken aback. He was a young genius from one of the eight aristocratic houses and top five among the thirty or so young aristocratic geniuses.

He wouldn't have been surprised if his opponent had been one of his peers, but the person in front of him was clearly a candidate from Winterdraw Island!

This was simply stunning. Him and his peers were some of the most talented youths in Myriad Abyss Island.

They'd come to Winterdraw purely to mess around. It was a game; the Winterdraw candidates were merely prey waiting to be slaughtered. They'd hadn't taken this seriously from the start. However, Jiang Chen's performance completely flipped the cloaked man's prejudices around.

To think that there's a genius of this caliber in a backwater like the Rejuvenation Isles!

He'd found the Goldensable Fleeceflower earlier than Jiang Chen, but because of the various hazards surrounding it, he stepped aside to come up with a plan.

Unfortunately for him, Jiang Chen suddenly appeared out of nowhere and reached the Fleeceflower first. He was completely taken aback and wanted to intercept, but had failed. This led to a chase, whereupon he finally realized that he was facing an extremely strong foe.

Time passed quickly while the pursuit was on. Night went by in the blink of an eye.

Night time in the Blackwraith Mountains was extremely frightening. But visually speaking, it was no different from day to Jiang Chen because he cultivated the God's Eye. The cloaked man didn't seem to fear the darkness either and wasn't affected by it.

The chase had been going on from dusk until dawn, yet Jiang Chen was wholly unaffected by fatigue. However, after an entire night of cat and mouse, he realized that speed might not be enough to shake off his pursuer.

Thus, he slowed his footsteps and gradually decreased his speed. The two had entered a dense and overgrown rainforest. The cloaked men followed suit and slowed down as well.

Jiang Chen came to a screeching halt, turned, and glared at the cloaked man with wrathful eyes. They were a few hundred meters apart, but he could clearly see the frightening power concealed behind the cloaked figure's dark and sinister eyes.

"I assume you're not one from Winterdraw Island?" Jiang Chen asked blandly.

"Have you decided to stop running?" the cloaked man replied coldly.

Jiang Chen shrugged. "Do you really think that I was running away?"

"Enough of your nonsense. Hand over the Goldensable Fleeceflower!" There was no emotion in the cloaked man's tones. He was as cold as a sharp blade.

"You recognize the spirit herb?" Jiang Chen was a little taken aback.

"You have two choices. Hand it over willingly, or I'll take it from your dead body." The cloaked man answered in a sinister tone.

Jiang Chen burst into laughter. "I'll give you two choices as well! Take off your cloak, or I'll tear it off myself after I kill you!"

The cloaked man had shown a lot of potential, but that alone wasn't enough to scare Jiang Chen.

The man threw a sharp and malicious glare at Jiang Chen. "Idiot trash! Do you know who you're talking to?"

Jiang Chen answered blandly. "The only trash here is you. Why do I need to know who you are? A coward hiding behind a cloak is unworthy."

Killing intent flashed across the cloaked man's eyes as a sinister cackle burst out of him. "So be it. Time to surrender yourself to fate. Genius of Winterdraw Island, I'll show you just how insignificant and weak you really are!"

Radiance suddenly exploded from an upraised arm. An enormous sword could vaguely be seen within the light. His right arm had turned into a razor-sharp sword!

Jiang Chen was mildly surprised. This was no ordinary divine art. The cloaked man had refined his arm with true sword intent, melding sword and arm into one.

"Choose. Do you wish to be shredded or cut into pieces?" The cloaked man cackled. He raised his arm, flaring the blinding light once more. Frighteningly lethal arcs of sword light criss-crossed through the air.

Turning one's arm into a sword made handling it infinitely easier. It was much better than a traditional sword in terms of speed and maneuverability.

Sword intent hurtled in like a tornado.

Jiang Chen didn't dare take the attack lightly. In terms of martial technique, the mysterious black-cloaked man was no weaker than the empyrean masters he'd faced before. He shifted, evading the incoming attack with his advantageous position in the sky.

At the same time, he summoned the golden magnetic mountain and tossed it into the air. The mountain spontaneously expanded and levitated above their heads. Powerful magnetic power came pouring out.

Jiang Chen quickly followed up with chained hand seals, summoning a violent magnetic storm into the air. It was so fierce that it seemed it could swallow the land whole.

The cloaked man was slightly taken aback as well. His sword technique was extremely powerful and agile. He'd slain many formidable foes with it. However, the technique he was so proud of had mostly been absorbed by the golden magnetic mountain and magnetic storm.

With a sharp inhale, he stared warily at the magnetic mountain. The treasure was releasing magnetic power and absorbing his sword light!

"Tsk tsk. I didn't think that Winterdraw would have someone of your caliber. The treasures you possess and the techniques you cultivate don't look like they're from this backwater. Are you really from the island?" The cloaked man's suspicion had been roused.

Jiang Chen smiled coldly. "How about you?"

