

## Three Realms 1611

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

#### Chapter 1611: Order Collapses

“What’s that?” Rising out of the rubble, Xuan Zan’s pupils contracted violently. He pointed at a meteoric light that shot into the indistinct distance. It was so fast that it was impossible to see clearly with the naked eye.

Kuang Han and Xue Yi both looked in that direction. The light left behind an afterimage, but it had already become a point in the vast horizon.

“Bah, have we let him escape?” Kuang Han gritted his teeth, his expression full of incredulity. “What are you hesitating for? After him!”

Xue Yi emitted a sound of surprise, then yelled. “All the restrictions around here are gone? I thought that the Blackwraith Mountains has a powerful one that prevents flight? How did that kid...?”

“The restrictions are broken. After him!” Kuang Han waved a hand.

The three mid empyrean experts all rose into the sky. They chased after the light with incredible rapidity, working themselves up into a frenzy. Clearly, they couldn’t accept what had transpired under their noses. This was the height of disgrace!

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In the precise moment Jiang Chen had finished refining the Obelisk of Containment, Winterdraw’s foundations shuddered. Countless formations and restrictions lost effect. As they crumbled, their energy roiled everywhere, causing a myriad of natural and supernatural phenomena to manifest.

The sky that had been near dusk was abruptly brighter than it would’ve been at midday. Innumerable beacons of light streaked across it, like thousands of lightning bolts snaking to and fro in the clouds.

The air currents whipped up by the disturbance rippled outwards, kicking up ever more powerful turbulence. The water on Winterdraw’s coast formed into rising tides rivaling a tsunami’s.

Oddities shook the island.

Countless people swarmed from their homes into the streets. The destructive visions all about them were absolutely shocking.

“What’s going on?”

The streets were shaking. They seemed to be standing on a wavy surface rather than solid ground. Surprise and bafflement was written on faces everywhere. However, most didn’t seem afraid. Evidently, Winterdraw’s inhabitants were uniformly a strong-minded bunch. They didn’t even fear death, much less a few strange sights.

Very quickly, shouts rang through the avenues. “The restrictions on the borders are loosening!”

“What do you mean, the restrictions are loosening?”

“Yeah, that’s got to be it. Winterdraw’s foundations are breaking! Haha, this is our chance to escape!”

“Haha, freedom is now! If you don’t want to be trapped here for the rest of your life, hurry up and run!”

So it was everywhere on the island. People driven into a frenzy swarmed into the open. The quickest to react didn’t even pack any bags; they made for the border at the earliest opportunity. Everyone wanted in on this golden opportunity.

On the outskirts of the Blackwraith Mountains, Imperial Prince Huo and Commander He instantly noticed that something was awry. All the changes originated from the mountains nearby.

The chief warden’s expression looked the worst of all. His gaze was glued to the pillar of light from deep within the Blackwraith Mountains, the shaking of the earth. and the unnatural color of the sky.

“Has something happened? Has something truly happened?” he murmured to himself.

He didn’t know the island’s secret either. He and his predecessors had merely been in charge of making sure this place was an adequate prison for exiled undesirables. In light of that, he was only an official with incomplete knowledge.

What he was seeing reminded him of a few rumors he’d heard. He sank into stupefied silence.

“What does all this mean, Old Ding?” Imperial Prince Huo was utterly lost.

The chief warden sighed. “Your Highness, the Blackwraith Mountains’ forbidden grounds are rarely entered even by my own men. Whenever we enter, we refrain from blindly rushing in. Rumor has it that Winterdraw’s fundamental roots lie within, and it seems that current events verify that rumor.”

“You mean... someone has shaken Winterdraw’s foundations?” Imperial Prince Huo colored.

“I think so.” The chief warden sounded conflicted. “I wonder if it was the two contestants or the three houses...”

“What happens if the foundations are shaken?” asked Commander He.

A chain reaction was set off by the changes in the mountains’ core in the midst of their conversation. The restrictions on the island’s boundaries began to crumble and self-destruct.

The chief warden was completely purple. “This isn’t good. If the foundations are loosened, the entire island’s defense system will be neutralized. This is the worst situation possible!”

The prince and the commander grew somber when they heard the declaration. “Exactly how serious is it?”

“Very. If the island’s cultivators find out that the border defense system is broken, it’ll cause a mass stampede. The whole of Winterdraw will be defenseless then, and its natural order will be no more...” the chief warden was not exaggerating at all.

“Commander He!” The imperial prince instructed hurriedly. “Please, take the bulk of the men and lock down all the important docks. At the same time, send a messenger to ask the imperial family for assistance. Old Ding, do you have confidence in the ability of your troops to defend all the choke points?”

“There’s no use to doing that, Your Highness,” the chief warden smiled wryly. “If the defenses are down, the crazed prisoners might not even go to the choke points in the first place. They will be able to leave from anywhere.”

“There aren’t any boats elsewhere, or airboats for that matter. They wouldn’t be able to get very far!” Imperial Prince Huo was still hanging on to false hope.

“Not necessarily. They’ll try to swim. They have no hope in staying on Winterdraw regardless. Why would they not give everything up for potential freedom? Though it may result in their deaths, they will take the desperate gamble for the very small chance at life!” Warden Ding knew the people he spent time with far better than the imperial prince.

“What should we do, then?” Imperial Prince Huo looked blank. “Winterdraw is huge and bordered by ocean on all sides. We can’t hope to encircle the entire thing – nay, not even a hundredth of it.”

“We can only hope that no one notices. When the first man does and incites everyone else to action, the island will plunge into chaos!”

“Your Highness, I think that Winterdraw’s affairs should be solved by the locals. The three major factions and second-rate ones under them have sway over most of the people here. If we have them keep the order, perhaps...”

Imperial Prince Huo glanced toward Xie Wushang and his peers. “Old Ding, call them over.”

The faction leaders were ushered over straightaway.

The imperial prince spoke gravely, his expression grim. “Friends, Winterdraw has seen a disastrous change. Now is when your loyalty is put to the test. You are all local bosses and most of the inhabitants here are under your control. I would like you to return to your territories and maintain stability. Are you confident in this mission?”

Xie Wushang and his fellows traded thoughtful looks. They had noticed the momentous occurrence as much as anyone else. This was the best of opportunities for them to escape! The very thought of it shook them to the core.

The imperial prince’s expression darkened at their hesitation. “What, do you have second thoughts as well?”

“You are the faction leaders of Winterdraw,” the chief warden declared sternly. “It’s not to your benefit that it should devolve into anarchy. Your rule can only be upheld through law and order. What say you to that?”

The faction leaders remained silent.

They had some position and authority here on Winterdraw, but the chief warden was liable to take it away at any moment. All of it was largely an illusion. Thus, they thirsted for freedom much more.

They would rather give up all they had in order to leave the island. After all, they had no future, hope, or freedom on Winterdraw. They could only stay on the island their entire life under the hand of one or another. If they lost control over their own subordinates, an upstart would inevitably rise up and slay them. Such was their fate.

Indeed, their own rises had been mixed with replacing the last generation of rulers. The replacement had naturally been of the violent sort. They didn't want to go on like this.

"Your Highness, we can maintain order, but we do need a promise from you."

"What promise?" Imperial Prince Huo inquired coolly.

"We need our freedom. Please grant us freedom after everything is said and done here, and let us leave Winterdraw Island. Even if we are to roam the world as a wandering cultivator, we would be more than willing." Xie Wushang made a daring request.

The lord of Nether Vale nodded in agreement. "Yes, this is my only request as well. As long as we are given freedom, we will do everything in our power to make things settle down."

"What about you?" Imperial Prince Huo swept his gaze toward the others.

"We want our freedom too. Please give it to us, Your Highness!"

"Yes, everything else is pointless without freedom."

Liberty was universally desired among the prince's audience.

The imperial prince didn't reply. Instead, he looked to the chief warden for his opinion. "Do you think that's feasible, Old Ding?"

The chief warden sank into thought for a moment. "If things become peaceful again, their departure will only be met with the ascension of new leadership. After we cultivate the next generation a while, everything should go back to normal. But the final choice is yours, Your Highness. I don't dare make it for you."

Imperial Prince Huo considered this for a moment, then nodded himself. "Alright, I will accept your condition. If you can restrain the rioting people and calm the worsening crowd, I swear on heaven and earth that I will restore your freedom to you afterward. You will leave Winterdraw Island honorably!"

Everyone was overjoyed upon hearing this.

"His Highness has spoken," the chief warden stated coldly. "So you should be satisfied, no? If so, go perform your side of the bargain. Time is of the essence. If there's further delay, it will be much tougher to quell the rebellion!"

"Let us return immediately. Please await our good news, Your Highness!" Xie Wushang and company were extremely enthusiastic. They hurriedly set off on their journeys back.

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#### **Chapter 1612: Starfate**

Insecurity crept into Prince Huo after the faction heads had left. He couldn't help but glance in the chief warden's direction. "Old Ding, are they really reliable? They seem dutiful on the surface, but what if they're just voicing words we want to hear? Won't they run away if they get the chance to?"

The chief warden shook his head. "I can't say for sure, but I've already planted a few pieces that can be discarded." He made a throat-slitting gesture.

Prince Huo nodded. "Very good. You've done well. But I'm still worried. Under these circumstances, can their men really stabilize the situation?"

"Hmph! we'll just have to wait and see! They don't deserve their positions if they can't even handle a small incident like this!" The chief warden snorted coldly. He snuck a glance at the five aristocratic houses and transmitted a mental message to Prince Huo. "You Highness, the five houses seems very satisfied with our hospitality. Perhaps it's a good time to ask for their help?"

After thinking about it briefly, Prince Huo walked towards the aristocrats. "My dear guests. please pardon the intrusion."

"There's no need to be so courteous, Prince Huo. What's happened? Why does it seem like utter chaos has befallen Winterdraw Island?"

"Somebody's barged into the forbidden area at the Blackwraith Mountains and tinkered with the island's formation core, destabilizing its foundations. So... umm..." The prince stuttered and stammered before continuing with a thick skin. "This is difficult for me to say, but the situation has grown beyond our control. I plead for your kind assistance. The Rejuvenation Isles will be eternally grateful for your help."

"You're a decent fellow, Prince Huo. Speak. How can we help you?"

"Indeed. We can consider helping as long as the task isn't too burdensome."

The prince heaved a sigh. "I'll start from the beginning..."

He explained the situation at Winterdraw once again. Naturally, he placed emphasis on the island's importance and the disaster that would occur if the convicts were allowed to escape. Thus, he needed their help to slay all those who attempted to.

"Someone destabilized the island's foundations?" exclaimed someone. "Who? House Kuang? This is really out of line"

"Agreed! We're highly satisfied by the hospitality you've shown us. Our trip here has been mostly up to par."

Prince Huo could only laugh wryly. He'd felt that the other three houses had gone overboard as well, but he was in no position to say that.

