

Three Realms 161

Chapter 161: Old Man Fei Begging to be a Medicine Servant

Although the matter with the Dragonteeth Guard this time had remained within a small, tight knit circle, Jiang Chen's name became a hot topic that no one could veer away from.

However, Jiang Chen paid no heed to the goings on in the outside world.

He now had gained both the identity of a noble and a manor. He finally had a place to stay within the Skylaurel Kingdom, and all was proceeding on the proper path.

"The next step is to assail the spirit realm. With my current foundations, assailing the spirit realm isn't much of a problem. The key point is cleaving open the spirit ocean. The level of my spirit ocean will determine the height of my future path in martial dao. Unfortunately, I currently haven't had much dealings with spirit realm practitioners, and don't have much direct knowledge of this world's spirit practitioners."

Jiang Chen tried hard to think back. He'd had a few dealings with the spirit realm disciples of the Purple Sun Sect back in the Eastern Kingdom. When he'd arrived in the Skylaurel Kingdom, he'd had a few more run-ins with the Northern Palace disciples.

Of course, the Northern Palace was just a satellite site of the Precious Tree Sect, and their so-called spirit realm practitioner were just all dabblers.

Apart from Liu Can who'd truly stepped into the first level of the spirit realm, all the others were merely at the half-step spirit realm.

It was rather the disciples of the Purple Sun Sect whose strength had been increasingly stronger.

"Forget that Xu Zhen, he's not that much stronger than Lu Can of the first level spirit realm. Yu Jie's level of training should be at the second level or even the third level of the spirit realm. Chu Xinghan, who'd appeared last, was greatly stronger than Yu Jie. He likely has the strength of a fourth level spirit realm, or even higher. However, from the power they deployed, they seemed to be greatly limited. They seemed to be continuously limited towards the water attribute. Could it be that, from the very beginning, the creation of their spirit ocean was favored towards the water attribute?"

He truly had had limited exposure to spirit realm practitioners, and temporarily hadn't met a single person that he could spar with peacefully.

However, Jiang Chen was different from the practitioners of this world. His knowledge of martial dao exceeded even that of the premier practitioners in this world.

Of course, he hadn't been able to cultivate in his past life, but he had used a mind full of theoretical knowledge to train countless domineering geniuses. Any one of these geniuses could likely trample over the preeminent practitioners of this world if they arrived here.

Therefore, Jiang Chen was self confident. He wasn't lost.

"After last time's enlightenment, I already know that the so-called twelve meridians true qi is actually a bridge, a process in which one transforms from mortal to spirit. The spirit realm is merely the first step

in shaking off the mundane. To truly control the heavens and reshape the power of reincarnation, who knows how long this road will be..."

Jiang Chen was well aware of how long and arduous the path of martial dao was. Even if he held advantages that others didn't have, he still couldn't relent in the slightest on this road.

"My memories from my past life are my advantages, but my resources of this level are obviously quite poor. I must leverage my own advantages to the best of my abilities in order to collect the best resources of this world for my use."

Jiang Chen knew that the path of martial dao wasn't a fight against the heavens, but a fight against people.

Resources were limited, but practitioners, coming in one generation after another, were unlimited. Unlimited people fighting over limited resources. It was a given that some would become dragons, and others would become ashes.

Jiang Chen had also undergone significant contemplation before swindling the people who he'd gone after this time.

Killing a minor character like Lu Wuji would only vent a moment's worth of ill will. In Jiang Chen's eyes, Lu Wuji was just an annoying, bouncing cockroach. There were plenty of opportunities to kill him.

But the spirit ingredients that he'd garnered were ones that he desperately needed.

A process was necessary to break through to the spirit realm. He needed some supplementary aid to help him decrease the amount of winding paths on his road of martial dao.

"Young master, the weird old man from the Qingyang Valley is here again."

Just as Jiang Chen was meditating, Xue Tong came in with a report.

Jiang Chen had paid visits to the Southern Palace and the Myriad Treasures Palace. But he'd purposefully set old man Fei from the Qingyang Valley aside so as to stoke his anxiety.

Jiang Chen had grasped old man Fei's mindset and was of a mind to train this stubborn old man. So he'd kept whetting old man Fei's appetite and made it so that the old man would voluntarily come find him.

"Jiang Chen, you darned kid, you simply lack heart, don't you? Tell me, hasn't this old man been a staunch and loyal supporter? I was openly hostile to Shangguan Yi over your issue. You're a fine one alright, you haven't spoken anything to me in all these days. This angers me, this truly angers me."

This strange old man gurgled tea in large sips as he complained whilst his eyes stared shiftily at Jiang Chen.

"Old man Fei, you can't blame me for this. You also know that I've just arrived in the capital and all sorts of random, complicated events have cropped up in my face. See, if it hadn't been for you this time, it would've been an unknown if I'd even been able to make it out of the Dragonteeth Guard's Black Dungeons."

Elder Fei particularly liked to hear words like these. He chuckled, and then seemed to immediately recall that he was here in protest. Shouldn't he be more serious?

He drew his face downwards, "Jiang Chen, you told me to come find you at the capital last time. Now that I'm here, how do you plan on arranging this matter?"

"Old man, did you know that your acting really sucks? Don't act deep and mysterious, that takes technique and isn't something you're good at."

Elder Fei rolled his eyes and sprawled out on a chair. "Anyways, I'm going to stay here even if you don't give me an explanation today. I'll eat your food and sleep in your house. I'm going to follow you even when you go to the outhouse, and will stick by your side when you go find a woman. You're stuck with me!"

Jiang Chen was speechless. The old man absolutely was an amateur at concealing his feelings, but he was definitely a pro at being a rascal.

"Old man, must you really?"

"Heh heh, someone with a thin face won't have a full belly. Those with thick faces will eat their fill. I don't have anything else to do, so my face is quite thick." The old man didn't find his behavior shameless, but was rather proud.

"Fine then!" Jiang Chen flicked his middle finger at old man Fei and then immediately asked merrily. "So speak, just what do you want?"

"Isn't that bullshit? I want you to introduce me to the wise senior."

"And then what?"

"I'll ask him how to refine the Renewal Purity Pill then." The old man was a bit impatient. "I say, Jiang Chen, are you trying to go back on your word? Why do you keep repeating things we've already agreed upon?"

"Go back on my word? Do I look like that sort of person? I mean, what if he isn't willing to teach you after I introduce you? What then?"

This question was one of the ones that old man Fei was most worried about. When Jiang Chen asked him, he was instantly dumbfounded and murmured. "What if he's not willing to teach? Not willing to teach? What then?"

He then smashed a fist into his thigh and bit off his words, "If he's not willing to teach me, then I'll hail him as my master. That'll work, won't it?"

"Take him as your master? Do you think such a learned, erudite sage such as him would take an old and decrepit man like yourself as his disciple?"

Old man Fei was stunned again. This was true. That esteemed person had no relationship with him. On what basis would that esteemed person have to take him, a frumpy old man, as a disciple?

"If it comes down to it, I'll even be his medicine servant and his follower. How about that?" Old man Fei was willing to lay down everything as he spoke through gritted teeth.

"Wouldn't that be an injustice for you?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

"What do you know?" Old man Fei was delightfully proud. "This is why we say you young folks are as short sighted as mice. You think being a medicine servant or follower for someone is embarrassing. Why don't you think that a great character who is able to grasp the Renewal Purity Pill is a person whose existence has ways to heaven. To follow at the side of such a great character as this and learn the tiniest bit of anything would result in endless benefit! Ai, your hair isn't even fully grown out yet. You won't understand if I speak of this to you."

Jiang Chen smiled mischievously. "Old man, does this mean that you're willing to let go of all your moral principles in the name of learning?"

"What are moral principles?" The old man laughed oddly and asked tiredly, "Can I sell that for money? If I can, I'll wrap all of it up and sell it."

"Ai. Have you ever thought about what if that sage elder is younger than you? Won't you think that you're demeaning yourself?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

"You're speaking like an outsider again. In the world of training, age is but a number. Many young geniuses have packs of old fogies by their sides. Do you think they feel it's shameful? They're happy as a clam! The strong are venerated, do you understand that?" Old man Fei spoke with sincere words and earnest wishes.

Jiang Chen was speechless. It seems that this old man really didn't have principles. He wondered how badly the old man had been worked over by others to have such a unique perspective on life.

"Therefore, you'd be willing to sell yourself to whoever teaches you how to concoct the Renewal Purity Pill?"

Old man Fei laughed dryly. "I wouldn't even bat an eye if I sold the entire Qingyang Valley, much less myself."

"Do you mean that?" Jiang Chen laughed lazily.

"Truer words have never been spoken. Hey, I say, can you cut the blather? When will you introduce me? Just tell me straight up!" Old man Fei was getting displeased.

A trace of a calm and composed smile hung at the corners of Jiang Chen's lips as he looked at the strange old man scratching his ears and head in embarrassment.

"Then kneel and kowtow." Jiang Chen threw out this sentence diffidently.

"What?" Old man Fei rolled his eyes, but seemed to read some clues from Jiang Chen's eyes in the next moment. His entire body seemed to have been electrocuted as it trembled violently, and he jumped up and leapt in front of Jiang Chen with greatly exaggerated movements.

“What, what did you just say? For me to kneel and kowtow?” Old man Fei’s voice was actually trembling, as agitated as a man who’d been willing to die, but suddenly heard words that there was a medicine that would help him come back from the dead in this world.

“What? You’re not willing to? Alright, then it seems like all your heroic utterances were jokes? Forget it, forget it, pretend I didn’t say anything.” Jiang Chen reached out a finger and waved it.

“Don’t, don’t do that.” Old man Fei had a fawning expression on his face. “Jiang Chen, no, young master Jiang, please speak more clearly.”

“I’ve already told you to kowtow and take the oath, have I still not been clear enough? Old man, your powers of comprehension are so poor that it seems I must thoroughly reconsider whether or not to accept you as my medicine servant.”

“You... you accept me as your medicine servant?” Old man Fei widened his eyes as his tongue curled in his mouth, beams of unbelievable shock shooting out from his eyes. “You’re... you’re that sage elder?”

“Mm mm, your comprehension isn’t that bad after all. But, I’m not some sage elder. You can treat me as the sage elder’s representative, do you understand?”

“Understood, understood. You’re the sage elder’s treasured disciple.” Old man Fei was so happy that his smile reached his eyebrows and his old face was wreathed with fawning smiles. “Right?”

Seeing that Jiang Chen didn’t respond, old man Fei seemed to suddenly understand something as he sank to his knees and kowtowed. “With the heavens as my witness, if young sir Jiang Chen can pass onto me the Renewal Purity Pill, I, Fei Xuan, will be willing to take his commands and be his follower, ready for his beck and call. If I have any other contrary thoughts, may the heavens and earth destroy me.”

So old man Fei’s name was Fei Xuan.

One had to say, this old man was quite something. He would joke around like a kid who’d never grown up, he was great at playing dumb and acting cute, but when he fixed his sights seriously on something, he would be more resolute than anyone.

Chapter 162: The Renewal Purity Pill

If it’d been anyone else, they would’ve hesitated a bit before kowtowing and taking the oath. They’d be concerned about their personal gain, weigh up their face, and consider gains and losses from all aspects.

But old man Fei was quite straightforward as he immediately kowtowed.

After he kowtowed, he didn’t stand up and voice some pleasantries like ordinary folks, neither did he feel regret, anger, or humiliation.

Old man Fei did nothing of that sort. He put on his thickest skin and drew close to Jiang Chen with a smile. “Young master, old Fei is one of yours from now on. You wouldn’t let one of your own come off worse, would you now?”

He rubbed his hands as he talked, and his expression was as wily as it could be. His eyes looked around shiftily and he looked quite comical.

It was Jiang Chen's turn to be left without a comeback this time. He'd thought that this old man would struggle for a bit, contemplate it for a while, or even angrily reject it.

Who would've thought that this old man would be so decisive?

In this way, Jiang Chen didn't even have the grounds to be demure and modest even if he wished to.

"Old man Fei, will you really have no regrets about this?" Jiang Chen asked faintly.

"Regret what? I, old man Fei, have lived a long life and have never known what is regret. Instead, I think that if I turned this down, then I really would regret it."

"Oh? You're that confident in me?" Jiang Chen had thought this old man had acted on the spur of the moment. Could it be that there was another motive behind all this?

"Heh heh." Old man Fei strutted with pride. "Young master, I haven't lived to this age for nothing. How long has it been since you've arrived at the capital? You could quickly deploy three out of the four great sites to back you up. Moreover, you had them back you up while running the risk of offending the Dragonteeth Guard. I, an old man have a favor to ask of you, but could it be that the Southern Palace and the Myriad Treasures Palace also have favors to ask of you?"

"Alright, even if they did have favors to ask of you, then at the very least this means that you're not a simple person, since you were able to lead three great sites by their noses in such a short timeframe. I wouldn't believe it even if you beat me to death if you say that there's not a hint of a mystery surrounding this kind of person."

When he spoke to this point, old man Fei smiled in a way that showed off his cleverness, "Young master, how would you say my powers of comprehension are?"

"Not bad, you've got some. You're decisive enough. Old man, this is the recipe for the Renewal Purity Pill, take it." Jiang Chen reached randomly and took out a recipe, throwing it over.

Seeing that Jiang Chen was throwing over a recipe like a piece of trash, old man Fei's initial thought was that Jiang Chen was joking.

The Renewal Purity Pill was an ancient recipe! Even if there was a patron behind Jiang Chen, he wouldn't hand it over that easily, right?

At the very least, Jiang Chen could raise all sorts of requests and add all sorts of conditions, taming him so that he was properly docile before taking out the recipe.

