

## Three Realms 1661

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

#### Chapter 1661: Elder Wanjun

"Grandson Qingsang is here to greet my grandfather." Yan Qingsang was casual and true to himself before his grandfather.

Yan Wanjun sighed inwardly. One of his sons was of mediocre talent, the other locked in Boundless Prison, and his only grandson had grown up to be headstrong and tactless because of his indulgence.

But now, his grandson had proven himself in the jade festival.

"You've done me proud, Qingsang. Those in the family who like to criticize you won't be able to find faults with you now, haha!" Yan Wanjun's expression turned smug. He was the one who'd vehemently argued for Yan Qingsang to go to Bluesmoke with the other youths.

Before the departure, it was greatly debated if Yan Qingsang should be allowed to go. Many elders believed that he was too stubborn, blunt, and inflexible. He was unlikely to play well with the others and could be an unstable factor in the group.

In fact, what Yan Qingsang had done in the Jade Revel Lodge did indeed prove their concerns correct.

But his performance in the jade festival had been extraordinary. His singular gains had been more than the other youths combined. As a result, many who wanted nothing but to make trouble for Yan Qingsang could only swallow their frustration.

Yan Wanjun was rather pleased with the outcome. His grandson had made him look good and he could now lift his head proudly in front of the rest of the family.

"Don't praise me, grandfather. I'm not going to lie to you. Most of the credit should go to Brother Shao Yuan." The boy didn't bother with pretenses with his grandfather.

Jiang Chen piped in, "It's also thanks to Brother Yan's extraordinary talent and open mindedness. Things wouldn't have gone as smoothly if it had been anyone else."

Yan Qingsang blushed. "That's not me at all, brother. I feel like an imposter being described as talented and open-minded."

Jiang Chen smiled in lieu of a response.

Yan Wanjun laughed and responded disapprovingly, "Can't you be serious for one second? You're thirty already, but still so undependable. Haven't you learned anything from your brother?"

"I have! I've learned a lot about ancient jade from him."

"Balderdash. I'm not telling you to learn about ancient jade. I'm telling you to learn from his bearing. Let me tell you, you have much to learn when it comes to how you should bear yourself and interact with others." Yan Wanjun might have been reprimanding his grandson, but his eyes were filled with fondness.

Jiang Chen snorted silently. Now he knew why Yan Qingsang was the way he was. He had been spoiled to death by his grandfather. It was said that an indulgent mother would raise a hopeless son. In this case, it was an indulgent grandfather harming the grandson. Nevertheless, that was between the two of them. He was in no position to make comments.

"I have a favor to ask, little brother Shao Yuan," Yan Wanjun said seriously, his curious gaze fixed on Jiang Chen.

"Please be frank about your instructions, elder," Jiang Chen hurried out.

"They're not instructions. I just want you to offer Qingsang some guidance in the future. This brat isn't the most talented in the family, but he's among the top tier. His personality, however, leaves something to be desired and can use some tempering. Please help him out in that regard. The two of you should care for each other within the family and work hard to stand out from the rest."

"Of course." Jiang Chen nodded.

"Qingsang has never been popular in the family. He finds faults in everyone around him. It's uncharacteristic for him to befriend you." Yan Wanjun sighed. His grandson worried him greatly. While his two sons' fates were already set in stone, his grandson was young and his future malleable.

That was why he had high hopes for Yan Qingsang. He hoped that the boy would one day achieve greatness. However, his grandson's cultivation currently didn't even rank in the top five of the house, let alone the top three or even rivaling Yan Zhenhuai.

Even Yan Zhenhuai, recognized as the top genius of the youths in House Yan, could only be considered average among the great factions in Eternal Divine Nation.

At the end of all this, the elder knew that the most talented person among the younger generation in House Yan wasn't Yan Qingsang or Yan Zhenhuai, but his granddaughter Yan Qinghuang.

Sadly...

He felt a sharp pain in his heart when he thought of the girl. His son had made a grave mistake, but his granddaughter was innocent. However, the elder had been unable to disobey the family out of consideration of the greater good.

Still, he was remorseful for his inability to help Huang'er. If there was an alternative, he would never allow her to be sacrificed for the sake of clan.

But there was nothing he could do by himself. He alone wasn't enough to fight House Yan. Even if he could, he was no match for House Xiahou. It all came down to House Yan being too weak. If it'd been strong enough to rival House Xiahou, they wouldn't have suffered the abuse and humiliation.