The five houses had every right to say whatever they want about the other three, but the same couldn't be said of the Rejuvenation Isles and Winterdraw Island. These aristocrats weren't anyone he could afford to offend.

"Alright, enough chatter. Let's hear what plans Prince Huo has in mind for us, we'll help where we can. However, do note that we won't be able to help if the entire island rebels."

Winterdraw's population was simply too big. Even with their abilities, there wasn't much they could do if an uprising occurred.

“Thank you kindly for the aid. If the situation wasn’t so grim, I’d never trouble you with our matters. Things are still under control for now. With your help here and there, I’m sure the issue will be resolved soon.” The prince was royalty after all. He had a knack for politics and remained gracious even in the midst of an emergency.

First, he reinforced defense at various spots. Then, he stabilized the situation in all areas and formed an all-encompassing web to prevent any escapees from reaching the border. If a large group of cultivators was spotted, it was to be reported immediately.

Prince Huo wasn't the fastest at responding, but he was incredibly resourceful during emergencies.

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Jiang Chen was currently in the airboat called Starfate. After spending some time with it, he’d gotten familiarized with the controls and operation. It wasn’t particularly spacious and could probably fit only two to three hundred people. However, there was an enormous library filled with various scriptures and Senior Pei Xing’s lifetime learnings.

Jiang Chen quite admired the senior. This was a great formation master with the purest of obsessions. No fame or glory was intermixed with his belief. His love for the dao of formation was unrivalled.

Many formation masters spent their entire lives researching formations, but most strived for even greater success in martial dao. Pei Xing wasn’t like that. He’d dedicated most of his life to formations, while only thirty percent of his knowledge was martial dao.

The airboat was frighteningly fast. Before long, Jiang Chen had already flown across the Blackwraith Mountains. It hurtled across the sky like lightning. From above, he noticed that cultivators were lying in ambush at every exit.

However, like a flash of lightning, he was gone with the blink of an eye.

He continued to observe the changes in the outside world. Upon reaching the border, he noticed that chaos had also befallen the area as well. The formations surrounding the border had completely disintegrated. Torrents of turbulence lined the border, tearing everything into pieces.

“Haha! As expected, the restrictions lining the island are all invalid after the obelisk was completely refined! The traps have all been disarmed as well! It’ll be smooth sailing from now on!”

The airboat was truly shockingly fast. It was faster than any he'd had seen before. He glanced behind him and noticed the three figures that were still chasing after him.

“The three stooges that don't know when to give up!” He smiled coldly. There was simply no way they could catch up to the boat. Since it was so incredibly quick, he decided not to leave and had the boat fly around in circles instead.

With the advantage in speed, he flew to every corner of the island and informed everyone about the current situation at the border with his dragon roar art. Now was a great opportunity to flee! It was incredibly effective. The violent outlaws immediately swarmed the borders as though they’d caught the scent of blood.

Flying the airboat was as easy as a stroll in the park for Jiang Chen, but the three behind him were completely exhausted. He slowed down on purpose when needed so they could barely catch up to the vehicle. This frustrated them greatly.

They'd caught on that maybe Jiang Chen had obtained a heaven-defying treasure and that they might no longer be able to catch up. However, they refused to give up.

After a few rounds of this, Jiang Chen eventually found himself circling over Sin City. He swept his consciousness across the city frantically. He was looking for the Tong father and daughter and Commander Yong. They were all excellent people. If they were willing, he wouldn't mind taking them along.

It wasn't long before he found Xing Hui and his daughter among the scrambling crowd. He immediately sent Long Xiaoxuan to them. "Brother Long, bring them onto the boat. Don't alarm the others."

Jiang Chen had a great deal of trust in Long Xiaoxuan's capabilities.

Xiao Hui and his daughter was soon brought onto the airboat. They were elated when they saw Jiang Chen. They'd considered escape after receiving news that the seal had been destroyed.

However, Xing Tong was simply too weak. Xing Hui was a mighty cultivator, but his wounds had yet to recover. Their chances of escape were simply too low. They were stunned when they saw Jiang Chen at the helm of the airboat!

"Big Brother Jiang! We meet again! H-how do you have an airboat?" Xing Tong's eyes were full of life when she saw Jiang Chen.

The person in question laughed. "It's just a coincidence. The restriction at the border has been destroyed. This is our chance to escape. If you're willing, I can bring you along for the ride." Xing Hui nodded without a second's hesitation. "But of course! Sir Jiang, we will forever be indebted to you for bringing us along!"

Starfate arrived at Yong Peng's neighborhood in the blink of an eye. Jiang Chen was quite fond of the loving couple. If they were also willing, he'd bring them along as well. But since Yong Peng was the city lord's commander-in-chief, it'd be understandable if he'd chose not to come.

Jiang Chen quickly located Yong Peng with his consciousness. The person in question was at home and frantically packing his bags.

"Old Brother Xing Hui, do you mind saying a few words to Yong Peng?" It wasn't convenient for Jiang Chen to go down himself.

"No problem." Xing Hui assured.

Today was Yong Peng's day off. When he received news of what'd occurred, escape was the first thing that flashed through his mind. He wanted to go see the world!

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**Chapter 1613: Departing with Flair**

"Brother Yong, have you really decided?" Since Jiang Chen's treatment, Yong Peng's wife had largely recovered to her usual condition.

Hesitation flickered across Yong Peng's face. "Are you worried, Ah Tang?"

A candid smile appeared on the woman's face. "I'm not scared of anything as long as I'm with you, Brother Yong. How about you, kids?" She caressed her docile children.

"We're not scared, daddy and mommy!"

Yong Peng took a deep breath. "I've decided, Ah Tang. We must leave this place. I don't want Zhen'er and Li'er to be stuck here their entire lives. Neither they nor we have committed any crimes. Are we supposed to be imprisoned here forever simply because one of our ancestors did? Fated to be chained down, never seeing the outside world?"

The guardsman couldn't resign himself to his fate. If he were alone, he might've been able to, but he didn't want his children to live on Winterdraw forever. He didn't want them to wallow in a hopeless life, devoid of any freedom.

Existence without liberty and hope was meaningless, even if one struggled by.

"I'm right behind you, Brother Yong." Ah Tang nodded firmly.

As the family was having this serious discussion, Xing Hui suddenly appeared in the courtyard of their home.

"Commander Yong, Sir Jiang asked me to come ask you whether you want to take his airboat out of Winterdraw. If you don't want to, he won't force you. If you do, you should answer straightaway. We don't have much time!"

Yong Peng blinked. "W-what did you say?" he stuttered.

Xing Hui nodded. "I said it very clearly, didn't I? We don't have much time. Think about what you want to do, and quickly."

As he said this, he pointed into the air. There was indeed an airboat there, hidden within the clouds.

Yong Peng grit his teeth. "A solution comes to our problem instantly, Ah Tang! Do you remember Sir Jiang, who cured your illness? He's truly our family's benefactor. With him, there's hope!"

Of course Yong Peng knew that Jiang Chen had gone to the Blackwraith Mountains for a trial. Most had also found that the reason for the drastic changes in their environment had begun from there. Perhaps Sir Jiang had found some fortune within those mountains?

Yong Peng didn't hesitate. He rapidly brought his wife and children on board Jiang Chen's airboat.

Jiang Chen didn't know many people on Winterdraw and had little attachment to the place. He smiled at the arrival of Yong Peng's family. "Everyone's here, I see. I'd like to ask you one more time: you won't regret leaving Winterdraw, will you?"

"Why do you ask that, Sir Jiang?" Xing Hui brimmed over with excitement. "Why would we regret something that's giving us a second life?"



"My apologies, Sir Jiang!" exclaimed Yong Peng. "I don't know you very well, so I didn't expect your chivalry here. My family owes you another great favor, truly."

"I admire the love with which you treat your wife and children, Commander Yong," Jiang Chen replied coolly. "That's why I'm more than happy to take you along for the ride."

There was nothing more to say. He had a feeling that his three idiot pursuers were near. "Sit tight, everyone!" he called out. "The airboat is about to accelerate!"

He didn't want three people doggedly trailing behind him all the time.

Once Starfate was at full speed, it was shockingly fast. The vessel arrived at the coast almost instantly. There was an enormous mass of people below them. Evidently, the fastest of those in the know had already arrived at the island's boundaries, ready for their own flight.

Alas, most of the coastline held only the dangers of the ocean. Boats were limited to a few important ports. There were no tools for travel by sea.

Everyone knew that it was impossible for ordinary cultivators to fly over the seas within a two thousand mile radius. The cost was simply too great if one attempted such a thing. Most importantly, there was too much spatial turbulence. It was easy to get lost somewhere without a way out.

If one was lucky, that wouldn't be too much of an issue, but only empyrean experts could expect to succeed. Anyone below that level didn't have much hope. So, flying was out of the question. But attempting to swim across was just as difficult.

Countless monsters rested at the bottom of these waters. They were known for their ferocity and danger. If one depended on luck to fly past, then swimming required both luck and strength.

Without enough strength, a powerful sea monster would find it trivial to eat the average cultivator.

Xing Hui and his daughter looked down at the teeming mass below through the transparent shell of the airboat. They felt tremendously relieved and fortunate. It was a vastly different feeling to stand above than below. Inside the airboat, they were essentially guaranteed to travel across the seas safely.

The people below, however – even if Winterdraw didn't block their passage past its boundaries – perhaps four or five out of ten would escape intact. This was already an extremely optimistic estimate.

Though Commander Yong Peng was quiet, the fact that he clasped the hands of his wife and children firmly was evidence enough that he felt similar to Xing Hui and Xing Tong.

"Winterdraw won't be able to avoid a serious riot this time," Xing Hui sighed. "I doubt a thousand years would be enough to restore all the damage it will endure this time."

"A thousand years is on the low side," Yong Peng exhaled. "Fifteen hundred is more like it."

Jiang Chen burst out into laughter. "No matter how much time passes, it will never recover."

"Huh?" Everyone looked curiously at the young man.

He shrugged, smiling. "You won't have anything to do with Winterdraw in the future. Why mind its eventual fate?"

Xing Hui laughed in turn. "I suppose you're right, Sir Jiang. We're very lucky to have you take us along. I never would've thought it possible in my wildest dreams."

Xing Tong nodded emphatically in agreement, tossing occasional sidelong glances at Jiang Chen. She lowered her head embarrassedly whenever she did so, apparently worried that he would notice her actions.

The airboat rapidly soared across the cloudy skies, passing by the coastline without any trouble. It was evident that Winterdraw hadn't had the time to prepare for a problem as large-scale as they now had on their hands.

Two thousand miles of sea wasn't far at all. It took less than an hour for the vessel to make it past the deadly waters into the open world outside.

The pressure the dreadful seas had exerted was fully behind them. Cerulean sky, immaculate clouds, and azure ocean were only broken up by the occasional deserted isle. All of the passengers wanted to laugh out loud at the peace and exuberance they were feeling. They were free!

They were finally free.