He carelessly spread out the recipe and took a look at it. Old man Fei's expression immediately stiffened as his hands started trembling uncontrollably in a sign of weakness. It was as if his entire body had been electrocuted as he suddenly shook.

"This... this truly is the Renewal Purity Pill?" Old man Fei cried out hoarsely.

Old man Fei wasn't an unprofessional outsider. Despite the fact that he'd never seen the recipe for the Renewal Purity Pill, he'd still more or less heard of it and had studied the medicinal theory behind recipes.

If it was a fake recipe, a professional would be able to identify the problems with a single glance.

If it was a real recipe, a professional would also be able to discern its validity with a single glance.

This recipe may have been hastily written, but the ingredients, refining methods, knacks, and so on that were within it were all logical and reasonable. Only another professional could've written this.

"What? Do you think I would've fobbed you off with a fake recipe?"

Old man Fei's next move made Jiang Chen stare with his mouth agape.

The old man's legs bent as he once again kneeled down, and bambambam'ed, kowtowed three times.

"Old man, didn't you already kowtow earlier? What's this for?"

"Heh heh, that kowtow from before was merely a function of the circumstances. This kowtow is from the heart. Young master, if you tell me to go east in the future, I will absolutely not go west. If you tell me to kill someone, I daren't set a fire instead!"

"Ah forget it. You've quite a few years on you and have some reputation in the outside world as well. It's asking a bit too much for you to call me by young master. Call me young Jiang or young Chen in the future. Don't call me young master. It'll make people think that I actually have some sort of amazing background."

"Young Chen, if you don't have an amazing background, then no one within the Skylaurel Kingdom has an amazing background." Elder Fei chuckled and appropriately changed what he was calling Jiang Chen.

The old man could understand less and less of Jiang Chen now.

Although Jiang Chen appeared to be from the Eastern Kingdom on the surface, it was apparent even if one thought with their feet that he absolutely wasn't as simple as he appeared on the surface.

How could a young man who could easily take out an ancient pill recipe like the Renewal Purity Pill have a simple background?

At this moment, ripples of emotion were indeed rising in the old man's heart. He had seen generous young folk, but to give away ancient pill recipes like they were wares by the roadside, this was seriously his first.

Just from Jiang Chen's demeanor alone, it was enough to leave all the young folk within the capital in the dust, to speak nothing of anything else.

"Heh heh, this old man is still wise and brilliant. If I'd made that kowtow of mine that little bit later or had been less resolute, then maybe young Chen wouldn't have trusted me as much, and probably wouldn't have given me the Renewal Purity Pill recipe outright. What a haul! Mm mm, young Chen has such an amazing background, he must possess many more good things on him. I must closely follow behind young Chen's footsteps. Who knows, there may even be greater surprises in the future. Damn it all to hell. So what if I offended an elder in the Precious Tree Sect and had been sent here to this middling kingdom for decades. Huh huh, perhaps by following young Chen, I can swagger back to the Precious Tree Sect in the future!"

Although old man Fei had the final say on everything in the Qingyang Valley, he also had his share of sad and bitter past events. In actuality, he had offended a mighty man within the Precious Tree Sect and couldn't make it there anymore. Thus, he'd ran to the Skyl Laurel Kingdom and became the head of a secular site. With his abilities, this was actually a huge grievance for him.

Old man Fei had always wanted to return to the sect for every second these past decades and redeem himself with revenge.

It was a pity that his abilities and fortunes were limited. He'd offended an elder of the Precious Tree Sect. It was almost impossible for him to return to the sect.

Even so, old man Fei had never given up. Returning to the sect had become his goal for this lifetime and also his internal demon.

Everything he did was in pursuit of this goal.

Except, reality was a harsh and cruel thing. No matter how he tried, he had always instead drifted further and further away from that goal. From beginning to end, he was never able to catch a glimpse at a ray of hope.

However, Jiang Chen's appearance caused this door that had seemed tightly shut to suddenly open a crack, allowing a beam of light to shine in.

How would Jiang Chen know that old man Fei would have such bittersweet thoughts? He only saw old man Fei smile foolishly sometimes and then cry painfully for a bit, as if deep in thought.

"Old man, are you so happy with this mere pill recipe that something's gone wrong with your brain?"

"What 'just this pill recipe'?" Old man Fei shouted out. "This pill recipe is my lifeblood. Young Chen, you are truly the blessed savior of my life."

"Cut the blather. Oh right, I have something for you to do."

"What is it? Go ahead young Chen, if I don't handle it well, then kick my ass." The old man slapped his chest.

"Find a standard pill room for me, it's best if it's the kind with a formation to refine pills."

"Standard pill room? Formation to refine pills?" Old man Fei's expression was lost. "Young Chen, what's a formation to refine pills?"

Pfft!

Jiang Chen had been taking a sip of tea when he sprayed out his mouthful after hearing old man Fei's question, spraying it all over the latter's face.

The old man didn't wipe it off or make any motions. He just stood there with a face full of innocence. "Young Chen, don't do that. I really don't know what's a formation to refine pills."

Jiang Chen was completely speechless. He'd still overestimated the Skyl Laurel Kingdom's infrastructure. After thinking about it however, this was normal. Most pills used in the realm of true qi could be refined through an ordinary pill cauldron. Who needed the aid of a pill refining formation?

Even among the spirit level pills, there were very few that required a pill refining formation.

“Young Chen, don’t stay silent. This must be very advanced level of knowledge. Please explain to me on the basis that I’m quite eager to learn.”

Seeing that the old man had a face full of desire, Jiang Chen didn’t know what to say.

“A pill refining formation is as its words. It’s employing formations to supplement the dao of refining pills. Complicated pills are sometimes completely uncontrollable with just a pill master’s own level of training, particularly when it comes to controlling the flames. If the pill master’s level of training isn’t high enough, he will be greatly restrained. With a pill refining formation, he can manipulate the formation, and utilize it to create energy to aid the refinement of pills. Although the costs of this are high, it can help the pill master have an easier time refining pills while the chances of success will also be much, much higher.”

“Utilize formations to refine pills?” This completely upended old man Fei’s knowledge of the dao of pills and opened an entirely new door for him, allowing him to glimpse into a new world of the dao of pills.

“Can such a marvelous formation exists in this world? What... what genius invented this? Using formations to help refine pills, this is absolutely the innovation of geniuses!” Old man Fei’s face was full of excitement as his spray and spittle flew everywhere, he was so agitated that he spun in circles where he stood.

Innovation of geniuses?

Jiang Chen, again, didn’t know what to say. This was as common as home cooked food in the past Jiang Chen’s eyes. There was nothing remarkable about it at all.

One had to say, the Skylaurel Kingdom was a small place after all. The matters they could come in contact with were simply too few.

The spirit medicines that Jiang Chen had obtained from Lu Wuji had actually been to refine a certain type of pill.

This pill had an exceedingly low rate of success. For insurance’s sake, Jiang Chen had thought of using a pill refining formation, but he hadn’t expected that the Skylaurel Kingdom wouldn’t have it at all.

“Old man, so there’s no pill refining formation. How about a proper pill room? There’s got to be that at least, right?”

Old man Fei chuckled. “Not a problem at all. The Qingyang Valley is the site amongst the four that is most adept at the dao of pills after all. We have many strongholds within the capital, and plenty of pill rooms. I often refine pills in the capital as well. Young Chen, do you need one now, or...?”

“The sooner the better.”

“Alright, I’ll go prepare that right away.” Old man Fei was a man of his words as he tore off in a great hurry.

“Ai, it looks like my starting place after reincarnation is seriously low. Seems like I’ll have to spend some thought on this since there’s no pill refining formation.”

The pill that Jiang Chen wanted to refine this time was no trivial matter. It was the golden key to success in forging his physical body, cleaving the spirit ocean, and transmuting from mundane to spirit.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen was anxious for results, but that he had clearly felt that his current level of martial dao was too low. This made it very difficult for him to even protect himself in this world.

Jiang Chen didn't wish that his life would always be in the care of others. Therefore, he desperately needed to break through!

Chapter 163: The Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill

Breaking through to the spirit realm wasn't a difficult task. If Jiang Chen wanted to, he had an eighty to ninety percent chance of doing so within a month.

Although Jiang Chen wished to make it quick, he didn't want to be overly rushed either.

The pill that he was refining this time was called the "Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill".

The name was quite domineering. In actuality, this was a pill that could cleave open and shape the spirit ocean.

Jiang Chen naturally had even better pills, but with the Skylareland Kingdom's current conditions, the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill was the limit of his abilities.

Jiang Chen wouldn't be able to gather the ingredients for any better pills, and he wasn't assured of success in refinement.

The Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill was the most appropriate pill that Jiang Chen currently thought he could refine successfully.

The fine items that he'd swindled from Lu Wuji last time were precisely the materials needed to refine the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill.

Jiang Chen also knew very well that the success rate of this pill wasn't that high, and so he'd made an exorbitant demand for enough materials for ten tries. This way, he'd have sufficient capabilities to fail.

The so-called five dragons of the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill actually referred to the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. These five elements were innately present in the human body, and corresponded to the five organs.

The five dragons, as they implied, were to train the five types of qi and induce them into becoming dragons.

Opening Heavens was to cleave the spirit ocean open.

The pill was for coalescing the five types of qi into dragons and cleaving open the spirit ocean — thus was the origins of the name of the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill.

Jiang Chen was well aware that even within the Skylareland Kingdom, the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill should not have existed.

If this pill were to make an appearance, it would absolutely cause a public uproar and riots.

Of course, Jiang Chen wasn't so foolish that he would introduce this kind of pill into the market.

It was different from the Heavenly Karma Pill and Vast Ocean Pill. Those pills only served a complementary purpose.

But the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill was completely different. From many aspects, taking this pill was a mandatory step in entering the spirit realm.

For one, this pill could ensure, with ninety nine percent surety, that a true qi practitioner would have no accidents while assailing the spirit realm.

If being able to guarantee that no accidents would occur when assailing the spirit realm, then this would absolutely overturn everything if it appeared within the Skylarell Kingdom.

One had to know, practitioners at the peak of the true qi realm were as many as the hairs on oxen within the Skylarell Kingdom, but less than one out of a hundred successfully assailed the spirit realm.

Some didn't dare to make an attempt. They were afraid that if they failed, they would be dead and their training erased.

Some had missed the age to make an attempt and they knew that they wouldn't possibly succeed, and so they gave up.

Some made the attempt, but they failed. They were either crippled or dead.

Those few lucky ones successfully made it through their attempt and shook off the mortal coils to become spirit, becoming a spirit realm practitioner that all true qi practitioners admired and looked up to.

If true qi couldn't transmute to spirit qi, then one was a worm in the end.

This was the true meaning of martial dao.

The spirit realm represented breaking free from the mundane and reaching a higher level in one's studies.

Remaining in the true qi realm meant that one hadn't shaken off the mundane shackles and were still ordinary mortals in the end. As strong as their martial prowess was, they were still limited after all. Their lifespan was still curtailed compared to a spirit realm practitioner's lifespan.

Therefore, this simple function from the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill would be enough to make everyone go utterly crazy for it.

However, for the pill itself, guaranteeing the success of assailing the spirit realm was only a basic function.

Its most important function was to stimulate the five inner qi types and induce the qi to become dragons, sculpting the spirit ocean, assailing the spirit ocean, and excavating the potential of the spirit ocean in the body.

This function was where the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill proved to be the greatest.

From Jiang Chen's interactions with the disciples of the Purple Sun Sect, he could tell that a spirit dao practitioner had overwhelming advantages over the true qi realm.

But from their moves, it looked like their crafting of the spirit sea hadn't been too successful. The excavation of their potential had also been very singular focused.

From beginning to end, he had seen the Purple Sun Sect disciples demonstrate the potential of almost only the water attribute.

The water attribute was only one of the five types of qi.

In the greater world and a greater plane of existence, if someone was able to unearth one or two areas, they would almost be the lowest level of existence and a non-mainstream practitioner.

Even if they'd entered the spirit realm, their potential was usually the worst, their birth the lowest, and their qualifications would be the same as a poor practitioner.

If these poor practitioners didn't have the ability to obtain good pills and cleave the spirit ocean open from their own hard work and training, they were often seen as the lowest level of existence in the world of training.

The saying of 'those who specialized in the civil subjects would be poor, and those who specialized in the military subjects would be rich' was not a random saying out of nowhere.

If one didn't have a strong family background and plenty of disposable wealth, falling behind even one step due to a lack of strong economic support meant falling behind for the rest of one's life.

Only exceedingly few geniuses with astonishing potential would be able to trample over scores of practitioners with their breathtaking abilities. This kind of unsurpassed genius did exist amongst poor practitioners, but they numbered very, very few. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack and it was something that would come about by luck and not through search.

The current Jiang Chen, when compared to the sect disciples, was indeed a poor practitioner.

Born of a small duke in a common, ordinary kingdom, he lacked a strong family background, a patron, strong economic support, and he didn't enjoy an endless supply of resources.

But, he had the potential that he'd brought from his past life. It was definitely worthy of the title of being a breathtaking and astonishing genius!

"Whether it's the Eastern Kingdom or Skylareland Kingdom, they are all stops along my way of martial dao. While life goes on, there is no rest on the path of martial dao. It looks like I must hasten my pace."

...

Old man Fei did indeed have many strongholds within the capital. It was akin to a cunning rabbit having three holes to his burrows.

"Young Chen, this is one of the best pill rooms in the capital. There are no disturbances from the surroundings and its location is more isolated. What do you think? If you don't like it, I'll take you to another one."

“No need, this is fine.” Jiang Chen understood that the conditions of the Skylaurel Kingdom were like this, so he couldn’t be more demanding.

“Then... ” Old man Fei hesitated, a fawning look to please on his face, but he stopped after opening his mouth. “Young Chen, I’m quite curious, what pill are you refining?”