Yan Wanjun raged, but he didn't know whom to direct the anger at. The anger drove him to put high expectations on Yan Qingsang. He wished that his grandson would be able to succeed and reap honor and glory, pushing his line of the family to the top of the clan.

To do that, Yan Qingsang would have to live up to his expectations.

Before the jade festival, the boy had been far from impressive. His performance was at its best decent, at worst disappointing. But this time, he'd won the festival by a large margin.

This was why Yan Wanjun was so accepting of Jiang Chen and allowed him to accompany Yan Qingsang. The innate bearing and potential of this newcomer would be a positive influence on his grandson. What was more, the young man would never be a threat to Yan Qingsang.

After all, Jiang Chen didn't bear their surname.

No matter how talented he was, no matter how great his potential was, he would never be a candidate for a core member of the family. At most, he could be a venerated, foreign elder.

Dinner was set up in the garden. Grandfather and grandson had a drink with Jiang Chen beneath the moonlight.

The elder was also using the opportunity to observe and test Jiang Chen, which the latter was prepared for. His answers were naturally perfect, further alleviating Yan Wanjun's doubts.

"By the way, little brother Shao Yuan, there's a place called Cloud Camel Mountain at the border of House Yan territory. One of the elders said that there could be a spirit vein of stunning capacity there. However, his talent doesn't lie in excavation. How about you? Do you possess such skills?"

Jiang Chen was thoughtful. "If it's a regular spirit vein, it can't be that difficult to extract, can it?"

Yan Wanjun perked up. "Do you mean that the spirit vein is a special one?"

Jiang Chen remained cautious. "I can't say for sure without inspecting the place with my own eyes."

"If you do, how confident are you that you'll be able to come up with a conclusion?" Yan Wanjun couldn't help but ask.

If a spirit vein was discovered in Cloud Camel Mountain, much of the credit would go to him. It was a good opportunity to earn credit for a meritorious deed. He didn't want to let it slip by.

Jiang Chen paused. "I don't like to make empty promises. I can only give you a concrete answer after seeing the area for myself. Baseless predictions are meaningless. My assessment may differ depending on timing, location, terrain, and internal structure. There's no point in making guesses now."

His answer further convinced Yan Wanjun that he possessed real knowledge. If he had immediately given an answer, Yan Wanjun would be much more skeptical.

"If I asked you to survey Cloud Camel Mountain, will you be willing to?"

Jiang Chen didn't immediately respond.

After some deliberation, he gave the elder an apologetic smile. "Elder, excavating a spirit vein - especially one that is difficult to extract - can take decades, even centuries. Even observing the environment will take a few years. I haven't achieved great success in martial dao yet, and this is a crucial time for me to cultivate. If my cultivation is delayed for a few years, I'll miss out on a lot of opportunities. That's why I don't dare give you an answer now."

That wasn't the whole truth.

He wasn't worried about his martial dao, but that House Xiahou might come take Huang'er away in his absence. He would regret it for his entire life if he wasn't able to make it back in time because he was away on the border.

That was why he wouldn't agree to go anywhere faraway within the next ten years. That was, unless he was sure Xiahou Zong wasn't in the capital or at House Xiahou.

Yan Wanjun smiled. "If it'll take years, we won't force you to take on the task."

"Brother Shao Yuan has just arrived at House Yan, grandfather, and you're already assigning him missions," complained Yan Qingsang. "Where's your sense of hospitality? Besides, he's right. Don't you always say that we're at the critical age for cultivation?"

Yan Wanjun was defenseless against his grandson. He smiled wryly. "You sure know how to run your mouth, you brat. Grandfather didn't say Shao Yuan has to help me. This is just a personal request. The family isn't forcing the task on anyone either. Oh, didn't you acquire some ancient jade in the Bluesmoke Isles? Pick two of the best quality..."

"And what?" Yan Qingsang's hackles rose. "You're not going to deprive me of the fruits of my labor, are you, grandfather?"

"You! I fed you and raised you. Is it going to kill you to give me two pieces of ancient jade?"

"Tell me what you're gonna do with them first!"

"One of the daughters in House Xiahou is holding a birthday celebration soon. The young geniuses in the capital will be invited. I want you to bring your ancient jade..."

Yan Qingsang's face turned red. House Xiahou? The two words were make his heart flood with rage.