"Don't be too satisfied yet, my friends," Jiang Chen declared. "Where are we going next? If the Isles know that Winterdraw is rioting, it'll send out a mass of troops to cut any escapees off. We were among the earliest to leave, so we're relatively safe. But it's hard to say the same from now on. We must find where we may rest our heads next."

Having only been on Winterdraw so far in his excursion to Myriad Abyss Island, Jiang Chen lacked an understanding of the world outside. Thanks to his lack of time, the books Senior Pei Xing had left behind hadn't yet been perused.

"I was born on Winterdraw," Yong Peng smiled bitterly, "so I know nothing of the outside world. I am the fifth generation of my family native there, I believe. My ancestor was apparently a minor aristocrat of the Rejuvenation Isles, but I don't find it meaningful to seek out my lineage now."

Xing Hui was silent for a long while before he mustered up a reply. "The Rejuvenation Isles are to the southwest of Winterdraw. We're going eastward in our journey, so we won't encounter Rejuvenation's armies. The closest large patch of land on our current course should be Warmspring Island."

Xing Hui was different from Yong Peng. He hadn't been exiled very long on Winterdraw and so was reasonably familiar with the world outside.

"Old Brother Xing Hui, I remember you told me that younger sister Xing Tong was born before you came to Winterdraw, yes? You should be no stranger to the outside world." Jiang Chen inquired with a half-question.

Xing Hui knitted his brow. "To tell you the truth, I was a noble in the Rejuvenation Isles once upon a time. Alas, my clan offended the imperial family and was fully exterminated. My branch was exiled because of it too. I can't possibly return to the Isles now."

Yong Peng's eyes brightened. He respectfully offered a cupped fist salute. "Old Brother Xing Hui, we are quite literally in the same boat. I know nothing about the outside world. Where should we go to find a stable place to settle down in?"

Xing Hui thought for a moment, then replied. "You're a skilled man, Commander Yong. You'll be able to do well for yourself in many places. If your son and daughter are talented at cultivation, I recommend you pick one of the Ten Divine Nations to live in. The cultivation environment and prospects there are superior to everywhere else."

"The Ten Divine Nations?" Yong Peng was unfamiliar with that term.

"Yes. The Ten Divine Nations are the top factions in Myriad Abyss Island. They hold ultimate authority over the island, dividing up the power among themselves. Look at the Rejuvenation Isles. They seem impressive, but they're just second or third-rate in Myriad Abyss. Ordinarily, they wouldn't even have the right to fawn on the Ten Divine Nations." Xing Hui was clearly rather knowledgeable.

"Do you know the Polylore Divine Nation, Old Brother Xing Hui?" Jiang Chen suddenly asked with nonchalance.

"Polylore Divine Nation? Top five among the ten."

"Right. The trial in the Blackwraith Mountains was staged by the Rejuvenation Isles. Over a thousand contestants became the prey of the young geniuses of Polylore's eight houses. It was a conspiracy from the start..." Jiang Chen stated in a forbidding tone.

"Huh?" Everyone was stunned.

Yong Peng couldn't sit still. "Sir Jiang, I recommended you to participate in the selection. I didn't expect to throw you into hell!"

Jiang Chen didn't mind. "It's fine," he smiled coolly. "You meant well and you didn't know the specifics. In the end, it was a blessing in disguise anyway. How else would all of us be leaving the island so freely in this airboat? Do you know who was pursuing us a while back?"

"Who?"

"Can it be..."

"That's right," Jiang Chen nodded. "People from Polylore's eight houses."

Everyone else was stunned anew at his words.

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#### **Chapter 1614: Each To Their Own**

Both Yong Peng and Xing Hui were stunned by this detail. They had thought Jiang Chen's pursuers were merely people from Winterdraw. So they were from Polylore...

And yet, Sir Jiang didn't seem to care very much about being hunted by Polylore's experts.

“Sir Jiang,” Yong Peng asked cautiously after quite a while. “Who from Polylore...”

“Three mid empyrean experts. I killed a few of their houses’ geniuses, so they’re after me. They should be behind me now, though. You should consider well what your plans next are. I’ll look for a place to drop you off. It’s not safe for you to be with me.”

Jiang Chen had saved them partially because it’d been convenient to do so. He wasn’t looking to be repaid with anything.

Xing Hui thought about it for a moment. “US father and daughter would like to find a more secluded place to live out our lives. The Ten Divine Nations isn’t a suitable place for us.”

He knew the extent of his capabilities. Someone of his strength would only become cannon fodder in the Ten Divine Nations.

Because his daughter had turned out rather nicely, she was eye-catching anywhere she went. Thus, Xing Hui wished for a place where he would be able to protect her.

Yong Peng had a family too. He didn’t know anyone in the wider Myriad Abyss and thus couldn’t do much about his circumstances. He wanted to go to the Ten Divine Nations, but it was difficult to gain a foothold there without a referrer.

“If so, shall I put you down at Warmspring Island ahead?” asked Jiang Chen.

Xing Hui thought for it a moment, then nodded. “Alright. It’s reasonably convenient to head from Warmspring to elsewhere. Even if there are pursuing troops, they won’t be able to come here that quickly. Plus, we’re insignificant characters. Perhaps Rejuvenation won’t care about us.”

He chuckled self-deprecatingly.

Not that he enjoyed unreasonably looking down upon himself. Rather, it was the definite truth that Winterdraw wouldn’t consider Xing Hui and his daughter as anyone remarkable. Millions had escaped in Winterdraw’s recent riot, and more would be on their way in the coming days.

There were countless experts among those who’d fled. No matter how strong the Isles were, it wouldn’t have enough manpower to hunt all of them down. Moreover, it was unimaginably tough to actually catch any escaped prisoners.

A fish was easy enough to find in a small pond, but virtually impossible to seek out in a vast river or ocean. Obviously, the biggest fish became a priority in that circumstance. There was no effort left available to devote to smaller fry!

Moreover, Winterdraw’s exiles lacked a special seal with which to identify them. Without clues, how was a hunter supposed to track his mark?

Though Xing Hui was grateful to Jiang Chen, further consideration advised him that it was probably best to break with him from now on. The father and daughter pair would only drag the young man down if they traveled with him. Furthermore, it was a dangerous thing to be pursued by mid empyrean experts from Polylore.

Jiang Chen slowed his pace when about three hundred miles of Warmspring Island.

“Thank you for saving our lives twice, Sir Jiang. I cannot repay you with anything but my heartfelt wishes for your success.” Xing Tong had been mildly upset ever since hearing that they were going different ways at Warmspring Island. Her eyes reddened as they said their farewells.

Her pretty eyes gazed at Jiang Chen as she struggled not to cry. “Thank you, Big Brother Jiang. I won’t forget you for the rest of my life.”

For an innocent girl like her, Jiang Chen’s appearance from the blue had altered the fate of both herself and her father. Like a prince on a white horse, he had become a great hero in her heart. A girl’s youth was spent in fantasies and dreams, and her heart particularly pure. Thus, she had long since cemented him as an irreplaceable, impossibly heroic big brother.

Splitting up with him – with little to no hope of seeing him ever again – was absolutely devastating and saddening.

Jiang Chen smiled. “Xing Tong,” he comforted, “you should be happy that you’re free from Winterdraw’s shackles. You’re in the wider world now.”

Xing Tong nodded cleverly. “Big Brother Jiang,” she asked with hope in her eyes, “will I see you again?”  
See him again?

Jiang Chen sighed. He couldn’t promise anything for the future. However, far was it from him to crush a girl’s pure hopes. Rather than cruelly refusing, he smiled. “If we are fated to meet again, perhaps.”

Xing Hui knew that his daughter had developed a psychological reliance on Sir Jiang or couldn’t bear to part from him. He had been young once and understood his daughter’s feelings. But he couldn’t do a thing about it. If Jiang Chen had shown the slightest hint of interest, he would have offered his daughter without hesitation.

Having some experience in the ways of the world, Xing Hui could tell that Sir Jiang was an extraordinary man indeed. If a genius like him could become his son-in-law, his daughter would be set for life. Moreover, Xing Hui’s fate would be drastically changed too.

But Sir Jiang wasn’t interested at all. Xing Hui wasn’t about to take too much of an initiative, lest he cheapen his daughter’s emotions. Still, her marked reluctance pained his heart.

“Tong’er, Sir Jiang is destined for greatness. Fate dictated that he would save us twice, and we shall pray every day for his eventual success and rise to prominence. We too will share in glory when he becomes famous in Myriad Abyss.”

Her father’s comforting words didn’t have much their intended effect. Being an obedient girl in the end, Xing Tong tried her best to dry her tears, silently returning to her father’s back. Her eyes however, told a different story.

“Sir Jiang, I wonder where you’re planning to go next. If you intend to head for the Ten Divine Nations, please make sure to pay attention to one thing in particular.” Something occurred to Xing Hui before he left.

“What is it?”

“Your airboat shouldn’t charge directly into Ten Divine Nation territory. Otherwise, you’ll be obliterated on the spot as an invader.

“As the heart of Myriad Abyss, the Ten Divine Nations have a complicated set of rules. They’re also often intimately connected to each other. If you’re hunted by Polylore, I wouldn’t lower your guard for anything. If they put a bounty on your head in the entirety of the ten nations, you’ll be at a severe disadvantage.” Xing Hui relayed all that he knew.

Jiang Chen nodded. “I will take care. Many thanks, Old Brother Xing Hui.”

The older man nodded without saying another word. He left Starfate, descending towards Warmspring Island.

Yong Peng and his family prepared to say their farewells to Jiang Chen as well.

“Zhen’er, Li’er, come kowtow to Uncle Jiang. Without him, you would live like corpses on Winterdraw your entire lives.”

The two children listened to their parents quite a lot. They were already grateful to Jiang Chen for saving their mother, and were now even more endeared by the fact he’d rescued their entire family. They hurried forward to comply with their father’s instructions.

Jiang Chen extended a hand to keep them upright. “There’s no need for that. Commander Yong, I see that these two kids have reasonable potential. You’ve taught them pretty well yourself, but perhaps it’s a good idea to find a good sect for them while they’re young, to develop their gifts further.”

Yong Peng nodded. “I think the same, yes.”

“Take care.” Jiang Chen had nothing more to say.

“Sir Jiang, take care!” Yong Peng took his wife and children with him off Starfate, flying to Warmspring Island the same way Xing Hui had.

Jiang Chen was alone once more in the world. He called out Xiaoxuan, Little White, and the Vermilion Bird.

“Senior Vermilion Bird, Myriad Abyss Island has an endless ocean that we may wander in. We should find a place for your rebirth, yes?”

The bird had been looking forward to it all this time. It was hardly going to refuse.

“I’ve only owed the Primosanct Sect anything in my life, Jiang Chen, but it seems I will now owe you a favor as well. I suppose this is for the best. I’ve been doing pretty well recently, so now may be the best time for the rite of rebirth. Let’s look for a suitable place along the way.”