“What, you’re curious?”

Old man Fei nodded his head like a chick pecking rice. “Yes, yes! Young Chen, your moves are powerful and unrestrained with talent, full of mysteriousness and unexpectedness. I’m curious about anything that is young Chen.”

“Don’t natter at me. This pill has no use for you, so don’t waste too much time thinking about it. Right now, patrol the surroundings for me for the next ten days to half a month. Remember, don’t let any strangers approach within a hundred meters of this place.”

Upon hearing that this pill would be of no use for him, the old man’s curiosity more or less subsided a little. Hearing that Jiang Chen wished for him to survey the surroundings, the old man didn’t turn it down, but he was rather raring to go.

What did this mean? This meant that Jiang Chen was going through the initial steps of accepting him!

Young Chen was a genius under the protection of a mysterious expert. Old man Fei felt that it was his honor to be acknowledged and accepted by young Chen.

“Please be at ease young Chen, I will haul off anyone who dares to disturb your pill refinement and chop him into pieces to be fertilizer for the Qingyang Valley. Ah, it’s a pity that I cannot observe young Chen refining pills. It is indeed a pity.” The old man implored him with a pathetic look.

Jiang Chen chuckled as he knew that the old man was most skilled at pushing his luck. He didn’t engage in a conversation with him and walked directly into the pill room.

Although there was no pill refining formation, one had to say, old man Fei was still quite competent. This pill room had been prepared quite well, with all needed items in full readiness. Jiang Chen didn’t need to prepare anything. He only needed to bring his own raw materials to get started.

The Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill had five types of ingredients that corresponded to the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth.

There were more than eighteen supplementary ingredients.

The process of refining this pill was quite complex and detailed, and the refinement process was also quite long. It would take an incredible amount of energy and concentration, thus Jiang Chen had wanted to leverage the pill refining formation.

Jiang Chen sat cross legged in front of the pill cauldron and he used the God’s Eye to carefully observe the cauldron’s quality, ascertaining that there were no problems with it.

He then observed the other refining tools, for instance, the firestarter and tinder.

They were all the basics tools of a pill master, and these were necessary steps before refining pills.

Not a single bit of an accident was allowed to happen during the process of pill refinement. The pill would be a complete failure and waste when an accident happened, and the materials would be wasted in vain.

These ingredients had been difficult to obtain. It would've been impossible to gather them all in the Skylaurel Kingdom if one didn't have certain avenues, and it would've been difficult to buy them all in a short amount of time even if one did have the money to.

"At the end of the day, I have to thank that idiot Lu Wuji. If it wasn't for him resolutely and steadfastly committing stupid acts and enraging Elder Ning and Shi Xiaoyao, this matter likely wouldn't have been so smooth."

Jiang Chen revealed a mischievous smile at the corner of his lips as he looked at the superior ingredients. Lu Wuji was truly Santa Claus!

Even Jiang Chen hesitated. Was it better to destroy this opponent, who appeared smart on the surface but was actually as dumb as a pig, or was it better to leave him alive?

On careful consideration, it seemed to be a rather fine thing to keep this kind of opponent around as Santa Claus.

The first firestarter was lit, then the second, third, fourth, and fifth.

There were five flames in total.

There was also an art to flames. A correspondingly relevant flame was necessary depending on what kind of pill was being refined. There was a vast difference between the fire of metal, the fire of wood, and so on and so forth.

Jiang Chen lit the flames according to the relationship between the five elements and warmed the pill cauldron.

He'd proceeded cautiously in all these steps and according to how he should progress in all of them.

Jiang Chen had gone over these steps of refinement many times in the past few days. He could be certain that nothing would be missed.

The five main ingredients were then added to the pill cauldron in accordance to their proper order, with the supplementary ingredients afterwards. They were mixed together according to their proper fires, slowly simmered with the relevant flames...

Even though Jiang Chen had simulated all sorts of details countless numbers of times beforehand, he too felt that there were a great deal of them and it was quite exhausting.

This was Jiang Chen — if it was any pill master blow the spirit realm, they'd probably spit out blood before they'd made it through one process.

Having trained in the "Boulder's Heart", Jiang Chen's mental concentration was more than ten times that of an ordinary person's. Even so, he still felt slightly weary after following through with these steps one by one.

It was a good thing that after following these steps, it was manual operations next. This was a test of his control over fire. This needed skills of manipulation and observation. With his level of God's Eye, that shouldn't prove to be too much of a problem.

Time passed by in seconds and minutes. Jiang Chen looked as green smoke started rising from the pill cauldron. This green smoke had actually been steamed out all the ingredients, and it was the dross and waste matter from the spirit ingredients.

Upon seeing that the green smoke was becoming fainter and fainter, Jiang Chen knew that the flames were about ready. This was the tail end of the process, and it was already set in stone whether or not the pill had succeeded.

In this instance, even someone as calm as Jiang Chen felt the faint sensation of blood thrumming in his veins. This was the first time he'd so gravely refined a pill.

As a pill master in his previous life, Jiang Chen felt tragic that he'd been reduced to fretting over whether or not the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill had succeeded, but also felt a boundless strength to fight on.

Chapter 164: Old Man Fei's Grievous and Sad History

A bout of qi surged out and knocked off the cauldron cover. Smoke roiled and billowed from the interior of the cauldron, full of a strong sense of medicine.

Jiang Chen's brow creased faintly. The stinging smell that assaulted his nose made his heart sink.

Although he'd never refined the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill in his past life, he knew that if this pill was successful, it would be embodied with the presence of a dragon swallowing the heavens. It would absolutely not be like this.

Indeed, when the completed pill appeared, Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Looking at its black and dull appearance, Jiang Chen knew that this pill was trash.

It wasn't even a half finished product, much less a finished product. No one would likely even pick it up even if he left it by the side of the street.

"Completely in accordance with my expectations, the first attempt was a failure."

Jiang Chen was in no hurry to start the second attempt. He sat cross-legged, adjusted the true qi within his body, and went over the entire refining process.

Every detail and step went through his mind like a movie.

"Theoretically speaking, none of my steps had been wrong, so where had it gone wrong?" Jiang Chen meditated and thought back to the refining process, concerned about his personal gains and losses.

But he discovered that he hadn't had any flaws in his first refining!

"Could it be that I missed something during my operations? Or was it that my control of the flames wasn't precise enough?"

Although Jiang Chen had been a pill master in his past life and was well versed in the dao of pills, he'd never refined the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill and thus had no direct experience.

He couldn't figure out the reason why this was happening.

After meditating for two hours, Jiang Chen adjusted himself back to his peak condition and began his second attempt at refining. He was even more careful and cautious this time.

He sought perfection to the best of his abilities at every step.

However, in the moment that the results were revealed, Jiang Chen was disappointed once again.

The result was exactly the same as his first attempt. It wasn't even a half finished product, it was complete trash.

The third time, the fourth time...

Everytime, Jiang Chen always felt that there wasn't absolutely no flaw in that particular attempt, but the final result was always the same dregs as before.

"What the hell? When have I, Jiang Chen, ever been so bedraggled in my past or present life? Am I unable to refine a finished product when I refine a mere Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill without the aid of a pill refining formation?"

The determination to excel was stimulated out of Jiang Chen's bones.

However, he knew that something was definitely wrong here. If he continued on this path without changing his mindset, things would definitely not go well.

He'd prepared enough material for ten tries this time, yet he had now failed four times. This meant that he had six chances left. And for these six chances, each failure would mean that he had one less attempt left.

"There shouldn't be any problems with the details, so where is it going wrong exactly? It's not like the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill is a particularly special pill. With my abilities, I shouldn't fall down in the same place for four times in a row. Something must be going wrong here."

Jiang Chen once again sank into a meditative state. He decided to switch up his thinking and change his mindset.

"The Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill induces the qi to become dragons, opening the heavens and cleaving the ground open. The name of this pill is grand and magnificent..." Jiang Chen suddenly seemed to grasp the trace of a hint.

"That's right, the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill induces qi to become dragons, opens the heavens and cleaves the ground open. How heroic and gallant is this? I seemed to have departed from the true meaning of this pill. I've been careful and wary in the process of refinement and have been afraid of failure. I've completely missed the true meaning of this pill. I stuck to the pattern routinely without a thought, and set out to draw a tiger but ended up with a dog, completely failing to achieve what I set out to do."

A stroke of brilliance flashed through Jiang Chen's mind as inspiration came thick and fast. He'd immediately found the crux of the problem.

He was a reincarnated pill master after all, the dao of pills was as clear as day to him. Once he figured out the critical point of a problem, the direction of his next step was thus clear to him.

Indeed, there wasn't anything wrong with his refining process at all, but that his mindset was wrong. He didn't embrace the attitude of a surefire victory from the very start.

It'd be impossible to succeed in refining the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill in that sort of condition.

Jiang Chen knew that it was his fear of failure that had led to this outcome. Because he lacked the aid of a pill refining formation, it had caused Jiang Chen to operate with less than one hundred percent confidence from the very beginning.

This was a fatal problem for a pill master.

Once he found the reason for his failures, he adapted. Jiang Chen's powers of adaptation were still quite strong. If it was any other pill master, their mindset would surely have been adversely affected after failing four times in a row.

But Jiang Chen had trained in the "Boulder's Heart" art, and his mental state was akin to a boulder. His emotions wouldn't be disturbed just because he'd failed a few times.

Indeed, when the cauldron was opened for the fifth time, the pill had taken shape. Although it was a bit of a ways off from an inferior rank pill, it could just barely be labelled as a finished product.

"It looks like my direction was correct. This fifth time has more or less been affected by my mindset. I will surely succeed on my sixth try!"

One had to say, Jiang Chen's confidence was a sort that other pill masters was unable to learn.

His results were indeed a bit better the sixth time the cauldron was opened. This time's Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill had reached the quality of an inferior rank pill.

Although the seventh time also resulted in an inferior rank, but its appearance and quality had greatly improved from the previous pill. If it was said that the last pill just barely managed to be counted amongst the inferior rank, then this one was definitely the zenith of the inferior ranks.

Jiang Chen was spurred onto greater heights when he saw this improvement.

After meditation, his mental strength had received sufficient rest and he made another attempt with vigorous spirits.

The eighth time the pill cauldron was opened, he finally saw a middle rank Five Dragons Opening Heavens pill!

A middle rank pill was enough to guarantee a ninety five percent chance of success. This was to say that a practitioner at the peak of the true qi realm would have a ninety five percent chance of successfully assailing the spirit realm if they took this pill.

This was practically an assured slot into the spirit realm.

Each flower grows higher than the last. Jiang Chen rode his momentum and actually refined upper rank pills in his ninth and tenth times!

“What a pity, if I had another five sets of ingredients, I would at least have an eighty percent chance of refining a supreme rank pill!”

Jiang Chen sighed, not without regrets.

However, it was already enough to have this amount of reward. Jiang Chen didn't feel dissatisfied about anything. A supreme rank pill was often something that came by from luck and could not be searched for.

Jiang Chen was already rather satisfied that he had made it to this step. If it'd been anyone else, they'd most likely have despaired with such a harrowing beginning.

Jiang Chen had been able to turn the tide and overcome a disadvantageous situation, finally refining four to five finished products. It truly hadn't been easy.

Although refining ten times had seemed to take very little time, in actuality, almost every attempt towards the end had taken an entire day, or even two days.

The process of refinement hadn't been that long, but what had needed more time was the time spent in meditation, rest, and recovering his mental strength.

When Jiang Chen walked out of the pill room and breathed in the air of the outside world, he luxuriated in the afternoon sun and felt quite at ease.

Old man Fei came stumbling over, “Young Chen, you've emerged from closed door refinement?”

“Old Fei, you've gone through quite some trouble this time.”

Old man Fei's nose stuffed up and he almost shed tears. It truly had not been easy, guarding a door for ten days. He'd finally received a word of praise.

With Jiang Chen's word of comfort, old man Fei felt that these ten days had all been worth it.

“Oh right, old Fei, there's one thing that I find quite odd. Of the four great sites that belong to the Precious Tree Sect, three of them keep quite a high profile. The Northern Palace is domineering and arrogant, the Southern Palace likes to be in the limelight, and not to mention the Myriad Treasures Palace — there's not any business within the entire kingdom that they don't have a hand in. Why do I feel that only your Qingyang Valley keeps such a low profile to the point of taking it to the extreme? You don't look like someone who likes to keep a low profile!”

Jiang Chen was quite curious about this matter.

Who would've thought that he'd touch upon old man Fei's hidden pain with this question?

Old man Fei sighed dejectedly, as an incredible trace of sadness appeared within his crafty eyes.

“Ai, young Chen, to think that you've such skills in observation at your young age. That's right, our Qingyang Valley is indeed low key.”

“Don’t tell me that you’re someone who innately likes to keep a low profile. Don’t try to fob me off with words used in placating a three year old.”

Old man Fei scratched his head and chuckled. “Fine, I’m your servant after all. Even amongst Qingyang Valley disciples, not many of them know of this matter.”

“Oh? Is there something behind this?”

“Young Chen, you’ve also made the observation that the higher the profile one keeps in the Skylareel Kingdom, the more capabilities, status, and support one has. It’s not that I, old Fei, don’t know how to handle matters nor do I not know how to maintain a high profile, it’s that I truly have my difficulties that I’m unable to voice.”

“What difficulties?”

“Young Chen, I was a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect back in the day. I had quite a reputation amongst the younger generation. Except, I was destined to run afoul of base persons in my life. I accidentally wounded a son of an elder of the sect in a fight once, and everything went downhill for me then. I finally couldn’t make it within the sect any further and voluntarily applied to pave the way for a site in a common kingdom, and this is how the Qingyang Valley came to be.”