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

#### **Chapter 1662: The Elder Is Stunned**

Though Yan Qingsang looked a bit too flippant sometimes, he was strangely stubborn on the most particular of matters. Especially on the topic of House Xiahou, he was unrepentant and uncooperative. This was evident from his conduct back at the Jade Revel Lodge.

When he'd first heard of family feud, his first instinct was to oppose it. He hated House Xiahou to the bone, and found it absolutely unacceptable he would have to attend a birthday party for one of its daughters. Furthermore, he would be obliged to give away pieces of his valuable ancient jade?

There was an immense psychological hurdle here.

"Grandfather, House Xiahou is far too oppressive a faction. Haven't they bullied us enough? Are we supposed to go lick their boots too?" Yan Qingsang's tone was a bit too aggressive in light of his frustration.

"Ah, kid, when will you get rid of your bad habit?" Yan Wanjun's voice was filled with a deep helplessness.

That his grandson's nature was so immovable, especially when it came to House Xiahou, was a source of perpetual headaches for him.

"If you can't muster any subtlety and restraint, how will you inherit this branch's heritage? How will you undertake the task of restoring our line's status and honor? What right will you have to lead House Yan's younger generation?" Yan Wanjun balked irritably at his grandson's gloomy inaction.

Jiang Chen thought for a moment, then opened his mouth. "Brother Yan, I'll fund the two pieces of ancient jade."

Yan Qingsang glared at Jiang Chen. "The jade isn't the point here! House Xiahou is oppressing us, but we're supposed to butter them up. Why??"

"Why? Because they're stronger than us right now. At any moment, they can cause us to suffer more than we already have. Why else do you think?" Yan Wanjun furiously gasped for breath.

"I've let you have your way in everything else, Qingsang. I don't think a bit of extra personality is bad for a young person, so I haven't been too strict with you. But if you can't hold yourself back with regards to House Xiahou, you'll run into trouble sooner or later. Let me ask you, what can you do if Xiahou Zong comes to take Huang'er away tomorrow?"

"I..." Yan Qingsang scrunched up his face angrily. He opened his mouth, but nothing came out. What could he do?

Nothing at all!

Aside from watching the Xiahou genius take Huang'er away, there was nothing he could do at all.

Yan Qingsang's strength was insufficient to win against Xiahou Zong, even in a fair duel. In fact, five of him added together couldn't beat someone like that!

Xiahou Zong was touted as the strongest young genius in Eternal Divine Nation. No matter how unhappy Yan Qingsang was about him, he couldn't turn emotions into any actual physical damage.

"Qingsang, a man must view a problem in the long run as well as short. You want to act according to your pride, but you don't have the skill to back it up. Why then are you following your emotions? Can you afford to do that? It is fine to chase your whims, but you must have sufficient strength to do so. Maybe you think you can hide rather than fight, is that so?"

"And what's wrong with that?" Yan Qingsang was mulishly unconvinced.

Yan Wanjun sighed, then looked toward Jiang Chen. "Little brother Shao Yuan, you're the same age as my grandson and a brother to him. You be the voice of reason. From your neutral perspective, what do you think he should do?"

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Elder, I bear little goodwill towards House Xiahou, so I'm not really neutral or unbiased. From Brother Yan's point of view, I don't think there's anything wrong in biting the bullet for as long as needed.

"Relationships between great houses are often filled with hypocrisy and lies, but superficial gestures are necessary to a certain degree. You may think shirking your responsibilities is fashionable, but really, it's a

display of a different weakness. If you can talk with a smile to someone you truly despise, that is a useful psychological trial to undertake.”

He was speaking in hypotheticals only, of course. He didn’t know if he could pull that off himself.

Yan Wanjun blinked. “You have... little goodwill towards House Xiahou? Do you bear a grudge towards them for something?”

“How should I put this...?” Jiang Chen laughed, trailing off.

Yan Qingsang looked around, then grinned. “There are no outsiders here. I’ll talk if you don’t want to. Grandfather, it’s ninety percent likely that Brother Shao Yuan was the one who got rid of Xiahou Xi. You didn’t see how angry House Xiahou’s people were. It was damn exhilarating! Haha, they have no clue how or where Xiahou Xi died, and they’re still in the dark about it. This guy’s never admitted to that, though.” He rolled his eyes at Jiang Chen when he said this.

“What?” Yan Wanjun’s entire body shook. He looked at Jiang Chen with incomprehension. Though Xiahou Xi wasn’t the strongest genius in House Xiahou, he was among the top five. He’d been the leading young genius of House Xiahou’s team to the ancient jade festival. His untimely death had become an interesting topic of discussion within Eternal Divine Nation.