Despite having ‘island’ in its name, Myriad Abyss Island was actually an endless ocean. Within this ocean were many islands and archipelagos. Some islands were as huge as continents!

“I didn’t expect Myriad Abyss to be such a vast place.” The human domain wasn’t a small realm by any means, but it would only amount to a single mid-sized continent within Myriad Abyss’ seas. One was many magnitudes larger than the other.

It wasn't going to be easy to find a place suitable for the rite. Still, Jiang Chen wasn't discouraged. Starfate flew ever eastward.

His senses told him that the climate heated up the further east he went. There might be some opportunity there.

After three days of flying over water, he discovered land ahead. There was obviously a large faction upon it. In fact, it seemed stronger than the Rejuvenation Isles in terms of force.

"Never mind that. At last I've reached civilization. Maybe I should land and ask around?" Rather than searching for a needle in a haystack, Jiang Chen decided it was better to gather some info.

Putting Starfate away, Jiang Chen rode the Vermilion Bird down onto the large landmass. He arrived at one of its coastal isles very quickly. There was a visible restriction upon it that prevented entry to outsiders.

### Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

#### **Chapter 1615: Bluesmoke Isles**

"Welcome to the Bluesmoke Isles, friend." As soon as Jiang Chen landed, lawkeepers flew out to politely block the way. There was sharpness beneath their affable guise.

Their training and skill were evident. Though they were only great emperors, their spirit and morale was high. They were a well-trained and patriotic bunch; they wouldn't exude such auras of vigor otherwise.

Jiang Chen smiled and nodded in acknowledgment, but said nothing in return.

"First time in Bluesmoke, friend?" a square-jawed officer inquired courteously.

"That's right. I'll be in your care during my stay," the young man assented.

The officer nodded in turn. "The Bluesmoke Isles welcome cultivators from all over the world. We do have a few rules here, and you'll find your journey to be quite pleasant should you follow them."

Jiang Chen was quite satisfied with their attitude. "Don't worry," he replied affably. "I'm not here to cause trouble. Inform me of those rules and I'll uphold them to the letter."

The officer waved a hand, satisfied with Jiang Chen's considerate manner. "Come this way. There's a reception hall where the paperwork may be done. A token contribution of spirit stones is all that's required for you to move about as you wish in Bluesmoke. We will give you a brochure about what's off-limits."

Jiang Chen followed to the hall in question. The paperwork was done at a very brisk pace with excellent customer service. The fee was truly only nominal. All of these things helped better his impression of these particular isles.

Xing Hui and Yong Fan's families might have had a better home here in the Bluesmoke Isles. The thought flashed across Jiang Chen's mind. It was only momentary and fleeting.

After receiving his visa and finishing all of the procedures, Jiang Chen was met by a tour guide of sorts.

"The Bluesmoke Isles has eighteen islands on our outskirts. Paperwork for entering and exiting is available at each of them. Your paperwork is valid for any of our other islands as well. You must remember one thing, though: read our rules and regulations carefully. We do not suffer our laws being broken."

There were signs and guides everywhere. The Bluesmoke Isles was by and large, a welcoming place.

"I didn't expect the Bluesmoke Isles to have such a strong spirit of service. I thought that Myriad Abyss Island would be as harsh as Winterdraw everywhere." Jiang Chen had formed a terrible first impression of Myriad Abyss as a whole, by virtue of landing on Winterdraw as his first stop.

But the culture of the Bluesmoke Isles showed him that Winterdraw was hardly representative of everywhere else. Traveling past the outer islands put him into the interior. The larger continent wasn't much smaller than the human domain, if at all.

According to the regulations set out in the brochure, airboat flight was strictly forbidden in the interior. Thus, Jiang Chen could only ride the Vermilion Bird in the lower part of the airspace.

After a period of travel, he saw a bustling valley up ahead. There were well spaced buildings scattered within.

He was wondering whether he should descend and check things out, potentially gather some information, when he was greeted by someone appearing from thin air.

"Friend," the stranger approached Jiang Chen with a big grin, "welcome to the Bluesmoke Isles. You're here to participate in the trade exhibition in Oriole Valley, aren't you?"

"Trade... exhibition?" Jiang Chen blinked. He really wasn't here to participate in something like that.

"Oh, are you just passing by?" The surprise appeared to be mutual. After a moment, the stranger offered an enthusiastic smile. "If you are, all the more reason for you to join the excitement! Oriole Valley's trade exhibition has many treasures and valuable spirit herbs, plus many pieces of Bluesmoke Jade that our isles are famous for..."

Jiang Chen had little interest in a trade exhibition. Still, he didn't refuse outright. "Why don't I go and take a look, hmm?"

Descending to the mouth of the valley, he saw a mass of street stalls arrayed in rows. In the center of things was a large platform, apparently the place where the most important trades took place.

Oriole Valley was quite packed. People swarmed in the throng. As Jiang Chen strolled, a thin youth darted out of the crowd. His face was a bit dirty, like he hadn't washed it in several days. In fact, he looked mildly beggarly.

"Friend, friend, excuse me. My greetings to you." The young beggar seemed to enjoy adopting the pretenses of adult courtesy. He cupped his fist as maturely as he could towards Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen smiled a little, returning the gesture. He didn't take the youngster lightly simply because of disheveled appearance. He knew enough not to make enemies of those who were simply young and poor.



The youth was happy about the amiability shown to him. "Friend, let me introduce myself," he said excitedly. "I am Hua Ming!"

"Hmm, hello." Jiang Chen nodded. "Did you have something to talk to me about, Brother Hua Ming?"

The youth grasped the opportunity. "Brother, you see my clothes and how I carry myself. I look like I'm super familiar with this place, right? To be honest, I've been waiting here in Oriole Valley at the trade exhibition for someone who knows my value!"

"Why do you say that?" Jiang Chen asked with a faint smile.

"Let's put it this way. If you're here to trade and you hire me, I guarantee you'll save at least twenty to thirty percent of the spirit stones you'll spend. Anything you want to sell, I'll help you mark it up by ten to twenty too!" Hua Ming delivered this with undisguised confidence and pride, highly recommending himself.

Jiang Chen looked into the eyes of the suddenly serious youth. "I'm only taking a look. I don't know if I'll participate."

Hua Ming began to grow frantic after being refused. "Do you not trust me, friend?"

"It's not that. I believe you have the skills you say you have. But really, I'm not here to trade. Do I look wealthy to you?"

Hua Ming nodded vehemently without thinking. "Yes, very much so! I think you're richer than most here." He didn't say this loudly. In fact, he lowered his voice afterwards. "Law and order is very good in the Bluesmoke Isles. Not many will dare start trouble here. However, you should still be cautious. Better not to let others know that your pockets are lined."

Jiang Chen found the youth's discreet demeanor rather humorous. Why was a youngster pretending to be mature? It was a curious sight indeed. His God's Eye revealed people's hearts quite effectively. He knew that Hua Ming wasn't speaking too maliciously and thus responded in kind.

"You say your name is Hua Ming? And you're a savvy native of this place?" Jiang Chen inquired cheerfully.

Hua Ming puffed out his chest and raised his head. "You absolutely don't need to doubt that. I was born here in these isles. In particular, I'm familiar with every inch of ground near Oriole Valley. I can tell you..."

As they spoke, an officer strode over. Hua Ming was a bit anxious upon seeing a keeper of the law. His eyes darted to and fro, and he shrunk his head in order to avoid attention.

"Hua Ming, you rascal, you're trying to trick someone again! We already warned you not to take advantage of the trade exhibition. You hear??"

Hua Ming was a bit embarrassed at being rebuked. "What're you talking about, my good officers?" he muttered with some protest. "I've always been an honest and upright citizen! I've never caused any trouble for anybody. You can't slander me like that just because you know me!"

“Keep talking, buddy!” The officers didn’t seem interested in getting rid of him. Clearly, they were used to native boys like Hua Ming and allowed them to roam free as long as they did no evil.

Chuckling, the thick-skinned boy approached Jiang Chen after the officers left.

Jiang Chen looked back at the boy through a half-smile. “You’re showing so much interest because you want to make some money from me, yes?”

Something like that wasn’t supposed to be openly said. Jiang Chen’s bluntness turned Hua Ming’s smile somewhat awkward. There wasn’t a reasonable response to that. He wiped his hands on his somewhat shabby clothes.

“I can give you a chance. However, I need to test whether you’re capable of earning my coin.”

Jiang Chen’s words brightened Hua Ming’s eyes. “Alright, tell me about it.”

Because of the way he was dressed, Hua Ming’s usual attempts at soliciting someone to hire him had largely failed. Moreover, each failure had been met with a tongue-lashing or a storm of curses. When his luck was especially bad, he would be subject to a beating. Thus, Jiang Chen’s pleasantness represented a great opportunity.

“I want to learn more about the Bluesmoke Isles and the surrounding places. If you can tell me what I want to know, I’ll give you some spirit stones.”

“How many?” Hua Ming was more interested in the precise amount.

“How many do you want?” Jiang Chen seemed intentionally trying to rouse Hua Ming’s interest.

The boy felt an indescribable itch in his heart. He writhed around like a monkey, deliberating to himself. “Give me a hundred sky spirit stones,” he gritted his teeth, “and I’ll tell you everything I know!”

To Hua Ming, this was an incredible amount. He was ready to be haggled with.

But Jiang Chen was stunned by this quote in turn. Rather than too high, it was far too low. Had he misheard? What could a hundred sky spirit stones do in a place like this?

“Is that too many?” Hua Ming became anxious. “If you think so, you can name something a bit lower.”

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

#### **Chapter 1616: Hell King Island**

Jiang Chen didn’t think the sum too high. Rather, he found it suspiciously cheap. Was Hua Ming’s information really worth anything?

“A hundred sky spirit stones isn’t much at all. If your information is confirmed to be worthwhile, I’ll give you two hundred. If it’s amazingly useful, I’ll give you five. How about it?”

Five hundred sky spirit stones was a grain of sand on a beach for Jiang Chen. He was wealthier than a newly made tycoon. He wouldn’t be outshone even by the rich of Myriad Abyss.

After all, Shu Wanqing had possessed an amazing amount of wealth. Most importantly, the human domain had only a handful of empyrean experts. All the best things had been concentrated in their hands.

However, empyrean experts were everywhere in Myriad Abyss Island. A single empyrean expert tended to be far less wealthy in light of that. Therefore, the experts of Myriad Abyss were far poorer than Shu Wanqing had been.

"Truly?" Hua Ming's eyes lit up. His expression was incredulous.

"Absolutely." Jiang Chen was the epitome of certainty.

"Alright, ask away. Anything you'd like to know, I'll tell you everything!" Hua Ming was very excited. The five hundred sky spirit stones were beckoning at him. This was a more than princely sum for him.

"Let's talk over there." Jiang Chen pointed to a clear space near the edge of the valley.