“It’s better to be a bird’s beak than a cow’s rump. You were bullied in the Precious Tree Sect and was treated unjustly, it’s a wise decision to become the boss of an area within an ordinary kingdom.”

Old man Fei widened his eyes, “Young Chen, you must be kidding! Do you know what the identity of a sect disciple means? Particularly someone like me. If it hadn’t been for that matter, with my potential, I would’ve likely made it to the position of elder within a few decades. At worst, I would’ve been an elder-in-waiting. But look at me now. Even you’ve said that I’m an old and gross old man. Sigh. This is life. Taking a single step with the wrong foot means that my entire life is wrong.”

“Ai, young Chen, you’re young and so you won’t understand the bitterness, despair, and desolation of a sect genius coming down in the world to be amongst the common.”

At this moment, old man Fei had changed from his usual noisy and boisterous countenance, and his thin eyes were full of a tragic sadness that touched others.

Although Jiang Chen wasn’t the disciple of a sect, but from his knowledge of this world, there was indeed a great difference between sect disciples and ordinary practitioners.

To be exiled from being an exemplary disciple of a sect into passing the time in the common world, this was the same as Jiang Chen reincarnating into the son of a common, little duke from being the son of the Celestial Emperor. It was a speedy descent down three thousand meters.

However, Jiang Chen was luckier than old man Fei, because Jiang Chen hadn’t been able to cultivate in his past life, and good fortune had come out of a disaster when he reincarnated and now possesses the qualifications to train.

In that moment, Jiang Chen felt that he instead pitied old man Fei as someone who was afflicted with a similar suffering.

Chapter 165: Realizing the Philosophy Behind Entering the Spirit Realm

“Young Chen, there are no outsiders here and I, old Fei, am not scared of any jeering. To be honest, look at me. My position as the head of one of the heads of the four great sites, the Qingyang Valley, looks quite lofty, doesn’t it? However, in reality it’s less than even a fart. Any random, mid-ranked disciple from the Precious Tree Sect can point at my nose and curse my mother. I wouldn’t even be able to talk back. Therefore, this superficial level of glory exists only in ordinary people’s eyes.”

“Including the Northern Palace, Southern Palace, and Myriad Treasures Palace — their circumstances are surely better than mine, but their senior executives only amount to so much in the eyes of the Precious Tree Sect. Not that many sect disciples would give them face. In the eyes of true sect disciples, anyone who fools around in a common, ordinary kingdom, is someone who will amount to nothing. They’re all rejected defectives from the sect, and destined to have not much of a future. Do you understand when I put it this way, young Chen?”

Jiang Chen nodded faintly, “The sect disciples have their eyes set in high places. In their eyes, wasting time in the mundane world is a loss of power, and such people won’t amount to anything. This isn’t too difficult to understand.”

“Eh? Young Chen, are you also a sect disciple too? Otherwise...”

Jiang Chen waved his hands, “I’m not a sect disciple. I was born in the Eastern Kingdom, all of this can be verified. I can only say that I’m a bit luckier than ordinary practitioners.”

Old man Fei seemed to be musing over something when he suddenly said seriously, “Young Chen, allow me to continue. With your potential, your worldview and your bearing, it would be a true pity if you didn’t enter the sect. In my eyes, you absolutely have the qualifications to enter the Precious Tree Sect, and you can absolutely soar up into the sky and take the lead!”

“Let’s talk about that later. If being in a sect is a boulder than I am destined to be unable to bypass, then there’s nothing bad about entering and obtaining a slight understanding.”

Jiang Chen felt slightly distasteful towards the Purple Sun Sect, but this wouldn’t cause him to be irreversibly prejudiced against sects. He was an opened minded person, and naturally wouldn’t purposefully evade or reject sects because of a few subjective notions.

Jiang Chen had still inherited the thinking patterns from his past life as someone in a lofty position. If the sects were an obstacle that he was destined to run into, then he would either step over them or right on top of them.

Seeing that Jiang Chen’s attitude was this peaceful, old man Fei was flabbergasted. He wasn’t sure if Jiang Chen didn’t know that much about sects, or if his worldview was vast enough that he’d already jumped out of the confines of a sect and hence lacked the passion for them?

As he thought about it, he felt that it should be the latter.

Regardless of how he looked at things, young Chen didn’t see like one of those country bumpkin practitioners who hadn’t seen much of the world. Could someone who could gift him the Renewal Purity Pill like it was cabbage be completely clueless about sects?

To say the least, if Jiang Chen was willing to offer the recipe to the Renewal Purity Pill, it would be enough for him to gain a very nice position within the sect.

If he could offer it to an important member of the sect, perhaps he could gain the patronage of a great backer.

“However, why doesn’t he do so? Judging from his cultivation, he doesn’t seem to be a spirit realm practitioner. Can it be that the mysterious expert behind him is just a great pill master, and is unaccomplished in the realm of martial dao?” Old man Fei found it hard to get a grasp of things.

Jiang Chen paid no heed to old man Fei’s thoughts as he patted his shoulder, “After endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt whether there is a path out, suddenly one encounters the shade of a willow, bright flowers and a lovely village... Old man Fei, you’ve been ostracized from the sect for decades and are still so loyal to it. I believe that there will come a day when you can make a triumphant return back to the Precious Tree Sect.”

Old man Fei smiled wryly. “I hope such a day comes. I’m trying my best with the Qingyang Valley because I also want to make that slightest bit of contribution to the sect. I hope there will come a day when I can move the gods so that the senior levels of the sect know that there is such a character as I, Fei Xuan. Even though I was exiled, I never had any complaints or regrets and I even dreamed of returning to the sect when I slept.”

Jiang Chen sighed lightly. There were indeed many strange folk within the four great sites.

Elder Ning was absolutely focused on exterior looks with an almost perverted fixation on appearances.

Shi Xiaoyao was an absolute alcoholic, and quite besotted with the dao of wine.

As for old man Fei, he was a fervent supporter of the Precious Tree Sect. Even though he’d been discarded by the sect, he’d hardened his heart in his desire to return.

These were the hundred facets of the world.

Jiang Chen seemed to glean sudden reflections and feel sudden emotional resonance from these people.

“This is odd, why is it I’ve become so melancholy and moody all of a sudden? This is really bizarre.” Jiang Chen also felt strange. He didn’t know where these thoughts had come from either.

However, he’d naturally had these thoughts and couldn’t help but glimpse the hundred facets of human life from their state of their lives.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen seemed to grasp a thread of inspiration as his thoughts raced. Countless thoughts surged in that moment, as if a meteor shower fell from the skies, an irresistible advance.

“Old Fei, guard the surroundings for me a few more days, I’m going into closed door cultivation.”

After he threw down this strange instruction, Jiang Chen once again returned to the pill room. This time, he wasn’t refining a pill, he was meditating.

Those notions just now had enabled Jiang Chen to capture a wisp of inspiration, to grasp a delicate, mysterious opportunity.

Elder Ning, Shi Xiaoyao, old man Fei...

All these people and their stages of lives represented a type of attitude towards life.

Their attitudes were some of the most ideal material to refer to when shaking off the ordinary and entering the spirit realm.

Elder Ning, Shi Xiaoyao, why were they like that? It was obvious that they had been disciples who'd been washed out of the Precious Tree Sect. They were disciples who had no future within the sect, and so they simply decided to come to the ordinary world to enjoy life, and enjoy the thrills that power and influence brought in the ordinary world.

Meanwhile, old man Fei had also been expunged from the Precious Tree Sect, but he'd never accepted his defeat and never forgotten his desire to return to the sect. Even now, despite the fact that he was getting on in the years and behind the times, he still couldn't forget it.

Wasn't this the resolute conviction of "tearing through the boundaries and entering the spirit realm" that compelled him forward?

Old man Fei was meant to be a spirit realm practitioner, but without the support of the sect, he hadn't enjoyed the benefits of endless resources and was still an ordinary, middling, old man when he fell to the mortal world.

Although he held a large amount of power, his glory was only unparalleled within an ordinary kingdom. It was as he'd said, any true Precious Tree Sect disciple who was anyone could point a finger at his nose and curse his mother.

This was the division between the mortal and spirit realm. This was the path of martial dao. This was why there existed a never-ending drive to climb upwards.

Jiang Chen had theorized quite a bit of philosophy from these three people.

One was still ultimately a worm if he couldn't transmute true qi to spirit.

Transmuting true qi to spirit was the goal of all practitioners. But those who could truly complete the process were all geniuses that wore the golden scales of dragons.

To those who could take this step, it was but a simple step.

For those who couldn't make it, it was a chasm.

"Why is it that the ratio of practitioners that have transmuted their true qi in this world is so low? Why is the success rate of entering the spirit realm so low? From what I've seen, it's not a simple matter of not having the assistance of spirit medicine. It seems that their knowledge of the unformed bridge between true qi and spirit qi is not wholly complete. Perhaps, for the practitioners of this world, they think that transmuting true qi to spirit is merely an ascension of their martial dao training, but they cannot comprehend that it's a transformation, a ritual of leaving behind the mundane and entering the spirit. The enhancement of strength and raising of one's level in this process is important, but the enhancement and transformation of the heart's strength is equally important. Those who are unable to comprehend this will be unable to make it past this hurdle. This isn't too difficult to understand either."

In his meditations, Jiang Chen perceived many theories, and his comprehension of the heart's strength had already gone through a transformation, unbeknownst to him.

It wasn't a simple matter of understanding the true meaning of martial dao, but a comprehension of a stage of life.

From a certain aspect, Jiang Chen was also considered as being half step spirit realm from this moment forth.

And he only lacked that final step in the process now, and that was to transmute his true qi to spirit, cleave open the spirit ocean, and reshape the spirit ocean!

Jiang Chen had the aid of the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill in this process. He was richly endowed by nature compared to the other practitioners.

"Some of my comprehensions need to be more thorough. I still need some inspiration to complete the final bit of understanding. Obtaining that bit of understanding will be moment I enter the spirit realm."

Jiang Chen knew that he didn't have any time left for that now.

He had promised fourth prince Ye Rong that he would participate in Tutor Ye's birthday banquet, and offer his birthday wishes to this esteemed and sagacious elder. He couldn't break his word.

Refining the pill had taken ten days or so, and he'd meditated for a few more days. He calculated the dates and discovered that it was only another day or two before the promised day arrived.

When he returned home, Jiang Chen actually discovered that something had cropped up at home.

After Qiao Baishi had gone to the Southern Palace, the mundane tasks of the house fell to Jiang Chen's uncle, Jiang Tong, to handle. Jiang Chen's father, Jiang Feng, focused on martial dao and rarely inquired after matters at home.

Although Gouyu was Jiang Chen's follower in name, no one in the Jiang family truly treated her as a follower. She was basically the commander of the home guard.

This was to say, the entire Jiang family lacked a pillar when Jiang Chen wasn't present.

"The Dragonteeth Guard again?! Do they think that they didn't receive enough of a lesson last time?" When Jiang Chen heard from Xue Tong's report that it was the Dragonteeth Guard again, rage rose in his heart.

"Young master, it's different this time. According to the laws of the Skylaurel Kingdom, an unregistered spirit fowl cannot fly within the capital. The Qiao brothers have a brash personality and forgot themselves for a moment, giving an opportunity to the Dragonteeth Guard. They were captured along with their Goldwing Swordbirds. We asked about the matter through Commander Tian Shao, he's unable to do anything in this matter either."

"Are the two brothers alright?" Jiang Chen was more concerned with if any harm had befallen them.

"Having been captured by the Dragonteeth Guard, they're sure to suffer a bit. I went to visit them, it's not yet to the points of threatening their lives. Apparently a great character is celebrating his birthday soon, and the capital will be fasting for three days, with no blood allowed to be shed. The Dragonteeth Guard has to adhere to this too, so it seems that their lives should be safe for now."

Xue Tong felt similarly resigned. The Qiao brothers had brash personalities. Perhaps they could act without reservations in the Eastern Kingdom, but their characters would definitely land them in trouble in the Skylaurel Kingdom.

“Xue Tong, don’t berate yourself over this matter. You’ve tried your best, the fault isn’t on you. I’ll take care of it from here.”

“Young master, the Dragonteeth Guard is sure to use this as an excuse and make a big deal out of it, what strategy do you have?”

Jiang Chen spread out his hands. “If soldiers approach, we’ll send a general to fend them off. If water rises, we’ll create a dam to stop it. It happens to be the spirit king protector of the kingdom, Tutor Ye’s, birthday tomorrow. I will accompany the fourth prince to the banquet. You need not inquire more with regards this matter.”

The Dragonteeth Guard again!

A trace of killing intent flashed through Jiang Chen’s eyes.

“Dragonteeth Guard, I’ve already forgiven you once. I hope you were proceeding about this case normally this time, and not purposefully starting something. Otherwise, I will indubitably let you understand that you have to pay the price for provoking me, Jiang Chen, in blood!”

Chapter 166: The Birthday Banquet of the Spirit King Protector of the Kingdom

The name of Ye Chonglou was like the existence of a totem within the Skylaurel Kingdom. No one, from an eighty year old elderly man down to toddlers and children, would be unfamiliar with this name.

He didn’t have an awe-inspiring official title or a complex network of hanger-ons and power.

To put it even more plainly, he was just an old man who had nothing to do with the world. An idle, unoccupied person who busied himself with watching flowers bloom and fade. A person who concealed himself in the city.

However, when his name was mentioned, everyone from the king down to the commoners would be gravely respectful.

This was because this name was a monument and a totem to the Skylaurel Kingdom.

All the princes of the Skylaurel Kingdom had to respectfully call Ye Chonglou, “Teacher.”

Even the current king, who was a prince from the last generation had to respectfully call Ye Chonglou, “Teacher” as well.