The cloaked man smiled sinisterly without admitting or denying anything. “As expected. You’re not from this island are you? Do you really believe that a mere magnetic storm will be enough to stop me? You’re too naive!”

He sneered and raised his right arm once more. The enormous sword turned blurry and slowly disappeared from sight. He then clapped, slowly drawing his hands apart to reveal something in between his palms.

It was a tongue of flame about the size of a bean. It didn’t seem like much, but the cloaked man was completely focused on it. He leered viciously, casting Jiang Chen a cold glare.

The flame expanded exponentially with a shake of his hands. It turned into a ball of raging fire with the blink of an eye, which then transmuted into blinding green runes.

“Despair! The Nether Flames will turn your very soul into ash!” He crossed his arms with fists tightly clenched. When he opened his arms once more, his hands were arrayed in a strange hand seal that looked like a lotus.

As though plucking a flower, he extended one finger and sent his harvest, the ball of Nether Flames, hurling towards Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen sucked in a mouthful of air. The Nether Flames was definitely an extremely powerful heavenly flame! Moreover, his opponent had refined it to the point where it could be manipulated at will. A gentle touch was all it took to perfectly materialize it. The easy style marked the air of a grand master.

Jiang Chen held his breath. He knew that he’d encountered a truly powerful foe. His opponent didn’t just possess great talent and potential, but powerful equipment and killer trump cards as well. He had to take this seriously.

He made a gesture with his own hands and conjured dozens of fire and ice lotuses. They had been significantly upgraded as well.

The fire lotuses were voracious eaters. They had completely blossomed and pulled greedily on the ball of flame. The ice lotuses arrayed themselves in front of Jiang Chen. A transparent wall of ice loomed like an ice mountain, protecting him from all harm.

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

Chapter 1590: Countless Divine Arts

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was a heavenly rank spirit creature that’d grown synonymously with Jiang Chen.

The Nether Flames were terrifying, but the lotuses were no slouch either. Green leaves formed by the Nether Flames scoured the vicinity, seeming to burn the very air they rampaged through. But when faced with the fire lotuses, they dwindled and shrank in size.

The cloaked assailant was utterly flabbergasted by the scene that’d unfolded before him. He’d seen the Bewitching Lotus back attack the Goldensable Fleeceflower, but it’d only shown its vine-like properties when entangling with the Golden Vines. Its dual fire and ice properties had remained hidden.

Now that they were on show, a completely dumbfounding sight.

The appearance of the Nether Flames usually guaranteed victory. Even fellow geniuses had learned to avoid his fire. It was an unknown whether the top geniuses of the eight houses this time would be able to beat the flames either. It wasn't wrong to say that it was his most powerful trump card.

He found the development so unexpected that it was impossible to believe.

"Hmph! Let's see how much fire your strange vines can absorb!" As the cloaked man was in possession of a source of the Nether Flames, he only had to leverage a divine art to deploy all sorts of fire-attribute arts from the green ball of flames.

"Nether Destruction, Plague!" The cloaked man chanted while his hands flew through several seals. Several columns of green flame erupted from the ground around the green, blazing ball. Each column was as if a vicious hellfiend, ready to lay waste to heaven and earth.

Now instead of just one or two pieces of flaming leaves, there was a flurry of dozens.

After such strenuous usage, the Nether Flames' brilliance instantly dimmed. Clearly, the cloaked man had drained the divine fire without thought of the consequences.

Jiang Chen had anticipated this and shifted from one hand seal to the other. Thousands of lotus vines shot from the ground, filling up the entire space. They immediately feasted on fire energy exuded from the Nether Flames like gluttons that had been starved for hundreds of years.

Meanwhile, the ice lotuses remained at the back, vigilant and wary as ever.

The Bewitching Lotus was without a doubt a lot stronger than Jiang Chen had expected, especially against fire attribute attacks. The fire lotuses had adapted to the strength of their enemy and devoured the Nether Flames whole.

The cloaked man was on the verge of vomiting blood.

How can this be? Everything he'd ever known had been upended on its axis. This was one of his most powerful martial art techniques! There was still one trump card in his arsenal, but to think that the Nether Flames had proven completely ineffectual against the enemy!

His proud heart began to waver. He'd thought that the geniuses in Rejuvenation Isles were beneath him, but it seemed that this couldn't be further from the truth.

Jiang Chen stood calmly off to the side and waited for his opponent's next move. He could tell that the Nether Flames had been spent and were in a fragile state. It was no longer an active threat.

However, his opponent certainly had many more trump cards waiting in store. Jiang Chen was both taken aback and remained on guard. Someone strong enough to own the Nether Flames definitely had many other tricks to play. Jiang Chen had pieced enough clues together to form a rough guess of his opponent's identity.