"Anywhere you say, sir!" Hua Ming's head was spinning at the promise of the spirit stones. He wasn't in the right mind to oppose much of anything.

Jiang Chen counted out a hundred sky spirit stones when they came to that spot. "This is a down payment. Take it for now."

There was even a down payment? Hua Ming was astonished beyond words. He almost grabbed the spirit stones from Jiang Chen's hands. They disappeared between his fingers as readily as a magic trick.

"Like I said, sir, ask away!"

"I'd like to know how the Bluesmoke Isles match up to the rest of Myriad Abyss. Is it closely related to the Ten Divine Nations?" This was Jiang Chen's first question.

"I guess you can count it as a second-rate faction. Not much happens between us and the Ten Divine Nations. I've never heard of anyone from there visiting us in my entire life. But I hear someone's planning to make a trip recently..."

"What's the purpose of that trip?" Jiang Chen pressed.

"Probably our isles' biggest attraction, the Bluesmoke Jade. Our jade is unrivaled in the whole of Myriad Abyss, and rumor has it that they come from the primordial times. Some pieces of jade have ancient heritages embedded within. Every few centuries or so, the Bluesmoke Isles has a grand festival for excavating the jade. I believe one is happening this year. Many big houses from the Ten Divine Nations will send representatives here."

"Excavating... the jade?" Jiang Chen found this a bit confusing. "Where is the jade exactly?"

"Oh, just about anywhere, as long as you know how to look for it. But the most productive place is Yellow Dragon Ridge, to the east. There's plenty of jade there within tens of thousands of miles, but the government limits any digging efforts. It's a well-protected patch of land. It's your first time coming to Bluesmoke, friend, so remember this well: don't go wandering into the Yellow Dragon Ridge. Otherwise, you might die without even realizing it."

Jiang Chen had little interest in Bluesmoke Jade. Visitors from the Ten Divine Nations were far more interesting. He'd also heard that the Ten Divine Nations placed strict limitations on immigrants, and had been wondering how he could get into Eternal Divine Nation. This was an absolutely necessary topic to consider.

"Have you heard exactly what factions and houses are coming from the Ten Divine Nations?" Jiang Chen asked again.

Hua Ming shook his head. "No one knows right now. Perhaps Bluesmoke's imperial family might?"

Jiang Chen knew that the boy was unlikely to be privy to secrets like these. He changed the subject.

"Hua Ming, do you know if there are any islands with a particular affinity to fire around here? The more deserted, the better."

"Affinity to fire?" Hua Ming blinked, then blurted out, "Sure. Holy King Island."

"Holy King Island? What kind of place is that?"

"Well, Hell King Island is its real name. That island has a natural volcano, and the waters around it are near-boiling all round the year. The water steams for hundreds of miles, like a big pot of briny soup about to boil over. Even some fire-attribute cultivators don't dare approach. Many go to train themselves, but few manage to return. The ones that do often become renowned experts."

Jiang Chen was overjoyed. "Tell me, where is that island? How far is it from here? What are its coordinates?"

Hua Ming smiled wryly. "Brother, are you a fire-attribute cultivator? Please calm down. That island is a terrifying place. Out of a hundred people that go there, ninety-nine die. Do you want to go there to breakthrough?"

"Enough chatter. Do you want your spirit stones or not?" Jiang Chen's expression darkened.

"Ah, I was just reminding you." Hua Ming wasn't an ill-intentions youth. He didn't want someone kind enough to give him stones to encounter misfortune. He had spoken out of youthful habit.

"Don't worry. Even if nine thousand nine hundred ninety-nine die out of ten, I'll be the lone survivor. Answer my question."

"Alright. Hell King Island isn't far from the Bluesmoke Isles. Maybe eighteen thousand miles eastward of here, then a bit further north. I hear cultivators all have to circle around that area, and few are willing to actually go there."

"Why? The boiling ocean shouldn't affect cultivators overmuch. What danger is there?"

"Not just the ocean, but the volcano there sometimes erupts at incredible temperatures. The stuff it spews out is hot and powerful enough to break through empyrean experts' defenses. A great emperor that passes by can easily be turned to ash."

This information was a bit more useful. However, Jiang Chen didn't show a bit of displeasure at this. Rather, he was quite pleased. Wasn't that a place that the Vermilion Bird would love the most?

The Vermilion Bird needed this kind of place to complete its rebirth ritual. Its chances at success would be greatly increased.

Hua Ming shook his head rapidly. Clearly, he thought that his new brother was crazy.

Jiang Chen asked a few more details about Hell King Island.

"I don't know very much more than that," Hua Ming replied. "If you want to know more, I'd recommend you go to a bigger city in the isles and look for info there. That sounds like a better idea."

"Fine. Tell me, how many experts are there in the Bluesmoke Isles?"

"Experts? That's hard to say. We definitely have a few great empyrean experts, and of course more mid empyrean experts than that. I guess minor empyrean experts are a force to be reckoned with too. Most here considered reasonably strong are great emperors. Origin realm is a starting point, and sage and emperor realm are rudimentary!"

Jiang Chen had nothing to say about that.

In the sixteen kingdom alliance, origin realm cultivators were forefather-level experts. And yet they were considered rudimentary in Bluesmoke. Children three to five years old could achieve that level.

Great emperor realm had been considered the pinnacle of achievement in the human domain for a long time, but someone like that could only be considered reasonably strong here. That meant they were as common as sage and emperor realm cultivators in the human domain. And this was only in the Bluesmoke Isles too!

As first-rate factions, the Ten Divine Nations were sure to be even more absurd.

It seems the Ten Divine Nations have strength beyond estimation. How fearsome is Myriad Abyss Island, really? Will there be divine level experts?

He really wasn't quite sure.

Divine experts belonged to the heavenly planes. Any divine expert could reasonably be called a god!

Jiang Chen had thought it impossible for Myriad Abyss to have such existences, but he no longer entertained that conviction with certainty.

After asking a few more questions, Jiang Chen learned more about the Bluesmoke Isles' strength. In the process, he got to know more about the trade exhibition in Oriole Valley as well.

"Brother," Hua Ming said. "You look like you're a pretty important guy. Still, though the trade exhibition here in Oriole Valley isn't very high level, there's the occasional deal that happens. I've grown up here my entire life. That happens several times each time the trade exhibition happens."

"Deals... that happen?" Jiang Chen became curious.

"It's all about the Bluesmoke Jade, you see. Some pieces of jade are difficult to identify from their surface appearance. It's hard to determine how much heritage they contain. A couple years ago, there was a piece of cheap jade sold at bargain prices, but it turned out to be an amazing deal. That jade

contained a wisp of an ancient expert's will, capable of exerting immense pressure in battle. Even empyrean experts can potentially succumb to it!

"There's another time when..." Hua Ming had plenty of stories to tell about Oriole Valley.

Jiang Chen had a rather improved impression of the youth. This disheveled boy had his own way of life. Otherwise, it would've been difficult for him to survive in Oriole Valley, much less thrive.

The answers to his question had been worthwhile enough. Jiang Chen felt the five hundred sky spirit stones to be deserved wages. He handed the entire sum to Hua Ming.

"Consider the hundred before as your tip. This is your proper fee." Jiang Chen's generosity was met with excitement from his temporary hireling.

Hua Ming put the spirit stones away, then fixed on at what he saw in front of him. "Look, look, there's a public announcement of some sort. Something impressive must've happened. There wouldn't be one during the trade exhibition otherwise! Come on, let's go and see." He dragged Jiang Chen in that direction.

Having nothing better to do, Jiang Chen allowed himself to be taken to the spectacle.

The bulletin board did indeed have a new public announcement on it. It was a bounty. There was even a portrait. He almost burst into laughter when he saw the image.

There were two busts there: one was of his appearance back at Winterdraw Island, the other, Su Hong.

"Three great houses of Polylore Divine Nation hereby do announce that we vow vengeance upon these two criminals. Anyone who captures them alive will be rewarded ten million sky spirit stones. Anyone who gives clues, two million sky spirit stones. Anyone who slays them, five million sky spirit stones..."

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

#### **Chapter 1617: Purchasing the Heavencloud Ganoderma**

Jiang Chen was secretly grateful that he'd put on a disguise and changed his identity into that of Shao Yuan. The name had once taken the human domain by the storm, but no one knew of it here.

Hua Ming peered at the notice board from afar and muttered to himself. "Wow. What crime did these two commit? Three great houses are after their heads! They're in for it now!"

Jiang Chen feigned ignorance and smiled blandly. "Who knows? These nobles must be really wealthy to be able to afford such hefty bounties!"

Hua Ming sighed. "The Ten Divine Nations are wealthy and reckless beyond measure. It's very likely that they'll increase the bounty even more after it's unclaimed for some time. It's ten million now, but it'll rise to fifty million before you know it. Aristocrats like them have no lack of money. What they really want is face. Once they've issued a kill order, they'll never rest until it's completed."

Jiang Chen laughed. "Haha! I guess those two really are as good as dead then!"

“Well, it’s hard to say for sure. Most of the kill orders issued on Myriad Abyss Island have been fulfilled, but there are exceptions. The information given for these bounties aren’t very detailed. The crimes these two committed must be incredibly serious.”

A jianghu wanderer suddenly interrupted their conversation with a mocking laugh. “Ignorant fools! You must’ve never set a foot outside of the Bluesmoke Isles before! The rumors have already spread far and wide!”

Hua Ming wasn’t the least bit offended. Instead, he smiled and smiled ingratiatingly, “Brother, judging by the aura you exude, I can tell that you’re a seasoned explorer. Perhaps you can enlighten us and talk about the rumors?”

Intelligence seemed to be his trade. He was incredibly shameless and curious when it came to information.

The wanderer couldn’t even be bothered to spare Hua Ming another look. However, he seemed to have noticed Jiang Chen’s unusual air and didn’t dare to be overly condescending.

He cackled oddly. “There was an incident at Winterdraw Island, part of the Rejuvenation Isles. Rumors state that a few geniuses from Polylore Divine Nation were killed by these two. The details are extremely complicated, but it’s the topic of the moment everywhere outside.”

Hua Ming’s eyes glinted. “Pardon me brother, is it possible for you to share some of the details?”

The crowd around the board engaged in heated discussion, their interest in the bounty very apparent. However, there were some buzzkills as well. “The bounty is very high, but with great reward comes high risk.”

“Indeed. They won’t be simple characters if the noble houses are issuing a bounty for them.”

“Forget it. This kind of money isn’t meant to be ours. With some luck, perhaps we can stumble upon some clues and make two million empyrean spirit stones. That’d be good too.”

Eventually, the conversation died down and the crowd slowly dissipated. Jianghu wanderers were realists and knew that this kind of bounty wasn’t meant to be theirs. Their interest quickly faded away after the initial surge of enthusiasm.

Hua Ming laughed after noticing that Jiang Chen was still looking at the board. “Brother, are you interested in the bounty?”