Even the generation before the last, and the one before that...

At least five generations of the Ye family dynasty had to respectfully call Ye Chonglou “teacher”.

It could be said that tutor Ye Chonglou had passed his knowledge down to generation after generation of disciples in the royal family. No one could clearly identify how many generations it had been, and no one knew just how old Ye Chonglou was.

Generations of heritage and years of accumulation had resulted in Ye Chonglou's current day standing. Even though he held himself aloof from worldly affairs, no one had the right to compete with him.

Ye Chonglou didn't have any particular hobbies. He just had one habit, and that was to celebrate his birthday once a year.

Because of his habit, the royal family of the Skylaurel Kingdom had specially built a Tutor Manor for him.

This Tutor Manor was used only once a year, and that was to hold Tutor Ye's birthday banquet.

Jiang Chen wasn't born and bred in the Skylaurel Kingdom, and thus, he didn't have any direct knowledge of Tutor Ye. Therefore, when he saw fourth prince Ye Rong and the others meticulously get ready, he was a bit surprised.

"Younger brother Jiang Chen, you're here. Come, I'll introduce you." Ye Rong called out happily when he saw Jiang Chen. "You're old acquaintances with Tian Shao. He will be accompanying me to offer birthday tidings to Tutor Ye this time as well."

Ye Rong pointed at another young man with sculpturesque features next to him, introducing, "Lin Qianli, core disciple of the Azure Heaven Southern Palace. Your ages are similar, thus you can interact more."

Lin Qianli's expression was remote as he looked at Jiang Chen and nodded slightly.

When Jiang Chen saw him acting like this, he knew that Lin Qianli was likely someone with a haughty personality, so he smiled carelessly and was randomly polite, "I've long been looking forward to meeting you."

If it was anyone else dealing with pleasantries, they would usually say something polite in response as well. However, Lin Qianli smiled faintly, "You've come from the Eastern Kingdom just a month ago and this is the first time we are meeting. Why have you looked forward to meeting me?"

Jiang Chen laughed involuntarily, he'd thought that this Lin Qianli was an enigma and naturally remote, someone who didn't like to talk. He hadn't thought that the other would be so sharp, and would seem to be latently hostile.

"The great name of the Southern Palace is illustrious and renowned. Of course, I've long admired it." Since this fellow was going to be like this, Jiang Chen had no interest in wasting time talking to him.

Ye Rong hadn't thought that Lin Qianli would suddenly be so intensely keen and smiled, "Qianli, you haven't known Jiang Chen for long. When you interact more with him in the future, you'll know that younger brother Jiang Chen is absolutely worth your friendship."

"Jiang Chen, Qianli's personality is just like this. He's cold on the outside and warm on the inside. You'll know what's going on when you spend more time with him." Ye Rong eased the situation.

Tian Shao also said with a smile, "Yes yes, things of a kind come together and people of a mind fall into the same group. Those who aren't the same won't walk together. Qianli, young Chen, I'm slightly older than both of you and I have quite an eye for people. I can promise that the two of you will become good friends after spending some time together."

Lin Qianli smiled apathetically and declined to comment.

Jiang Chen shrugged slightly and he didn't say anything either. He wasn't the sort that had to make friends with someone, and would never put his hot face up to someone's cold bottom.

"Alright, it's about time, let's go."

Anyone could see that Ye Rong had made painstaking preparations to celebrate Tutor Ye's birthday. His outfit was neither showy nor did it lose the splendor befitting the air of a royal disciple. He appeared quite suited to the occasion.

Ye Rong's mood was quite cheery along the way as he chatted and laughed with Jiang Chen and the rest.

"Younger brother Jiang, there are many festive occasions in our Skylaurel Kingdom, the Wishing Tower temple fair for instance, the Precious Tree selection is another. The birthday banquet celebration of Tutor Ye is another one of those."

Tian Shao was quite friendly with Jiang Chen. After all, they had gone through a lot together. At the end of the day, half of the reason why he'd been able to be promoted to vice general this time could be attributed to Jiang Chen.

Therefore, Tian Shao played the role of tour guide for Jiang Chen along the way.

"Tutor Ye a person who is indifferent to fame and wealth. He celebrates his birthday every year and he uses the banquet as an opportunity to examine the younger generation of the Skylaurel Kingdom. Therefore, those who receive the invite are all young wonders of the kingdom who are less than thirty years old. Of course, everyone who receives an invite can bring a certain number of guests. There's no age restriction on the accompanying guests."

"This opportunity is rare. Any disciple in the Skylaurel Kingdom who is anyone would be honored to receive Tutor Ye's invitation."

"Younger brother Jiang Chen, don't feel too ill at ease at an occasion like this. Tutor Ye's mindset is such that he neither worries nor cares about public opinion. He has a very unique eye in judging people and matters. Things like birth and status are all but floating clouds to him. To him, there is no foundational difference between a prince and a commoner."

A senior elder who stood at the peak of a kingdom naturally wouldn't have any distinctive stances. Jiang Chen didn't doubt this point.

"I'm guessing that the people the first prince is bringing this time will be directed at you. Jiang Chen, you must be mentally prepared."

Jiang Chen's issue with the Dragonteeth Guard had caused such a furor, and Lu Wuji had been made an example of to within an inch of his life. As the person behind him, the first prince would surely be ticked off.

"Jiang Chen, don't worry either. Even if first brother has some ideas or thoughts, he wouldn't dare act too atrociously in front of Tutor Ye." Ye Rong comforted Jiang Chen when he saw that the latter wasn't speaking.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Since we have come, let us stay and enjoy it. There's nothing much to worry about."

The Tutor Manor's yard, a quiet and secluded spot within the capital.

The group of four quickly arrived at the entrance to the Tutor Manor.

At that moment, the entrance to the Tutor Manor was bustling with extraordinary activity and noise. Any young disciple who had received an invite all cleaned themselves up nicely and came to participate in the banquet.

There was a small, exquisite lady with a lithe, graceful body at the door. She wore minimal make up and a demure smile that didn't lose the slightest bit of enthusiasm as she greeted all the guests with a smile.

"Jiang Chen, that woman is called Dan Fei. Tutor Ye adopted her when she was young. She's Tutor Ye's disciple in name, but Tutor Ye actually treats her like a grandchild and dotes on her hugely."

When Tian Shao introduced Dan Fei, he lowered his voice as much as possible, obviously dreading this Dan Fei quite a bit.

Jiang Chen lifted his head to look at Dan Fei when he heard Tian Shao speak like this.

The girl was dignified and proper with white, translucent skin and slightly painted eyebrows. The feeling of a female superwoman exuded from her gestures, giving Jiang Chen the first impression that — this woman is not one to be trifled with.

"Younger brother Ye Rong greets sister Dan Fei." Fourth prince Ye Rong's personality was outgoing as he walked up with a smile of someone greeting an old friend, and sketched a bow.

"Ye Rong, you little monkey! Mm, you seemed to have grown a bit taller in the months that I haven't seen you." The girl called Dan Fei was roughly the same age as Gouyu and thus, she was naturally much older than Ye Rong.

"Sister Dan Fei, to still call me by that in today's occasion is denying your younger brother much face!" Ye Rong purposefully appeared to be a bit depressed, but he was inwardly happy.

He knew that Tutor Ye's treasured disciple Dan Fei still had quite a positive impression of him.

Dan Fei laughed lightly as her slender neck moved slightly, revealing the snow white skin at the nape of her neck and adding a few more traces of allure.

Her finger tip lightly grazing over Ye Rong's nose, she said, "Hurry and go in! Your older brothers have already arrived."

Ye Rong chuckled, "Sister Dan Fei, is teacher in good health?"

"Yes, he's in quite good health. However, he's been worrying over some matters lately. Eh, that's right, you don't know that already?"

Dan Fei looked at the three companions that Ye Rong had brought, and her almond eyes had a few traces of surprise in them when she swept them across Jiang Chen and the others.

"What's happened?" Ye Rong started as his heart sank in that moment, feeling that he had missed out on something important.

Dan Fei spread out her hands, "Alright, go on in first. Let's chat when we have a chance later on. I need to greet other people here."

Ye Rong had a wry face, "Alright, sister Dan Fei, you need to tell me later. Teacher has been so good to me that I should at least take on some of his burdens for him."

Dan Fei sighed lightly but she didn't say anything.

Ye Rong knew Dan Fei's personality and he appropriately led Jiang Chen and the others inside.

After passing through the door, a spacious yard came into view. It was quite expansive and it had been designed according to the style of a garden. It was as if a beautiful park.

There were artificial mountains, pavilions, running water, and bridges.

The elite disciples of the kingdom who had come to participate in the banquet were all clustered together in twos and threes, talking and laughing. All of them were in high, vigorous spirits.

The Skylareel Kingdom was amongst the best of the sixteen kingdom alliance. The young disciples of the entire kingdom were suffused with the confidence and bearing that was found only within a strong kingdom.

Judging from this perspective, their overall level was indeed much higher than the noble disciples of the Eastern Kingdom.

From the noble disciples of the previous Eastern Kingdom, setting Jiang Chen aside, the only ones with the right to enter an occasion such as this would likely be the Long family brother and sister.

The least of any of the disciples here would be many times better than any of the other disciples of the so-called four great families.

"The Skylareel Kingdom isn't strong without reason." Jiang Chen had this direct thought in his heart.

Since he was following in Ye Rong's retinue this time, Jiang Chen would naturally not supplant his host. He kept a low profile next to Ye Rong and avoided unnecessary trouble to the best of his abilities.

Ye Rong's personality was outgoing, with a few traces of humor within his joviality. This caused him to have quite some connections with the noble disciples of the kingdom.

Therefore, many greeted him with a smile everywhere he went.

"Number four, I recall that you've always been quite low key. Why do I feel that you seemed to have changed your style lately?"

Just as Ye Rong was greeting well known acquaintances, someone walked out from a side garden and walked over with a slightly mocking tone.

Chapter 167: Meeting on a Narrow Path, Eyes Ablaze with Hatred

The person who had also arrived wore the accoutrements of a royal disciple. He wasn't tall, but a sense of shrewdness filled his eyes. As those eyes looked around, there were even a few traces of a violent air.

“Third brother, you’ve come this early?” The smile on Ye Rong’s face didn’t falter when he saw this person and called out in greeting.

“The earlier the better when offering birthday felicitations for the honored tutor since that indicates you possess more sincerity. Number four, haven’t you always said that the honored tutor has always taken great care of you? Why have you come so late? Is it that you affirm with your lips but deny in your heart?”

This person was the third son of the current king, Ye Zheng. Out of all the princes, his status was a bit higher than Ye Rong’s, but he basically also had no hope for being Crown Prince.

Ye Zheng probably also knew that he had no hope of being Crown Prince, so he was quite close to first prince Ye Dai and rather proactive about cozying up to him.

“Third brother, you still like to joke around. Us brothers have all benefited greatly from the honored tutor’s attentions. How can there be a difference in the weight of our sincerity?”

Ye Rong didn’t want to get embroiled in a quarrel with Ye Zheng so he simply laughed heartily. “Third brother, I’ll go walk around and say hello to everyone.”

Ye Zheng smiled superciliously, “Number four, I was saying just now that you’ve been keeping a high profile lately. What, you want to greet everyone and make connections here and there? Do you have something in mind?”

This was an allusion and insinuation obliquely implying that Ye Rong had the ambition to become Crown Prince.

Ye Rong looked quite innocent as he laughed wryly, “Third brother, we’re all young folks here and just greeting each other. Isn’t that common courtesy? Otherwise, people will say that we royal disciples have no manners and maintain an aloof elitence. Wouldn’t that be throwing the face of our Ye family away?”

“Haha, well said, well said!” An extremely magnetic voice suddenly resounded from behind.

Ye Rong knew who it was as soon as he heard it.

Indeed, a person whose complexion was as clear as jade with eyes like bright stars and wearing a light yellow robe that offset his tall stature walked out from the artificial mountains on the side. He was towering, straight-backed, and magnificent, giving one the feeling of one brimming with talent.

“Big brother, you’re here as well.” Ye Rong didn’t actually want to interact with this person, but since he’d already appeared, there was no way that Ye Rong could avoid the inevitable.

The person who had come possessed an imposing and dignified bearing, and comported himself with sophisticated grace. He was the first prince, Ye Dai. There were five followers behind him, also illustrating the special treatment afforded to the first prince.

They were both here to attend Ye Chonglou’s birthday banquet. Ye Dai was the first prince and although he hadn’t been titled the Crown Prince, but he could bring five followers with him.

As the fourth prince, Ye Rong had only three slots.

Although it was just a difference in numbers, this displayed the differences between the two.

“Number four, so you’ve finally arrived.”

“First brother, what does this mean? Could it possibly be that you were waiting for me?” Ye Rong deliberately pretended to be confused.

“You’re right. Heh heh, I’ve been waiting for you.” Ye Dai said with a faint smile.

“I’ve heard that you have a follower called Jiang Chen. I wonder if he has come today?” Ye Dai’s gaze was noncommittal as he swept it randomly behind Ye Rong. That light dismissal seemed as if he had gazed at several wooden logs instead, completely displaying the superior attitude of his position of first prince without holding back anything at all.

Ye Rong started. He’d actually been mentally prepared for Ye Dai’s pointed actions, but he hadn’t thought that Ye Dai would be so direct.

“Royal big brother, it seems rather inappropriate if you wish to cause a scene on an occasion like today?” Although Ye Rong was wary of Ye Dai, he couldn’t possibly back down at this time either.

“Haha, number four, you’re thinking too much, aren’t you? Cause a scene? What can cause a scene about between us brothers? I’ve heard that this Jiang Chen has caused quite a disturbance lately and wanted to see for myself just what kind of amazing character this young man from the Eastern Kingdom is like.”