The cloaked man glared coldly at Jiang Chen, frustrated to see only a smug smile on his opponent's face. The pace of the battle was growing out of control. As one of the geniuses from the eight aristocratic

houses, he was supposed to be a fearsome hunter in this backwater. And yet, here he was, wondering who was the real hunter and who was prey.

This brat can't be from Winterdraw. With talent and heritage like his... is he also from the Ten Divine Nations? A slither of suspicion crept into his heart. This won't do. I can't afford to drag this out any longer. I need to end this quickly and cleanly, or time is going to run out.

The geniuses from the eight houses had come here to hunt down the candidates. It was the core basis of their game.

The chosen candidates were fated to be living targets, or prey in other words. They were tools for the aristocrats' entertainment and training.

However, Jiang Chen yet remained unaware of all of this. He continued to think that the hostility emanating from the cloaked man stemmed from the Goldensable Fleeceflower.

Thankfully, his consciousness remained extremely powerful. So much so that he could vaguely sense that his opponent was beyond furious after withdrawing the Nether Flames had been. The opponent was about to use his strongest attack. It might even be the most powerful trump card in his arsenal!

This was naturally bad news. He'd already decided that as long as his foe didn't go overboard, he'd limit himself to great emperor divine arts. But since his opponent was pulling out all stops, he had no choice but to follow suit.

"You've got some talent to make me put away the Nether Flames. However, you won't be so lucky with what I'm about to show you next!" He spoke as though he'd already sentenced Jiang Chen to death.

Jiang Chen remained as nonchalant as ever. It wasn't the first time he'd heard such threats. The cloaked man muttered rapidly. He abruptly raised his arms and struck himself in the chest.

Bam Bam Bam!

Strange runes materialized around him. It was truly a sight to behold. His body grew in size moments later. "Descent of the evil spirit!"

Countless purple qi currents roiled forth and rippled around him. An enormous change was occurring in his physique. His chest, arms, thighs, and muscles were expanding at an alarming rate.

Hmm? Jiang Chen was taken aback, but quickly recognized what was going on. It was some sort of cross between a bloodline inheritance and god summoning!

The cloaked man must possess a strong bloodline through which he could summon the gods and receive their pointers or even more straightforward possession. He was clearly not foreign to this secret technique.

A vicious, murderous looking fiend had taken the his opponent. It was just as menacing and frightening as the great demons from the primordial age.

Jiang Chen understood that his opponent had forced the power in his bloodline to awaken, causing a major change in his physical form. After negotiating with the gods, he'd received the boon of an evil spirit possessing his body. This resulted in a terrifying increase in strength.

Jiang Chen grinned as the scene unfolded before his eyes. "Wonderful! This is simply wonderful!"

He had no shortage of similar skills. His Golden Body of Demons and Gods had already reached the initial realm of perfection. With just a turn of his figure, he instantly grew by several multitudes.

Two extremely imposing giants had emerged in the forest. One was surrounded by a golden light, while the other enshrouded by a purple brilliance.

"Die!" The cloaked man flew into a rage when he saw that his opponent had grown in size as well.

This wasn't Jiang Chen's first time using the Golden Body of Demons and Gods either. The two exchanged blows, falling back to the most primitive way of fighting. However, the energy exchanged in every fist and kick was far beyond anything previously seen.

The evil spirit came with domineering momentum. Armed with a gargantuan, sinister-looking battle axe, it hurled itself at Jiang Chen's golden body like a madman. Fortunately, Jiang Chen's golden body had long entered the realm of perfection many years ago. He had nothing to fear even though he was without a weapon.

When the axe came hurling at his face, he twitched slightly and slammed a fist onto the side of the blade, changing its trajectory. A physical fight like this was a great test of one's foundations.

The two vied back and forth, shaking the heavens and earth with their struggle. Jiang Chen was a slippery one, surreptitiously scattering plenty of Soulless Powder of Wind and Cloud into the surroundings as they fought.

He knew that this wasn't the run-of-the-mill opponent. He would never be able claim absolute advantage through a physical fight alone. Even when his opponent ran out of tricks, he could easily run away given his speed. It was hard to catch up to someone when their agility was roughly the same.

Therefore, Jiang Chen decided to forgo complex plots and just utilize the Soulless Powder. Poison wouldn't affect him anyways, so he felt no pressure using it at this time. The longer the fight went on, the more relaxed he became. He had the feeling that his opponent was running out of tricks.

Such was how fights went. They had to be finished in one go. Prolongment only led to ever-weakening efforts. The other would surely want to retreat after failing so long to take down Jiang Chen. And now, his goal was to actually prevent his opponent from wanting to leave.

The Soulless Powder wasn't yet in full effect yet, so he wanted to drag things out until the cloaked man realized he'd been poisoned.

Meanwhile, the lofty aristocratic genius was quite fretful. He was very passive in this battle. Every move looked like it had Jiang Chen in his sights, but it always turned out that he was the one falling for a trap instead. Thoughts of withdrawing really were cropping up for him now.