The latter smiled. “Indeed. Ten million empyrean spirit stones is quite a large sum.”

“That’s true, but it’s probably not smart to get involved in something like this. You can’t afford to offend someone on the run like this,” Hua Ming advised solemnly.

Jiang Chen nodded in agreement. I can't believe that there are bounties on both Su Hong and I. He made it out of the Blackwraith Mountains as well! He's a lot sturdier than I'd thought, and to make it out without being caught! His potential is truly stunning.

Su Hong had been able to have a head start thanks to Jiang Chen's warning, receiving a second lease in life.

Jiang Chen took another short glance at the board before he turned around and headed to the trading area. Like a personal attendant, Ming Hua followed him around diligently. He wasn't oppose to it as he didn't have a bad impression of the youth.

He walked leisurely past the floor stalls, inspecting the goods throughout the way.

Ming Hua asked curiously when he noticed that Jiang Chen didn't stop for a single thing. "Brother, why don't you take a look? Are you sure that there's nothing good here?"

Jiang Chen laughed. "What are the chances of there being something good on the floor stalls?"

Taken aback, Ming Hua nodded honestly. "Not very high."

"If that's the case, why should I bother looking one by one? There are tens of thousands of stalls here. Am I supposed to check them all?"

Ming Hua didn't know what to say to that. He heaved a long sigh after some moments had passed. "But... how do you know if there's something good if you don't look?"

"I have my ways." Jiang Chen smiled mysteriously. There were many things that he wasn't disclosing. He swept his eye across the contents of a stall when he walked past them. If there was something that caught his eye, he'd stop to take a look. But since there wasn't anything worthy yet, why would he waste his time?

With his wide breadth of knowledge from his past life and current level of consciousness, it was incredibly difficult for any treasure to escape his eye.

Disappointment descended after walking through a row of stalls. The things available for sale weren't exactly trash, but they were incredibly trite and unexciting. They might be useful for an emperor realm cultivator, but they were completely useless to him. What he wanted were the unexpected bargains. Without them, he couldn't be bothered to stop.

Hua Ming had begun to feel a little anxious and resigned when Jiang Chen suddenly halted in front of a stall.

The person running the stall was a well-built, short, and slightly chubby young man. He seemed quite the honest sort and stuttered when Jiang Chen stopped in front of his stall. "D-dear customer... what is it that you're looking f-for?"

Jiang Chen inclined his head slightly while staring at the Heavencloud Ganodermas on display. "How much for these spirit herbs?" He asked with a smile.

This was the key ingredient in refining the Emperor Supremacy Pill. It was incredibly rare in the human domain, with only a few available at any given time. The ones on display at the stall were miles better than anything found in the human domain, so it was practically love at first sight.

Since he was now a great emperor, these pills would greatly accelerate his progress. Naturally, he was keen on buying them.

A spirit herb of this caliber could cost up to hundreds of millions of saint spirit stones in the human domain. A hundred million saint spirit stones was roughly equivalent to a million empyrean spirit stones.



“Honored customer, if you’re interested in the Heavencloud Ganodermas, they’re eight hundred thousand spirit stones each. If you take all of them, I’ll even give you a ten percent discount. How about it?”

The honest youth’s price was very reasonable. It was much lower than it would be in the human domain. A Heavencloud Ganoderma of this level would cost more than a hundred million saint spirit stones, equivalent to over a million empyrean spirit stones. But here, they were only eight hundred thousand empyrean spirit stones each and there was even a ten percent discount!

This was more than reasonable. Jiang Chen counted them up to find six in total.

“I’ll take all of them.” His straightforwardness left the shopkeeper flabbergasted. Even Hua Ming sized up Jiang Chen with a weird look.

What a rich guy!

Just look at those deep pockets! He’d just spent over four million spirit stones without batting a single eye! Many could afford to fork out that much money in the Bluesmoke Isles, but only the higher echelons could spend it so nonchalantly.

Hua Ming was completely stumped by Jiang Chen’s affluence, the expression on his face quite lively.

“Honored customer, I’ve wrapped the herbs up for you. After the discount, it’ll be a total of 4.32 million stones. I’ll wipe out the smaller figures to make it a round figure at 4.3 million. Will that be fine?” The honest youth was extremely respectful towards Jiang Chen. His voice was filled with reverence and even a hint of fear.

“Wait a minute!” Ming Hua interjected. “Your herbs are good enough, but they aren’t exactly perfect. This one has some blemishes on the leaves, and that one seems to have some problems with the roots.”

The stallkeeper stared at Ming Hua with his mouth agape, not knowing what to say. After that, he turned his gaze towards Jiang Chen, clearly wondering if the beggarly youth was acquainted with the opulent customer.

“H-honored customer, my Heavencloud Ganodermas are of the h-highest quality. Y-you...” The stall owner was clearly not adept at bargaining and was rendered speechless by the accusations.

“Y-you what? Other merchants at Oriole Valley don’t even dare greet their customers without giving them a twenty percent discount. You should give us another twenty percent discount on top of what you’ve already given us.”

The stall owner’s eyes were red with indignation. He was so agitated that he was on the verge of beating Hua Ming up. However, he managed to keep his temper down since he was a businessman. He settled for a death glare at the boy and put down the herbs in his hands. “T-then... I shan’t be selling them anymore! They are no longer for sale!”

Hua Ming was flabbergasted as well. He’d wanted to curry favor with Jiang Chen by asking for a steeper discount, but the stall owner was extremely principled and chose not to sell instead! It felt like he’d lifted a rock and smashed his own foot with it. Awkwardness filled the air.

"You call yourself a stallkeeper? Haggling is part of the trade! If you find our price unreasonable, quote us another one!"

"No! The herbs are no longer for sale!" The stall owner was fuming after the humiliation.

Hua Ming's hands were tied. He had a very glib tongue, but there was nothing he could do if the stall owner decided not to sell. Was he supposed to steal it? He neither had the courage or the ability to do so.

Jiang Chen smiled ambiguously at Hua Ming. Without saying another word, he took out 4.3 million empyrean spirit stones and placed them on the floor. "Brother, please don't mind him. Here's your money. I'll be taking the herbs."

The stall owner was stunned after seeing that he was paid in full. However, before he could say anything else, Jiang Chen had already walked off into the distance.

### Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

#### **Chapter 1618: Bluesmoke Jade**

Hua Ming was a bit flustered. Still, he jogged up when he saw Jiang Chen walk forward.

"Hey, hey, brother, hold on a sec." He was a persistent boy and quite thick-skinned; he had a way of life that was all his own.

Jiang Chen halted. "Your job is done," he smiled coolly. "I've paid your fee, haven't I? Go do business with someone else."

"Just now was an accident," Hua Ming defended himself enthusiastically. "I haven't shown you my haggling skills yet. I'm not an expert on spirit herbs, you know. But jade – that's my specialty. You won't go wrong if you listen to me about that. You'll save tons!"

Jiang Chen didn't know what to say or do about Hua Ming's stubbornness. I suppose there's no problem having a temporary follower during my leisurely jaunt.

"Stay with me if you want to." He shrugged.

Hua Ming thumped his chest with enthusiasm. "Alright! You'll discover how good I am soon enough, just like how horses really shine after long distances. I don't boast for no reason, you know!"

As a youngster making his livelihood in Oriole Valley, Hua Ming had a keen eye for people. It was rare to encounter someone who was so kind to him. Moreover, this man looked extraordinary from the outset, and was wealthy and generous to boot. This was a chance to really turn his life around. This was why he stopped at nothing to follow his benefactor.

Jiang Chen returned to idle browsing after his purchase of the spirit herbs.

He barely touched the most popular good being traded here in Oriole Valley – Bluesmoke Jade.

Buying jade was essentially gambling. Most of the time, the stones had value only as collector's items rather than any practical use. If one happened to buy a piece of the jade in the latter category, that was a bargain rather than the norm.

Nevertheless, the passion with which the jade was bought and sold was undampened. Every stall selling jade was crowded by multiple crazed cultivators.

Evidently, the jade had changed enough fates in Bluesmoke that most were willing to take a risk. Some had even been propelled to the pinnacle of martial dao. An entire batch of cultivators had benefited from the jade.

However, it had also caused many others to go bankrupt.

Countless cultivators pinned their hopes on the jade's ability to work miracles. In actuality, the likelihood of a single piece of jade containing an ancient heritage was lower than one in a million.

Jiang Chen shook his head with inward disapproval at the crazed atmosphere. He didn't like the feverish ambience of the crowd, nor did he much care for cultivators who gambled their hopes away on insubstantial things.

The jade trade was a lucrative one, and its customers hardline bookies. Most participants yielded no return whatsoever regardless of investment. Jiang Chen was very suspicious whether any pieces of jade with ancient heritage circulated on the open market at all. Would they really appear with any sort of regularity?

Most importantly, wouldn't experts be able to identify the valuable pieces ahead of time?

In the eyes of many cultivators, Bluesmoke Jade couldn't be identified before it was refined. But his experience informed him otherwise with confidence. Cultivators with enough expertise could at least vaguely sense valuable pieces, if not divine them outright.

Following close behind, Hua Ming asked curiously. "Brother, it's your first time here in Bluesmoke, right? Why not play a round of jade?"

"I haven't seen any of interest," Jiang Chen replied simply.

"You won't see anything at all, you're glossing over things so fast! Bluesmoke Jade is about getting lucky anyway. What's the point of looking?" Hua Ming laughed.

"Why waste my money if I can't look before I buy?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"Waste your money? What if you win? What if you get a bargain? You'll win a prize that you couldn't possibly buy!"

"What, is this a get rich quick scheme?" Jiang Chen grinned. "Is that why everyone is so feverish around here?"

"It's just what's popular here in Bluesmoke, man! If you stay a bit longer here in these isles, you'll see it's the most fashionable hobby, that's all."

Jiang Chen wasn't one to be convinced easily. He walked about randomly, scanning any stalls he passed by with a cursory eye. He didn't easily fish out spirit stones for a purchase.

Though Hua Ming felt an itch in his heart, he couldn't demand his skills to be put to use. The stones belonged to the man who'd hired him.

They shopped around for four hours. Just as the boy was about to give up, Jiang Chen suddenly stopped at a store. This vendor was clearly a sizable one, with many cultivators gathered around it.

"Let's go in and see, shall we?" saying this, Jiang Chen strode inside.

Hua Ming was a bit anxious to see Jiang Chen entering the shop. He was most effective at applying pressure on street stalls.

Larger stores like these were often backed by specific factions. Though he was a good influencer, he didn't dare recklessly haggle in another's territory. If he were targeted by a local power, he'd be in more trouble than he could digest.

Because street stalls were largely set up by wandering cultivators, they lacked the connections that would protect them from Hua Ming's aggressive bargaining.

As expected, he was blocked rather brusquely from entering by the store's employees. "What're you coming in here for, brat? You think beggars are allowed in our fine establishment? Your ratty appearance will only scare off the real customers."