Ye Dai was quite at ease as he laughed. It was obvious that he felt no pressure at all in front of Ye Rong as his every word and laugh was self-confident and carefree.

And, he also seemed to rather enjoy the dread that Ye Rong was projecting upon confronting him, as though he was facing a formidable enemy.

At this moment, someone growled sinisterly from behind Ye Dai, “Jiang Chen, the first prince wishes to see you. This is a wonderful thing similar to the auspicious sign of green smoke rising from your ancestors’ graves yet you’re hiding like a young, married woman behind the fourth prince. What, are you afraid to meet the first prince?”

This voice had a harsh tone to it, filled with a sense of hatred that rose up to the heavens. It was vice general Lu Wuji. He’d taken a great fall this time and although he hadn’t been demoted, but his prestige had more or less taken a hit within the Dragonteeth Guard. Add that to being swindled out of a great sum of money by Jiang Chen, his inner energy had been greatly injured. He’d also been humiliated by Jiang Chen. His belly was so full of resentment and anger that not even all the waters of three rivers and five creeks would be enough to wash those emotions away.

“Unpresentable?” Jiang Chen said with a slight smile. “Lu Wuji, perhaps you should say these words to yourself? If I were you, I’d really take cover in a turtle’s shell to avoid coming out in public and making a fool out of myself. What, you didn’t lose enough face last time?”

Lu Wuji’s gaze was tinged with a violent light as he said viciously, “Jiang Chen, don’t you be too proud too quickly.”

“Haha, does this kind of nonsense need to be repeated? Why can’t I be proud? What reason do I have to not be proud in front of you, Lu Wuji? Give me a reason, eh?”

“Jiang Chen, you animal, do you remember me? You beat a disciple of my Northern Palace to death. I, Liu Can, will well and truly settle this score with you when we exit these doors. Let’s see if you can escape to the Qingyang Valley this time!” Another person jumped out and started threatening malevolently.

This person was obviously Liu Can of the Northern Palace, the strongest amongst the culprits who’d originally been pursuing Jiang Chen to death.

“You, transsexual? What, you’ve come to strut around in pride and glory instead of hiding in your Northern Palace after old man Fei didn’t slap you to death with one blow last time? Who do you plan on robbing this time?”

Transsexual! That was a degrading term that commoners used to call eunuchs. Liu Can had unique features since he had the body of a man, but his features contained a few traces of female tenderness. He did rather look like a eunuch.

When he heard Jiang Chen call him a transsexual, Liu Can was greatly enraged. This was the word that was the greatest taboo to him. He was strong within the Northern Palace so no one dared talk about him like that behind his back, much less than to his face.

Not to mention that in such a brief moment, Jiang Chen had humiliated him in front of so many others!

“Jiang Chen, you country bumpkin, you creature as pathetic as a dog. How dare you act this wildly in my Skylareland Kingdom? I, Liu Can, swear that I will kill you!” Liu Can spoke through gritted teeth.

“Mm, now that you mention it, your current state of frenzied rage really does make you look like a defeated dog. However, I won’t compare you to a dog since that’s an insult to dogs.” Jiang Chen smiled slightly.

In terms of verbal sparring and how good one was at being venom-tongued, Jiang Chen was absolutely peerless and matchless.

He didn’t need to speak sharply or hop up and down like a shrew cursing in the street, gasping for breath angrily.

A few random words were enough to grasp the scabs of the other’s wounds and viciously throw some salt in their wounds.

Lu Wuji and Liu Can were thus defeated after a few rounds.

This caused a coldly strict youth beside Lu Wuji to be quite irritated. He took one step forward and stared at Jiang Chen with a coolly sinister look. “Jiang Chen, I, Xin Wudao, was handling a case outside and thus allowed you to escaped disaster. If I had been in charge of your case, you would already be a stark white skeleton in the Black Dungeons by now.”

“And who the hell are you? Are you guys taking turns in the battle ring to exchange verbal blows? You’ve got a lot of spare time on your hands.” Jiang Chen looked at those behind the first prince. “First

prince, I must protest. Your followers love flapping their mouths. Aren't you going to keep in them in line?"

Ye Dai smiled dashingly, "This is a private matter between all of you. Whether it's me or number four, we both have no authority to intervene. Jiang Chen, I've heard of your exploits within the Eastern Kingdom. However, this is the Skylareland Kingdom. Since you're an outsider with no foundation, you should look more clearly at which road to take."

This sounded like a call for peace, but it was actually an attempt at taking Jiang Chen down a peg.

Jiang Chen gave a bark of laughter. "This proves that the first prince does not know enough of me yet. I, Jiang Chen, always walk my own path and let others go on barefoot."

"Jiang Chen, don't you be arrogant." Xin Wudao roared. "I, Xin Wudao, am the general of the seventh troop of the Dragonteeth Guard. I'll tell you clearly, you're in trouble."

"Oh? Are you threatening me?" Jiang Chen sneered with a shadow of a smile. The general of the seventh troop of the Dragonteeth Guard, this meant that he was Lu Wuji's superior since Lu Wuji was the vice general of the seventh troop.

"Threatening you? Who the hell are you to be worthy of receiving my threats? Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan are your dogs, aren't they? They behaved atrociously and disturbed the order of the capital. They've already been arrested by me. Jiang Chen, you were lucky to escape disaster last time because I wasn't there. This time, I'll start with your followers."

Jiang Chen's expression grew chilly. He already knew that something had happened to Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan which resulted in their arrest by the Dragonteeth Guard. Jiang Chen had been hoping that it was the Dragonteeth Guard going about their normal business, but from Xin Wudao's tone, it was quite apparent that he was using his position to get even for a personal matter.

Seeing Jiang Chen remain silent, Xin Wudao was even more proud. "What? Aren't you going to be cocky? Didn't you suck up to the three great sites? Why don't you repeat past events for me to see?"

It was obvious that inciting a matter like the three great sites simultaneously launching an attack once was alright, but it would definitely not go down well if it was used too many times.

Powers such as the three great sites could not make any decision carelessly. He'd leveraged them well last time, because the others had sought his favor. He had also cleverly used the circumstances he was in to create a situation in which the three great sites attacked the Dragonteeth Guard together.

Such a thing could happen once, but not twice.

There would be no problem on old man Fei's side for the Qingyang Valley, but it was impossible for the sides of the Myriad Treasures Palace and the Southern Palace.

Except, if he played the card that was old man Fei again, it was the same as using the same trick twice. Whether or not it was effective, it would at least appear cowardly and timid.

Besides, after last time's conversation, Jiang Chen also knew that old man Fei had his own burdens. Old man Fei had been marked by those of the Precious Tree Sect and thus had always kept a low profile.

If he pushed old man Fei to the front whenever he ran into something, then that would simply be a bit too cruel to him.

Jiang Chen disdained doing so and hence did not want to do so.

“Jiang Chen, don’t say that I’m taking advantage of my power to bully you. I’ll give you a chance. There will be a martial sparring segment later when we celebrate the honored tutor’s birthday. If you can beat me during that segment, then I’ll immediately return those two dogs to you.”

Xin Wudao’s tone was as quick and forceful as it was overbearing and aggressive. Accompanied with the violence imbued in his gaze, he was a presence that demanded submission from others.

Jiang Chen lifted an eyelid slightly, “Do you mean that?”

Xin Wudao laughed heartily, “I’m a vaunted general of the Dragonteeth Guard. How would I play the juvenile tricks of first making you promises and then denying them?”

“Alright, it’s settled then.” Jiang Chen said noncommittally.

He could also see that Xin Wudao’s strength had already surpassed half step spirit realm. He was a practitioner truly within the first level of the spirit realm.

To his surprise, out of Ye Dai’s five followers, Jiang Chen discovered that three of them were spirit realm practitioners. Apart from Xin Wudao and Liu Can from the Northern Palace, there was another mysterious man wearing a full body black robe and a cape. He was also a spirit realm practitioner, and his presence in the spirit realm was even stronger than Liu Can’s and Xin Wudao’s.

Jiang Chen already did not have much confidence in facing off against Xin Wudao or Liu Can, but if they wanted him to fight against the mysterious man, then he would be even less assured of a victory.

Chapter 168: Lordmaster Ye with the Invincible Aura

“Younger brother Jiang, you were too impulsive.” Tian Shao sighed when the first prince’s men left. “You shouldn’t have agreed to the demonstration.”

“Jiang Chen, Xin Wudao is one of the ten generals of the Dragonteeth Guard. His training is foremost amongst the ten generals. He’s had many wondrous twists of fortune on his path of martial dao training, and he’s already broken through into the spirit realm. He numbers amongst the top select experts in the younger generation within the capital.” Ye Rong was quite worried. “If he issues a challenge later, I’ll find an excuse to reject it. Ten years is not too late for a gentleman to see his revenge.”

“Ten years?” Jiang Chen shook his head. “A gentleman cannot be cowed easily. Although I, Jiang Chen, am no particular gentlemen, I know that losses cannot be suffered overnight. Ten years for revenge? I can’t wait that long.”

“Ai, younger brother Jiang, this is an obvious trap that they’ve set for you and they’re waiting for you to jump in it.” Tian Shao still wanted to persuade Jiang Chen to give the match up.

“The distinction between geniuses and mediocrity lies in that although knowing full well there’s a trap there, geniuses will jump down without hesitation, whereas mediocrity will cower and shrink. Jiang

Chen, it's your choice whether you're a genius or just mediocre." Lin Qianli, who'd been silent all along, suddenly spoke up.

"Oh? Brother Lin, what would you choose if it was you?" Jiang Chen asked rather meaningfully.

Lin Qianli said proudly, "What a useless question."

"I can answer this question for you on his behalf." Fourth prince Ye Rong suddenly opened his mouth. "Qianli is an exceedingly stubborn person on his path of martial dao. He never leaves a way out for himself."

"Haha, not bad, not bad. Even the fourth prince has spoken. Lin Qianli, I'm beginning to admire you a bit."

Jiang Chen and the others had already followed Prince Ye Rong into the inner courtyard as they chatted.

This was where the birthday banquet was truly being held. All was already in readiness in the spacious inner courtyard, and it only awaited the young geniuses of the Skylareel Kingdom to take their seats.

Everything would have been precisely prearranged for a banquet of this level. How many invites to send, how many seats to arrange, and everyone's seating arrangement had all been previously arranged.

Therefore, the possibility of fighting for seats didn't exist.

As a royal son, Ye Rong's ranking amongst the princes was number four. Therefore, his arranged seat was the closest to the center.

The tables of this banquet were the long, rectangle sort and were placed on the two sides of the courtyard.

The first row of seats on both sides were naturally those of the first prince Ye Dai and second prince Ye Qiao.

Ye Rong had been arranged to sit on the the second row. Third prince Ye Zheng was at the table on the left, Ye Rong was on the table on the right and they sat facing across from each other.

Dan Fei sashayed up to the main table after everyone had taken their seats. Her almond eyes scanned the area and her skin was like flawless white jade. She appeared very lovely and moving.

Her pearly teeth showing slightly, Dan Fei smiled, "Dan Fei is very happy that on this day, every year, I get to see the young geniuses of my Skylareel Kingdom gather under one roof. I see your growth and changes every year, and see you transform from green youths to strapping men who can undertake tasks alone. The honored tutor holds himself aloof from the world and he has long since made light of the affairs of human life. Why does he wish to celebrate his birthday every year? Not because the honored tutor likes a lively bustle, but because he wishes to see talent of exceptional ability appear in every generation, and to see the pupil outdo the teacher. He wishes for the youths of Skylareel Kingdom to become stronger and stronger every generation. The kingdom only has hope when the young are big and powerful."

Dan Fei's words were sonorous and forceful, but they still retained a trace of her unique soft tenderness. It made the hearts of the young folk beneath the main table pound with emotion.

The young folk present had all more or less received Tutor Ye's tutelage. Except, some of them were less fortunate and they had had fewer opportunities to receive teaching. They weren't like the princes of the royal family who were able to receive Tutor Ye's personal coaching everyday.

Receiving Tutor Ye's tutelage was a glory, and it was a cherished goal that all these young people would beg for even in their sleep. There was also another key point that they could be close to Sister Dan Fei. She was a woman that filled the minds of young men with dreams and sent their hormones flying.

Looking at the reactions of the young men below, Dan Fei smiled faintly but she didn't say anything. As smart as she was, how would she not know the thoughts of these kids?

"Alright, everyone be quiet now, the honored tutor is arriving."

Dan Fei bent slightly and called out respectfully, "Lordmaster."

An elder with white hair and a white beard wearing a loose robe walked in. A feeling of a mythological immortal emanated from his brow, giving others the spiritual feeling of floating away from the mundane world.

This elder was the totem figure of the Skylareel Kingdom, Tutor Ye Chonglou.

Ye Chonglou's pace was not fast, but his every step gave Jiang Chen the misconception that a great mountain had grown feet and was moving itself over.

Don... don... don... don...

In that instant, Jiang Chen's "Ear of the Zephyr" actually heard all sorts of drumming sounds. The frequency of these sounds were actually becoming faster and faster.

This obviously wasn't any drumming sound, it was the sound of heartbeats.

Ye Chonglou's every step caused the heartbeat of those around him to speed up accordingly.

"He isn't purposefully stimulating his aura and he isn't using strong spirit power to suppress the scene! Tutor Ye is merely using the rhythm of his footsteps to create oppression and affect everyone's heartbeat!" Jiang Chen was vaguely surprised. He originally hadn't thought much of Tutor Ye, but he suddenly understood why everyone in the entire Skylareel Kingdom revered this person as a totem character.

Even Chu Xinghan from that day would likely find it impossible to not be affected by this elder, much less Liu Can and Xin Wudao, those practitioners of the first level spirit realm.

At this moment, Jiang Chen's "Boulder's Heart" began to show its purpose. He calmed the various thoughts in his heart with some effort and he controlled his mind, unmoving as a mountain, as if a boulder.

Even though Tutor Ye's footsteps seemed to be imbued with some sort of magic, as strong as those heartbeats were, he would strive with all his might to be as unmoving as a mountain.

Except, under such strong influence, it was difficult for Jiang Chen to truly be as unmoving as a mountain.

Just as he was unable to hold out —

“Haha, not bad, not bad. We haven’t met in a year, but you young fellows haven’t laid down your training. Sit, everyone, let’s not stand on ceremony.”

“Student Ye Dai greets Tutor Ye. May the honored tutor live a long life, with many happy returns of this day unto eternity, forever protect the mountains and waters of my Skylaurel Kingdom and pass down your legacy throughout the ages.”

“Ye Qiao greets the honored tutor. May the honored tutor’s happiness be as immense as the eastern sea, life as long as Mt. Tai, and remain forever ageless.”

“Ye Zheng, Ye Rong, Ye Hao... greets the honored tutor.”

The princes took the lead in stepping out and moving forward to make their bows and gestures.

Only then did the sons and disciples of the other nobles and dukes all step up and respectfully make their greetings, offering words of blessings.

When these ceremonies were observed, Ye Dai broke the ice and smiled, “Sister Dan Fei, it’s about time. Shall we present our gifts to the teacher?”

Dan Fei smiled merrily, “Ye Dai, you’re so eager. It looks like you’ve prepared something nice this year and want to come out on top?”

“Heh heh, sister Dan Fei is sister Dan Fei alright. You can see through even my little bit of planning.” Although Ye Dai possessed a sophisticated manner, he presented quite a nice manner in front of Dan Fei, and tried hard to create the role of a younger brother for himself.

He was well aware that Dan Fei served by Tutor Ye’s side, and she was the tutor’s favorite. As long as he appropriately fawned on Dan Fei, he would surely leave a good impression with Tutor Ye as well.

Having Dan Fei speak a few good words to Tutor Ye was something that a thousand gold would find it hard to buy.

Dan Fei looked back to cast a look of inquiry at Ye Chonglou when she saw the excited expressions of the young folk all itching to have a go.

The lordmaster didn’t look that enthused and flagging interest was hidden in between his brows.

“Dan Fei, come here.” He beckoned with his hand.

Dan Fei walked over leisurely and put her ear up to the lordmaster’s mouth.

His lips moved slightly, he seemed to be murmuring something. Dan Fei’s almond eyes blinked as her brows danced, and then she nodded afterwards.

“Everyone, the lordmaster has said that another segment will be added before presenting the gifts at today’s birthday banquet. Everyone, please be mentally prepared. The segment is, if anyone can solve this difficult problem, the lordmaster will owe them a favor.”

“What?” All the noble disciples beneath the main table were shocked.

Who was the honored tutor? He was the Mt. Tai and the North Star, the unaging totem of the Skylareland Kingdom. A favor from him was definitely a medal that was an absolute exemption from death!

It wouldn't even be an exaggeration to say that a favor from the honored tutor was even more useful than one from the king himself.

After all, the king's favor would undoubtedly be either fame or riches. The noble scions present weren't short of these, and these things could be earned.

However, Tutor Ye was a legendary character. His favor would absolutely surpass mundane glory and splendor!

Even first prince Ye Dai's heart raced as joy blossomed on his face. He'd received some intelligence beforehand so he'd made full preparations before this year's celebrations. When he heard Dan Fei's words, he more or less guessed that the preparations he'd made were the right gamble!

As for fourth prince Ye Rong, he vaguely felt that he had missed something when he heard Dan Fei say that the tutor had something troubling him lately.

When he heard Dan Fei's words now, that thoughtful feeling deepened. He then looked at the sense of excitement that the first prince couldn't fully hide between his brows, and his thoughtful feelings become even stronger.

"This is bad, Ye Dai must've received some sort of advance warning this time and prepared for this matter beforehand. I must've missed something! I'm going to be caught on the wrong foot this time!"

Ye Rong was a bit regretful but also unwilling to accept his loss at the same time. His connections in the capital still had a gap compared to the first prince.

It was obvious from this matter alone. The first prince's intelligence could even reach Tutor Ye!

"Sister Dan Fei treats me well and she would definitely not be biased towards Ye Dai and give him information privately. Ye Dai's mother's family has great power, wide networks, and many connections. Is he going to occupy the first mover advantage again this time?" Ye Rong felt more and more hopelessly stupid as he thought.

Setting down one foot wrong meant all his footsteps were wrong.

A favor from the honored master was something that even their father, the king, was unlikely obtain easily!

If the first prince took this advantage as well, he really would be like a tiger with wings. He would have subtly received the support of the honored tutor. Ye Dai already had an advantage in the fight over the title of Crown Prince, his momentum as a descending ruler would be even more irresistible then!

"Just what is it that could cause even the honored tutor to have a headache?" Ye Rong was deeply worried at heart and he was also silently praying, "I hope that even Ye Dai will be unable to resolve this problem. Otherwise, if this favor falls on his head, the rest of us princes will be unable to find any footing in the capital anymore."

Chapter 169: The First Prince who'd Invested A Lot

In the middle of the stage, Dan Fei's painted brows moved slightly as she smiled. "Alright, first, we will go by the usual rules. Everyone will present their birthday gifts and when all the gifts have been presented, the lordmaster will personally choose three and award them places. Those who are awarded these places can ask the lordmaster questions and seek his guidance. First place can ask two questions. Second and third can both ask one. These are the rules, is everyone clear?"

"Sister Dan Fei, we all know these rules."

"Yes, sister Dan Fei. Let's start with presenting the gifts! This time, I'm going to place no matter what the cost!"

Standing behind Ye Rong, Jiang Chen looked at the expressions that yearned for action amidst the fervent atmosphere, thinking that all of this was a bit strange.

Logically speaking, for such an erudite and otherworldly person like the lordmaster, how the birthday gifts from these youths interest him at all? And to list this as a regular segment that recurred every year?

No matter how he looked at it, Jiang Chen didn't think the honored tutor was a man who craved riches.

But if he wasn't someone who lusted after wealth, Jiang Chen didn't understand it why he would place such importance on this segment either.

Jiang Chen couldn't help but cast a curious and surprised glance at the lordmaster. Ye Chonglou's eyes had been half lidded, and he'd turned a deaf ear to the riotous atmosphere present.

In the instant that Jiang Chen looked over, the lordmaster's eyelids suddenly lifted and his meaningful gaze just so happened to meet Jiang Chen's.

Jiang Chen smiled awkwardly, as if he was a peeping Tom caught in the act. But, he had no misgivings and immediately shifted his gaze away.

On the main table, the lordmaster seemed to have carelessly opened his eyes as well, and he didn't pursue Jiang Chen with his gaze. The look in his eyes was leisurely as he slowly closed his eyes again.

Jiang Chen paid no heed to this small interlude. Rather, it was Ye Chonglou whose heart was slightly stirred. Privately, he was a bit surprised. "The young man standing behind Ye Rong seems to be a new face? Has he possibly trained in some art of mental strength? My footsteps of the heart just now controlled even the spirit realm practitioners, but he was the only one who did not seem to be affected by me?"

The lordmaster's strength was head and shoulders above everyone else, and with a single thought, he could grasp all movement within a radius of ten li. When he walked with the footsteps to disturb the rhythms of the heart just now, he had been mentally calculating the rhythms of the heartbeats of those present, using that to define the level of training of the young ones present.

Including Dan Fei, there were 24 present, but he had actually captured two kinds of rhythms.

There was actually a fish that'd escaped the net!

Although Jiang Chen could break free from the control of the lordmaster's footsteps of the heart, but he could not prevent himself being identified from the crowd.

The lordmaster had been a bit joyful in the beginning, thinking that the level of training of a particular prince had advanced by leaps and bounds to the point that said prince could fight back against his footsteps of the heart.

But in the end, he'd discovered that the fish that had escaped the net wasn't a prince, and wasn't even a spirit realm practitioner at all. It was a young man he'd never seen before.

Judging from his age, this young man seemed to be even younger than a few of the princes.

At the moment that Jiang Chen's gaze had moved in the lordmaster's direction, the latter had sensed this and gained a spontaneous interest to probe Jiang Chen.

He had ended up discovering that the little fellow who'd snuck a glance at him wasn't under the slightest bit of pressure. When their eyes met, he'd carelessly moved his gaze away.

"This little fellow is rather interesting. Which house's young master is he?" Some curiosity grew within Tutor Ye's heart. It had been a very, very long time since he'd met such an interesting young person.

In reality, he held a birthday banquet every year because he wanted to test the young of the kingdom and see if there were any surprises.

Naturally, the so-called offering of gifts naturally wasn't because Ye Chonglou coveted these items, but because he wanted to make use of this opportunity to inspect the younger generation's temperament and powers of comprehension.

However, all of them held the mindset of competing with each other in presenting beautiful and fascinating gifts, hoping to curry favor with him.

They were unaware that what he valued wasn't these items, but the bearing and disposition they displayed through the segment of offering gifts.

It was a pity that year after year, the young people present never understood his intentions.

In actuality, the lordmaster didn't even look at the items offered. He'd hand them over to Dan Fei to send to the Myriad Treasures Palace and sell them all.

Dan Fei privately arranged for all the funds gleaned from the sale to go to charity. They were donated to the impoverished citizens within the kingdom who needed help, or used to develop poor practitioners with potential but no family background or backing.

None of the young folk present knew about any of this.

Standing behind Ye Rong, Jiang Chen could also faintly detect Ye Rong's nervous mood.

Indeed, Ye Rong was more than a bit anxious. More accurately, he was nervous to obtain a favor and worried that he would lose. He'd come prepared this time as well.

He wanted to take the lead in the segment of offering gifts and gain the honored tutor's favor. He could obtain the chance to seek knowledge from the honored tutor himself, and obtain the honored tutor's favor and good inclinations.

But, Ye Rong was also well aware that although he had made his preparations, so had the other princes. Everyone was smart and knew that this was the one good chance that came around every year to curry favor with the lordmaster. No one would let go of this opportunity easily.

“Honored tutor, student Ye Dai has walked through all sixteen kingdoms to obtain a scroll of the “Yellow Dragon Watching the Seas Painting”. It is said that if a spirit realm practitioner diligently studies this work, they will be able to increase their mental strength, receive inspiration, and even use it to prolong life! I offer it to the tutor in hopes that the honored tutor will have many happy returns!”

“What? The Yellow Dragon Watching the Seas Painting? Even spirit realm practitioners can use it to increase their mental strength, and prolong their life?”

“This... the step that the first prince has taken with this is simply too big? What else can we bring out to compete with him now that he’s shown off this treasure?”

“It’s over, it looks like no one else can have a shot at being number one then. Damn it, damn it!”

“The Yellow Dragon Watching the Seas Painting?” At that moment, Ye Rong’s heart also spasmed as his mouth was filled with bitterness. All sorts of depressing thoughts surged to the front of his heart. “This Ye Dai! He’s definitely invested a lot in this. His actions are to completely end everyone’s thoughts about attaining number one!”

Ye Rong was not willing to take this lying down and didn’t want to accept this, but he was also resigned. As the first prince, the power on Ye Dai’s mother’s side was the strongest amongst all the princes. The amount of resources that he’d received since small had also been the most.

Ye Rong’s birth mother was just a regular imperial concubine, with no power or influence. Even though he’d tried hard since he was small, he’d naturally fallen behind first prince Ye Dai in many areas since birth.

And now, the segment of offering gifts once again fully illustrated the differences between them.

After offering such a gift, Ye Dai was in fine fettle as he stood in the center of the area with his tall body, observing the reactions of those around him and enjoying the feeling of being admired and envied by all.

He’d always chased after the feeling of being so far removed from the masses and reality that others could only look upon his back. This was also what he’d always striven for.

His goal was to become Crown Prince, inherit the throne and control the entire Skylareland Kingdom, making everyone cower beneath his feet!

Whoever affected his pursuit of this goal was a thorn in his side!

After Ye Dai had offered his treasure, Ye Qiao, as the second prince, naturally couldn’t indicate his weakness. Although his gift was also quite fine, but the gap was too great when compared to the Yellow Dragon Watching the Seas Painting. He was about to find some pleasantries to conceal the timidity in his heart when Ye Dai suddenly spread out his hands, “Don’t be in a rush, number two. My followers have always admired the lordmaster and have also prepared their gifts.”

What?

Some of the expressions on the faces of those gathered became a bit ugly!

It wasn't that followers couldn't give a gift, but their participation had always been optional and voluntary. They usually followed closely after their masters had offered their gifts.

However, Ye Dai was indeed domineering. He hadn't spoken up earlier or later, but instead, waited for the precise moment that second prince Ye Qiao had been about to speak. Speaking out so suddenly was undoubtedly a deliberate slap in the face.

At the same time, it was setting an example to others. The followers of the first prince have also offered gifts, do as you will now!

My followers have given gifts. Can it be that you believe that you are more favoured than the first prince so you can avoid giving presents?

If these people's followers hadn't prepared gifts, then it would further depict how thorough the first prince's considerations were. Even his followers had prepared gifts, look at how much he respected the honored tutor!

From this perspective, it would also offset how generous, magnanimous and thoughtful the first prince was, as well as how well the first prince conducted himself!

Ye Qiao's expression grew ugly after suffering a setback from Ye Dai, and he took one angry step backwards. Although he was the second prince, but he couldn't very well be openly hostile towards Ye Dai on an occasion like this.

Since he couldn't erupt in open warfare, he could only pinch his nose and hold his anger in.