Hua Ming's attire and appearance were hardly worthy of praise, to be sure.

"Can't you see I'm with that honored customer over there?" he protested. "He's a pretty important character. You gonna stop him from shopping here, too?"

The employee in question was momentarily dazzled. Jiang Chen's clothes didn't seem too remarkable, but his graceful manner and elegant bearing made him stand out from the crowd.

It was difficult for the associate to make the right call.

"I've paid him to follow me around for a bit. Let him in," Jiang Chen smiled.

A satisfied smirk appeared on Hua Ming's face immediately. "You hear that? This honored customer's told you what he wants. Unless you want to turn him out, get out of my way."

The employee traded a look with the shopkeeper at the back. Seeing that the latter was silent, he allowed entry with a huff.

"You better stay honest," he warned, "and stay out of the other customers' way."

"Someone else has hired me," Hua Ming chuckled, "so I only need to answer to him. Who cares about the others?"

Jiang Chen ignored Hua Ming. Instead, he lowered his head and began to stroll through the store. The chain seal in his consciousness had stirred the first time he'd passed by here. It was proving increasingly effective as an alert. There was something up whenever it reacted.

That was why he'd come in here. If there was a deal to be hunted for with Bluesmoke Jade, then this was the place to do it.

He began to slowly comb through the large store. There were so many things here. It specialized in Bluesmoke Jade, and so it was everywhere in the shop. Most of the jade was in the raw, untouched form, having been recently excavated. The pieces appeared superficially to be rather similar to one another.

Hua Ming chuckled. "Brother, I'll help you haggle if you want to try it out. We'll get the best deal we can, yeah?"

"Quiet. I'm only here to look," Jiang Chen waved. Hua Ming was forced back into silence.

The store was full of ancient jade. It wasn't easy looking for specifically what he wanted. Furthermore, groups of people crowded over certain clusters. Jiang Chen wasn't interested in ruining others' fun for no reason, and began his search in the roomier areas.

Unfortunately, he found nothing of actual interest there. A few sweeps were enough to show nothing special in his consciousness.

There has to be something good in this store. The seal in my consciousness wouldn't have reacted otherwise. But where is it? Is it a piece of jade hidden beside countless others?

Though the search wasn't quite trying to find a needle in a haystack, it was nevertheless incredibly difficult.

Jiang Chen made a circuit of the shop. He hadn't gone towards the most congested areas, but he had been pretty much everywhere else.

There was nothing worthwhile whatsoever.

He was a bit disappointed and forced towards the several clusters of people in the store. Thankfully, the environment was reasonably orderly. A staff member helped make a way through for him as he approached that direction, so that he would have a spot to stand and observe.

Alas, Jiang Chen made no notable discoveries.

Only the most popular spot remained. There's no way that something good would be near that many people, right? He considered the teeming crowd. It'll be tough if it is.

If there were more people, it was easier for something actually valuable to be picked away.

"I'll go take a look anyway." He headed for the largest group of people.

The group encircled a large batch of raw jade. A veritable hill had piled up to colossal size. At least three or four dozen stood at the side of this hill, fervor written across their gold-prospecting faces.

A staff member smiled when he saw Jiang Chen approach. "Honored customer, we got this batch of raw jade in stock just today. These haven't been picked through yet, so it's a bit more likely to yield something useful. Of course, the prices are increased correspondingly a bit."

Jiang Chen was unsurprised. Fresh goods were more attractive for almost everything.

“What’re the prices around here?” Hua Ming declared with feigned familiarity.

The attendant looked at the boy with some disgust, then turned back to Jiang Chen. Realizing their relationship, he didn’t curse in the end.

“Customer,” he smiled, “the larger pieces are five hundred sky spirit stones each. The smaller ones, three hundred. Extra large, a thousand.”

Jiang Chen examined the mountain of raw jade. There were tens of thousands in various sizes there. He clucked his tongue. Bluesmoke Jade was a big business, alright!

### Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

#### **Chapter 1619: Fighting For Possession**

A single pile of jade this size totaled several dozen million sky spirit stones. Hua Ming cleared his throat, completely ignoring the staff member’s mildly disgusted expression. “What kind of discounts are you offering?”

“No discounts.” The staff member glared at Hua Ming, clearly dissatisfied with the presence of such a pain-in-the-ass. What was the point of the kid?

“No discount? Don’t try to trick my employer here just because he’s a foreigner. I was born here through and through. Every jade vendor in Oriole Valley gives discounts, yeah? A man of his prominence definitely deserves one.”

“Who are you, if I may ask?” the staff member glanced at Jiang Chen.

“Hmph. My employer is an important guy from the Ten Divine Nations. You can guess at his actual identity. He’s making a rare visit to the Bluesmoke Isles. You don’t wanna leave a bad impression, yeah?” Hua Ming was certainly a master of pretension.

Jiang Chen grinned wryly when he heard how important he was supposed to be. Still, he didn’t deny it. Now that the words were out of Hua Ming’s mouth, he found no reason to clarify.

“Alright then.” The staff member gave Jiang Chen the once-over. “Since you’re a valued customer, we’ll give you ten percent off like our VIPs. If you buy a lot, fifteen.”

Jiang Chen suddenly grinned. “I’m just buying a couple pieces. Nothing too much.”

Both the staff member and Hua Ming almost keeled over in shock. Hua Ming had already made his boasts, but his employer had just said that ‘a couple pieces’ were all that were needed...

He’d thought Jiang Chen would spend millions the same way he had with the Heavencloud Ganodermas. A deal that big would have been wonderful.

A couple pieces?

How much was that worth?

The fellow's expression became rather awkward. "If you don't spend more than ten thousand, customer, I can't really give you a..."

What was the point of giving a discount on less than three thousand sky spirit stones' worth of goods? There was no precedent of that in the store.

"I don't care, as long as your goods are high quality." Jiang Chen was quite candid. Having finally managed to squeeze his way in, he imitated the others in picking at the jade.

Now that he was nearer to a pile of raw jade, the chain seal in his consciousness reacted in much the same way it had earlier. It was a very familiar feeling.

"So it is here." He began a patient search.

First, he swept the raw jade in the cultivators' hands. There was nothing special about any of those pieces, thankfully. If someone had gotten the prize he was after, that would be quite troublesome.

His biggest worry out of the way, his mark must be within the messy pile of unprocessed stone on the ground. Jiang Chen rifled through them leisurely, following the others' lead. His consciousness was fully active in examining each and every piece of jade.

Having so many people helping the process certainly sped it along. Suddenly, his mind shifted. A piece of raw jade brought out by the others' searching caused a reaction in his consciousness.

Is that the one?

Jiang Chen moved decisively to grab the raw jade. Just when he had gotten his fingers on it and was about to take it away, another hand grabbed onto the opposite side of the stone.

It was a hook-nosed, middle-aged cultivator. He peered at Jiang Chen through squinted eyes, his tone peculiar. "First come first serve, friend. This is mine."

"I seem to have gotten my hands on it first, no?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"Oh? But I saw it first." The hook-nosed cultivator was positively frigid as he fixed his eyes on Jiang Chen. "Follow the rules, buddy. You came later. You know what rules are, don't you?"

Jiang Chen shook his head. "I only know that my fingers touched it first. It's mine by all rights."

Neither party budged an inch.

Upset, the hook-nosed cultivator leveled a glare. "You sure you want to fight with me over this?"

"Don't get it wrong. You're the one fighting." Jiang Chen retorted coolly with steel in his voice.

The friction between the two men bothered the other patrons.

"Take it outside if you two want to argue. Don't disturb the rest of us."

"Exactly. It's just a piece of raw jade, no? Pick another. Do you think you're going to strike it rich on just that piece? Do you think you have that much good luck?"

"That's right. You're just wasting time and spit."

The bystanders felt both parties to be fools. Only someone whose brains were fried would spend so much effort over a single piece of unremarkable jade. And neither was willing to give an inch??

Given Jiang Chen's frustrating stubbornness, the other party opted for underhanded tricks. He sent a strong current of electricity into the stone, trying to show Jiang Chen up.

However, it only felt like an ant was crawling on Jiang Chen's skin. It didn't prompt a reaction at all. After refining the Thundercloud Cicada bloodline, he was immune to all poisons and electricity.

He smiled faintly with a sidelong flick of his eyes. "Are you trying to give me a scratch? Put your back into it. You gotta show me sincerity to make give up my prize."

The man's expression darkened. He began to consider Jiang Chen more seriously. He'd thought Jiang Chen was easy to bully because of his youth. A single warning should've been sufficient to make him give the jade up. But there was no reaction whatsoever to the attack. The man seemed to have tossed a rock into the ocean.

A staff member came up to mediate the conflict. "Gentlemen, don't fight here. Otherwise, we'll have to see both of you out."

"I'm not fighting, friend," Jiang Chen smiled coolly. "I just wanted to pick up the jade I'm interested in. Unfortunately, someone else wants to take the same piece from my hands."

"Bullshit. You want to rob me of my prize!"

The staff member scanned both of them. "Sir," he turned to Jiang Chen. "This is an honored customer of our store. According to the rules here, he has priority."

Jiang Chen laughed when he heard. "He has priority even though I got it first? That only happens when it's impossible to determine priority, no?"

The staff member frowned, feeling that Jiang Chen was stupid in his inflexibility.

"You both have your hands on it, so I can't say which of you got it first. Perhaps you should be gracious and let this friend here have it. He's a pretty well-known cultivator, you know? One of the Northcrown Five. Why not make a good impression by taking a step back?"

The staff member's tone seemed fair, but was in fact biased towards the hook-nosed cultivator. A gang of five cultivators reasonably prominent in the world deserved accommodation, no?

The hook-nosed cultivator casually let go of his end, crossing his arms over his chest and looked at Jiang Chen lazily. The backing of the staff puffed himself up even more so. The look in his eyes was mocking, their meaning evident: you're too fresh to compete with me, kid!

Jiang Chen smiled coolly. "Excuse me. I haven't heard of any such group. You have your principles, and I have mine. I've never let anyone else have anything I take an interest in. Even if the king of the world were to come up and ask for it, I wouldn't give it to him if he were rude."

His words made every listener draw in a sharp breath. The cultivators who'd been picking through the jade a moment prior switched to scrutinizing him with a curious eye.



His stance was hard indeed. It was interesting that a young man dared speak like this, given his opponent and the store's backers. Either he was fearlessly brave out of ignorance, or actually from extremely important origins. Perhaps he really was from the Ten Divine Nations?

The staff member frowned. The difficulty of the situation was palpable. The store wanted to do business in the end and couldn't overstep its boundaries too much. Bias was acceptable, but limited. If he was too blunt, there would be suspicions about the legitimacy of the store itself.

The shopkeeper chose this moment to make himself known. He sidled over with a wide smile and a cupped fist salute. "Friend, please give me some face. The store will take back the raw jade to refrain from offending either party. As an apology, both of you can take three pieces of jade of the same size for free. It'll be on the house. How about it?"

The shopkeeper had a keen eye. Since both parties were equally difficult to deal with, he had to mediate for a happy solution.

Jiang Chen smiled. "I'm only interested in what's right. I don't care about the piece of raw jade itself. It's really quite insignificant. But are you sure, shopkeeper, that you won't privately sell it to them later on? If you'll swear an oath about that, I'll satisfy you by giving you the benefit of the doubt. There's tons of other jade here I can buy, yeah?"

He wasn't going to be fooled. It was quite possible the shopkeeper was familiar with the Northcrown Five. The store was taking the jade back, but it might very well make its way into the hands of the hook-nosed man in the end. This was just a little trick, nothing more.

The shopkeeper stopped in his tracks. This was exactly what he'd wanted to do. His smile grew unnatural after Jiang Chen pierced his ruse.

"Friend, it's not easy to run a store. Please, be a bit more understanding." His tone instantly became much colder.

"My sincere apologies. I'm going to do nothing less than take this piece of raw jade." As Jiang Chen said this, he took out five hundred sky spirit stones and put them on the counter. In the same motion, he put the raw jade into a storage ring. His movements were crisp and decisive.

His act angered both the store and the Northcrown Five.

The shopkeeper darkened. "Are you forcing the purchase, friend?"

Jiang Chen wasn't interested in explanations. "Everyone buys like this. Why can't I do the same? If others are simply buying, how am I forcing anything?"

He wouldn't do it intentionally, but there was nothing wrong with starting a fight as he was in the right here. A conflict was no problem, really.

Hua Ming was positively green in the face. "What do you guys mean?" he struggled out. "My employer is a big shot from the Ten Divine Nations. Why're you giving him trouble for buying a piece of jade to have some fun with?"

He might as well follow up with the ruse he had gone with earlier. It wasn't like Hua Ming had another choice. If the claim was sufficiently intimidating, then that was that. If not, then... let the cards fall where they may!

### Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

#### **Chapter 1620: Conflic**

In contrast to Hua Ming, Jiang Chen maintained his calm, not losing his composure even when caught in a hostile situation. He stood tall with a relaxed expression, lacking the usual nerves or fear that one in trouble would usually possess.

His presence was arresting. The crowd couldn't help but think that perhaps he really was someone important.

Even the shopkeeper reconsidered Jiang Chen carefully. He'd spent his life observing customers and had his own ways of reading people. This young man, however, he couldn't get a handle on.

Jiang Chen wasn't dressed particularly opulently and thus didn't look like a noble scion from the Ten Divine Nations. But his temperament, calm attitude, and irresistible presence on the other hand, did indeed resemble those of the aristocrats.

The shopkeeper couldn't come to a conclusion just yet.

The Northcrown Five were wandering cultivators and had a fair bit of status in the jianghu. But naturally the store couldn't possibly risk offending an aristocrat of the Ten Divine Nations for some wandering cultivators.

Everyone knew the major factions in the Ten Divine Nations were highly, unreasonably protective of their own. If he got on a noble house's bad side, the shop might not survive the troubles that came after.

The Northcrown Five were merely his old customers. They might have spent more money here than other customers, but the shop didn't have that strong a relationship with them when it came down to things.

Indecision set in.

The hook-nosed cultivator stared at Jiang Chen with a sneer. "Do you know how many claim to be from the Ten Divine Nations, kid? You're far from the first! Tell us who you are if you've got the balls to. If you're someone we five can't afford to offend, we'll get ourselves out of here. If you're an imposter, then I'll teach you a hell of a lesson today!"

These cultivators spent all their time busting their chops in the world. They'd learned to speak in whatever way the occasion warranted. They were experts in reading the room. His words sounded impressive, but one had to read between the lines. He appeared to be quite resolute, but in truth, he had left some wiggle room for himself.

It was a perfect illustration of bullying easy victims and fearing those that were stronger. From the way the ultimatum fell easily out of the man's mouth, it was clear that this was the Northcrown Five's usual modus operandi.

The shopkeeper changed his tune as well. In a purposefully neutral tone, he said, "Dear friend, this humble shop has come to be known in Oriole Valley. It was established hundreds of years ago. If you truly are from the Ten Divine Nations, we are honored by your presence. We'll willingly give you not one, but dozens or even hundreds of Bluesmoke Jade. It will be our gift to our friends from high places. Who might you be?"

This was another probe to compel Jiang Chen to reveal his true identity.

All of the customers elsewhere in the shop had stopped what they were doing to watch the drama play out. Those around Jiang Chen backed away to keep a safe distance from him. No one was stupid. They could be harmed on accident if a fight broke out.

As a result, Jiang Chen and Hua Ming were left in the center of the shop. They stuck out like a sore thumb.

Hua Ming quailed inwardly. He was a young boy after all, spending his days wandering around Oriole Valley. Half his time was devoted to begging, and the other half wasted on nothing of importance. In everyone's eyes, he was a dirty, stray dog. No one cared enough to spare him a glance.

However, he was currently the center of everyone's attention. Despite the fear filling his heart, he managed to stay strong against the pressure.

I'm just a little beggar. When have I stood at such heights? I've never been the center of so many people's attention before! I don't care who this man is. I'll stand strong by his side! My life isn't worth much. Even if I die here, I'll die having tasted glory for once in my life!

Hua Ming had made up his mind resolutely.

All his life, he'd been on the receiving end of scorn and disdain. He was a nobody that no one respected. He'd never even been treated like a human being. But now, the spotlight was on him because of this man. People no longer looked at him with disrespect, but with something different in their eyes.

It made Hua Ming's blood boil to be seen and valued. Even if he died at this moment, at least he would've shone brightly for once!

Jiang Chen threw the shopkeeper a look. As for the Northcrown Five, he didn't spare them even a glance. An aloof smile tugged at his lips.

"If I say that I'm not from the Ten Divine Nations, shopkeeper, am I going to be carried out of this shop as a dead man?" Of course he could tell that there was an edge to the shopkeeper's polite words. "Is this how you run your business? If the other customers were in my place, would you decapitate them without hesitation?"

"You've said enough already, kid," the hook-nosed cultivator scoffed. "If you can't prove that you're from the Ten Divine Nations, you have no one else to blame for what's coming to you."

Jiang Chen huffed out a laugh and shrugged. "Is that a threat?"

The man glared at Jiang Chen. "You can take it as one."

"So I'm unlucky today. So be it. What are you going to do? Show me what you've got." Jiang Chen didn't take the threat seriously at all. He knew that the more timid he was, the bolder the man would become.

The shopkeeper naturally didn't want a fight to break out in his shop. And judging from the young man's unusual calm in the face of threats, he couldn't tell if the calmness was merely a pretense, or if it was backed up by real power.

If there was a fight, and the young man was from the Ten Divine Nations, his shop was as good as doomed.

"Wait," the shopkeeper hurriedly spoke up. "This is a fight between the two of you. This humble shop should not get involved. The innocent customers should be left out of it as well. If you want to resolve this problem through force, you can request Oriole Valley to arrange a fight to the death. A private fight within this humble shop won't be approved by the authorities."

When everything was said and done, the shopkeeper was a businessman. He was reconsidering his options as the situation had devolved. He knew that if the fight happened on his premises, it was going to have a negative impact no matter the results.

Jiang Chen broke out in laughter.

The shopkeeper was a wiley one alright. He was trying to shirk his responsibilities!

"That's where you're wrong, shopkeeper. When it comes down to it, your unfair treatment was the source of our conflict. Do you think you'll be able to disown all responsibility by saying that?"

The more the shopkeeper tried to pretend the conflict had nothing to do with him, the more Jiang Chen was going to hold him accountable.

The shopkeeper grew even more suspicious because Jiang Chen's aggressive attitude. Perhaps the young man truly is someone important. Why would he be so fearless otherwise? If the young man was only pretending, he was too good an actor.

The hook-nosed cultivator was displeased as he'd expected full support from the shop, but before anything of consequence happened, the shopkeeper had pulled away and cut ties with him. This wasn't someone he could count on!

"Let's go to Oriole Valley and fight to the death. Do you dare take the challenge?" Fueled by his anger, the cultivator boldly took a stand. The Northcrown Five had never lost in a fight before.

Even that didn't get a rise out of Jiang Chen. "I'm not interested in traveling that far," he remarked nonchalantly. "Whatever you want to do, do it here and now. Even if the authorities finds fault, you won't be the only culprits. What's there for you to be afraid of?"

The five cultivators were getting confused. What was Jiang Chen trying to do? If he wasn't afraid of even Oriole Valley, how powerful were the forces supporting him?

Out of everyone in the room, Hua Ming was the most thrilled. He was young, but had a quick mind. He could tell that both the Northcrown Five and the shopkeeper were getting wary of Jiang Chen. Glee filled

his heart. He had been looked down on for years, but the glory he gained today more than made up for it!

He did his best to calm himself and exclaimed, "You people are blind! Don't you know who my employer is? You bullies who target only the weak may scare off regular men, but this is my employer you're facing off with! You've bitten off more than you can chew! What are you going to do, huh? Do you really dare see who's tougher between your or my employer??"

Hua Ming held his head high. Throughout his life, he'd learned to do only two things. One was to fake a smile. The other was to flatter others. Now, he'd learned a third thing today, and that was to speak confidently with his back straight and his chest out. Damn, it felt good!

Outside the shop, the street was crowded with onlookers. Drama attracted people faster than the plague could spread.

A team of officers pushed past the crowd into the shop. The captain of the team gave each party a glance before turning to the shopkeeper. "What's going on here, Shopkeeper Kang?"

The shopkeeper was stuck between a rock and a hard place. What he least wanted was for a fight to break out. For a business man, peaceful profits always came first. He put on a bright smile when he saw the officers. "Great timing, Captain Qiu! If you can resolve this problem, that will be ideal..."

He relayed what had happened.

Lieutenant Qiu frowned slightly once he understood the situation. He could tell the shop was to blame for not dealing with the issue properly to begin with. He turned to Jiang Chen. The young man had a striking appearance, gracious bearing, and gave off an uncommon air.

He didn't dare to show preferential treatment to either side. He greeted Jiang Chen respectfully and requested evenly, "This isn't a serious conflict, my friend. Are you willing to take my advice and let it go?"

"What about the jade?" asked Jiang Chen.

"Whoever came first has ownership. Since you picked it up first, you should have it. However, you still have to pay the full price. What do you say?"

"I already paid." Jiang Chen glanced at the shopkeeper.

"Yes, he did. He did pay."

Captain Qiu threw the Northcrown Five a look. "You people should take a step back too. Oriole Valley has overcome many challenges over the years to be where it is now. Stop stirring up trouble all the time."

The captain wasn't a fool. He knew that Oriole Valley could afford to offend the wandering cultivators. But this unknown young man, on the other hand, might be someone the Oriole Valley couldn't afford to antagonize as well.