It could be seen that Ye Dai had made exquisite preparations this time. The five followers he'd brought were all his confidantes. They were people that Ye Dai had steeled his heart in his desire to elevate them, and would be his future pillars of rulership when he took the throne in the future.

Having them offer gifts was naturally to give them a chance to display themselves in front of the lordmaster and make themselves known to him, leaving behind a good impression.

Although Xin Wudao and Liu Can usually stuck their noses in the air and were domineering beyond belief, they were as meek as mice at this moment and used almost obsequious attitudes to offer their personally prepared gifts. They had also all prepared a small speech to offer their birthday felicitations.

The honored tutor only nodded his head slightly, displaying neither sadness nor joy. It couldn't be seen from his face if he was happy or displeased.

He was so noncommittal that it didn't seem to be his birthday banquet at all.

However, Ye Dai wasn't worried. He knew that this was the honored tutor's personality. At his age, wealth and riches will not make him happy or unhappy. What he cared about would certainly be face and the feeling of being respected by others.

One had to say, Ye Dai's gamble had been made with great resolution.

After that, the second prince's gift was a kirin jade pendant that had been carved extraordinarily exquisitely. The kirin was an auspicious representation of longevity. Moreover, since this piece of jade was a fine piece at the spirit rank, it had the effect of calming the heart and mind. It was a rather nice item to gift to the elderly as a birthday present.

Except, for anyone else, this might have been a very rare and valuable gift but the honored tutor was the spirit king protector of the kingdom. He likely had at least eight hundred of something like this at home, if not a thousand.

Although Ye Qiao's followers had also prepared some gifts, they paled far in comparison to the ones that Ye Dai's followers had prepared.

Third prince Ye Zheng had sent a spirit medicine ingredient of the spirit rank. It was quite rare and it was clear that the third prince had spent some time and effort in searching for it.

This item was relatively more appealing than the second prince's jade pendant.

The third prince's followers had also prepared some presents as a gesture of respect, but their value were about the same as the followers of the second prince Ye Qiao. Although they were nice items, but there was nothing terribly interesting about them.

The pressure on Ye Rong was even greater now. He discovered that he'd made a grievous mistake. It wasn't that he hadn't prepared any presents, but that he hadn't made Jiang Chen and the others prepare gifts!

Whether it was Jiang Chen, Tian Shao or Lin Qianli, Ye Rong hadn't had them prepare anything.

This was because in accordance with previous tradition, the gifts from followers weren't considered much at all. No one would make a big deal out of this.

But today, first prince Ye Dai had purposefully called out the followers' gifts. This move had caught Ye Rong a bit by surprise.

Chapter 170: The Gift Mocked By All

Ye Rong had specially prepared a gift this time. He had also painstakingly selected his followers, Jiang Chen and Tian Shao, who would be young men who'd been more famous lately, and Lin Qianli, a genius disciple of the Southern Palace.

He'd thought that he'd be able to make quite a showing this time.

Who would've thought that Ye Dai would completely one up him and have three followers in the spirit realm! This would've been completely inconceivable in the past!

In addition, Ye Dai's present, the Yellow Dragon Watching the Seas Painting, had basically set the tone as soon as it'd appeared. Everyone else's gifts were a complete joke in front of the painting. They weren't on the same level at all.

"Number four, what did you prepare this time? You should bring it out for everyone to open their worldview." Third prince Ye Zheng said with a smile that had a few hints of provocation in it.

Ye Rong felt Dan Fei's gaze rest on him and strove hard to calm down. He told himself that he couldn't lose his composure and he must remain steady. He couldn't lose his grace no matter what, he couldn't lose his dignity in front of the honored tutor and Dan Fei.

"Sister Dan Fei, the honored tutor is an erudite sage not of this world. This younger brother was afraid that he would have no interest in common, ordinary things. Therefore, I have obtained one item that is the young cub of the Swordteeth Flying Fox. This animal has quite a spiritual nature. As big as the Skylaurel Kingdom is, I cannot think of any one other than the honored tutor to raise the spiritual nature of the fox."

Even Ye Dai was slightly surprised when Ye Rong spoke his words. He looked meaningfully at Ye Rong, inwardly displeased.

It could be seen from this gift that Ye Rong had indeed spent quite a bit of effort on it. Although the Swordteeth Flying Fox wasn't a rare or precious beast, if one could raise its spiritual nature, it would evolve into a spirit creature some day. This meant that one would have a spirit creature that was equivalent to a spirit realm practitioner.

The most important thing was that the cub of a Swordteeth Flying Fox had more of a spirit nature than other beasts and it was extremely quite connected to the spirit world. Its size was diminutive and its exterior appearance exceedingly cute. It gave others an exceedingly favorable first impression.

In addition, Tutor Ye didn't have many hobbies, but raising all sorts of rare and precious beasts happened to be his greatest hobby. Although the cub that Ye Rong was gifting was no match to the value of the Yellow Dragon Watching the Seas Painting, it was another matter entirely if it was one of the honored tutor's hobbies.

"Ye Rong, this bastard, it looks like his ambition is not yet dead. He must have brooded over this matter for a long time, naturally to curry favor with the honored tutor. He's just a prince born of a concubine, does he dare contend with me, a prince of the proper bloodline, for the position of Crown Prince?" Ye Dai did have reason to feel put out.

Ye Rong's recent performance made him feel very unhappy.

Dan Fei took a look at the Swordteeth Flying Fox cub that Ye Rong had offered. The little thing was rolling its eyes around as a chubby paw clutched a piece of fruit. It was chomping away happily, ignoring everyone around him and appearing incredibly adorable.

Women naturally like pets. When she saw that this little thing was so cute, Dan Fei also quite liked it and she couldn't help but play with it a little.

"Number four, where did you find this little fellow? He's so adorable." Dan Fei smiled and seemed to speak a word in careless praise.

Ye Rong has gladdened, but he spoke with a humble expression. "I happened to come across it by chance."

How did he not know that sister Dan Fei's seemingly careless words were actually for him to express himself in front of the honored tutor?

He felt a bit of gratitude in his heart. He knew that sister Dan Fei was still quite good to him.

Although Ye Dai retained a gracious smile on his face, he felt as disgusted as if he'd eaten a fly. Sister Dan Fei was actually all smiles and sweetness to Ye Rong. This made Ye Dai feel quite out of sorts, as if Ye Rong had seized something precious to him.

At this moment, Lu Wuji spoke up from behind him, "The fourth prince's Swordteeth Flying Fox cub is indeed a fun, interesting toy. I wonder what the three behind the fourth prince have prepared for the lordmaster? Let us all increase our worldview as well."

Lu Wuji knew quite well how to take advantage of opportunities. When he saw Ye Dai appear calm on the surface, he knew that the first prince must be extremely put out internally at the moment.

When he saw this opportunity, he knew that it was time to take on some of his master's burdens for him.

Since you, Ye Rong, were seeking the limelight, then we'll start with your followers. We'll make your followers make fools out of themselves and use that to dim your spotlight.

In Lu Wuji's eyes, Tian Shao was a mere commander and someone who wasn't fit for the greater stage. Even though he'd been promoted to vice general now, he was still piss poor. What good things would he have? Taking a step back, the question should be if he has even prepared a gift for the lordmaster.

As for Lin Qianli, that Southern Palace disciple had a personality like a rock in a latrine. He was stinky and hard, and he wasn't someone who knew the ways of the world at all. How would he even prepare any presents?

As for Jiang Chen, that fellow had some good things, but it was the first time that he had participated in an occasion like this. He'd never truly seen the world. Would he prepare a rich gift? Lu Wuji didn't believe it either.

Indeed, Ye Rong's faintly smiling face became a bit stiff after Lu Wuji had spoken.

Adept at observing people's expressions, Lu Wuji immediately captured this detail and guessed that Ye Rong definitely hadn't told his followers to prepare gifts.

Particularly that Jiang Chen. He hadn't even arrived in the capital for long, would he be willing to part with a large sum to prepare a gift? Absolutely not!

It looked like he'd gambled correctly.

Indeed, the first prince displayed a look of admiration when he flicked a look at Lu Wuji, "Number four, your flying fox is not bad and you've truly put some thought in it. In this way, I'm a little curious about what gifts your followers have prepared."

Ye Dai's eyes were sharp and ruthless. How would he not see that Ye Rong was in a predicament? This was kicking a man when he was down, and it would make Ye Rong appear in a bad light.

If Ye Rong hadn't had his followers prepare gifts, he really would lose a great deal of face.

Ye Zheng had always had poor relations with Ye Rong and he was the first prince's loyal confidante as well. When he saw the first prince open his mouth, Ye Zheng hastened to assent, "That's right. Number four, you've expended so much thought this time, you could not have have very well let your followers come empty handed, right?"

These words were a bit barefaced. But Ye Zheng had always been crude, and so the others were used to his direct bluntness.

This had nothing to do with the other princes and so they were happy to watch the show from the sidelines.

As for the sons and disciples of the other nobles and various dukes, this was an issue between the princes. They naturally wouldn't stand up and say anything. The most important thing was that they had no right to say anything at a scene like this.

It actually looked like all was well and that an amiable atmosphere was prevailing.

But in actuality, the light and shadows from all sorts of blades and swords were flying at Ye Rong ferociously.

Ye Rong never thought that the first prince would make moves against him so publicly. The smile on his face became a bit stiff in that moment.

Dan Fei had a clever heart and knew that Ye Dai was suppressing Ye Rong when she saw this situation.

She smiled faintly, "Alright now, the so-called offering of gifts is just to provide some entertainment. The lordmaster didn't make the rule that people must offer gifts."

Ye Dai smiled dashingly and said nothing.

Ye Zheng purposefully played dumb however, "Sister Dan Fei, don't be so biased. We've prepared gifts for all our followers, but you're trying to help number four save money."

These words were half joking and half serious. They were another step forward in forcing Ye Rong down the path of no return.

Ye Rong was severely depressed now. His followers didn't have to specially prepare gifts in previous years. The princes never confronted each other in a showdown like this, publicly making it difficult for each other to find a way out.

Ye Zheng looked like he was joking, but he actually had the most malicious of intentions.

Just as Ye Rong was at his wit's end and he was prepared to say a few pleasantries, Jiang Chen suddenly laughed lightly behind him and said in a tone of self admonishment, "Fourth prince, my deepest apologies. It's my first time participating in such a grand occasion and I was so nervous that I'd forgotten to take out our exquisitely prepared gift. The lordmaster is of noble character and high prestige. As the spirit king protector of the kingdom, how can us juniors not express our sentiments? May this jug of wine count as the sentiments from all three of us."

Jiang Chen took out something from behind him after he'd finished speaking. It was a wooden wine jug. The design of this jug was ordinary and common. It looked like a jug made of green vines, and it didn't look like anything expensive at all.

When Lu Wuji saw Jiang Chen take this wine jug out, he splurged out in laughter.

This jug was seriously too ugly, it was worse than even the ones found in marketplaces. The ones that vendors placed in their stalls would at least be wrapped up nicely to present a look of generosity.

What was this wine jug? Crude, simple, and unfit for the eyes.

It was likely that no one would even pick this thing up if it was thrown onto the streets. Jiang Chen had actually used it to fill with wine and present it as a gift to the spirit king protector Tutor Ye!

This... this was blasphemy.

When they saw Jiang Chen take the wine jug out, the expressions of the others present were also quite a work of art.

There was mockery, surprise, cold sneers, some shaking of heads, and some incredulity.

It was obvious that anyone could use even their feet to think and come to the conclusion that this wasn't some specially prepared gift. This was something that they had hastily fished out from their bodies because they'd been driven up a wall by Ye Zheng.

Perhaps, this kid was an alcoholic? This jug was one that he carried on him at all times to drink from?

"Prince Ye Rong has lost too much face this time. That follower is being a fool in wanting to shoulder his master's burdens. What kind of help was this? This was slapping his own master's face!"

"Is something wrong with this person's brain? Where did Prince Ye Rong find such an undependable follower? Ai, apart from second prince Ye Qiao, who can possibly contend with the first prince, this fourth prince Ye Rong is still quite a way off."

"Now, not even sister Dan Fei will be able to find a way out for Ye Rong."

Those who were present had their own thoughts, but all of them held the mindset of watching a good show, and they wanted to see how this farce would be resolved.

Ye Zheng slapped his forehead and smiled exaggeratedly, "Number four, are you sure about this? This... this is your so-called specially prepared gift?"

"Haha, specially prepared alright. This gift is truly different from the others alright. It's a completely unique sight, hahaha!" Lu Wuji didn't conceal his sarcastic implications at all.

"Number four, just speak candidly if you didn't have your followers prepare gifts! Taking out something like this is an affront to the ears and eyes. This is rather bad!" Ye Zheng said.

It was Ye Dai who smiled and stepped out to say, "Alright, let's just treat this small interlude as one to liven up the atmosphere. Sister Dan Fei, let's take this item away first. Otherwise... number four's face..."

This Ye Dai was pretending to be a good person now as he spoke with the tones of a caring older brother.

Ye Rong was also slightly surprised and he flicked a glance at Jiang Chen. He saw the shadow of a smile on Jiang Chen's face, and that he was completely unconcerned with the mockery and jeers from the outside world.

With his understanding of Jiang Chen, Ye Rong felt that Jiang Chen wouldn't take out a broken and battered item for no reason whatsoever. He said noncommittally, "Big brother, since it's a gift, why take it away? What can be gleaned about many things if we only look at external appearances? There's a saying that the outside is good jade, but the inside is filled with rotten materials. A pretty exterior may not indicate a good interior. In contrast, what looks unassuming may not be something poor."

Ye Dai was startled. He didn't think that this number four, who usually never competed for anything, would not only not be filled with gratitude for his "help", but would rather talk back to him!