That was how Yan Wanjun had heard of this. According to rumor, House Xiahou was internally livid about all this. The elder hadn’t expected the youth before him to be responsible for that feat.

The ability to defeat and slay Xiahou Xi one-on-one wasn’t impressive in itself. But that, given the circumstances, Xiahou Xi’s execution had been swift and untraceable. These two conditions multiplied the difficulty of the task. The person responsible had to be strong enough to overwhelm Xiahou Xi as well as be extremely decisive. Any hesitation would’ve led to a failure.

“Little brother Shao Yuan, did you really...”

“Yes.” Jiang Chen knew that he could no longer hide it. “I was with Brother Yan originally, but Xiahou Xi came out from the middle of nowhere to ambush us both. I had to take the initiative before he made good on his threats.”

Yan Wanjun now saw Jiang Chen in a vastly different light.

Yan Qingsang positively beamed. He punched Jiang Chen’s shoulder playfully. “You finally came clean about it, huh? I knew it was you all along.”

“Was I supposed to admit that back there? If I did, House Yan would’ve been implicated in a very troublesome way.”

“Yeah, yeah, you’re right to be careful.” Yan Qingsang nodded rapidly.

Yan Wanjun admired Jiang Chen like he would a monstrous existence. “Xiahou Xi was half-step empyrean, wasn’t he? Some say he even got to first level empyrean realm. You killed him? Young Shao Yuan, your ancestral bloodline is really...”

“It wouldn’t have been easy for me to win with my personal strength. I used a few tricks to turn the tables on him,” Jiang Chen said humbly.

"In the world of martial dao, everything you can bring to bear is your own strength. There's no such thing as trickery not being a part of strength," Yan Wanjun replied with utmost seriousness.

Yan Qingsang sighed. "If you can get rid of Xiahou Zong one day in the same way, that would be perfect. My cousin wouldn't have to be his cultivation vessel anymore then. Ah!"

"Qingsang, you shut up. Don't mention something like that so casually!" Yan Wanjun rebuked.

"I just wanted to brag a little. Who among the younger generation in Eternal Divine Nation can take out Xiahou Zong? He's already made it big, like a dragon that's returned to the sea. He's practically unstoppable. I wager Eternal Divine Nation will be his in a hundred years or so." Yan Qingsang's unwillingness to accept the situation was palpable.

Yan Wanjun completely agreed.

"Qingsang, how did Huang'er do in Bluesmoke? Was her mood alright?" the old man asked.

"What does that matter? There's a curse upon her fate that no one can change. Moods are temporary, and I'd wager she'd prefer death rather than her current existence." Some sadness tinged Yan Qingsang's voice.

"Ah, it's grandfather's weakness. I cannot protect my son or my granddaughter. Qingsang, I live still only for your sake. If you don't better yourself, there's nothing I have left to live for," Yan Wanjun heaved a long sigh.

"Don't say that, grandfather... I'll try my best for sure." Yan Qingsang became wistful at his grandfather's display of vulnerability.

"If you're serious about that, cool your heart about House Xiahou first. You must attend their daughter's birthday party. House Yan has many youths and a limited number of invitations. I went through a lot of trouble to secure you a spot. If you proceed with your foolishness, you'll be sidelined no matter how much I coddle you!"

His grandfather's anger exhausted Yan Qingsang, sapping the latter of his spirit.

"Fine, fine, I get it, grandfather. I'll go, alright?" He gave in in the end.

"Not just that. Make sure you present a smile! No matter how upset you are inside, bottle it up for later. That's an order!" Yan Wanjun glared at his grandson.

"I... I will try my best!" Yan Qingsang gritted his teeth.

"Little brother Shao Yuan, I entrust him to your care on this trip. Please, remind him of anything you notice. Remain vigilant on his behalf. His temper is easily taken advantage of."

"Alright," Jiang Chen smiled.

Yan Qingsang was much more pleased. "Now that you're coming, I feel much more at ease. Your presence provides me with a bit of extra insurance."

"What kind of insurance do you need in the first place?" Jiang Chen cracked a wry smile. "Are you planning to commit murder or burn them down?"

"I feel the impulse to do so whenever I hear the name 'Xiahou'," Yan Qingsang gnashed his teeth.

"Don't worry. Remember what I said last time? Heaven is as inconstant as water is formless. House Xiahou is at its peak right now, and it may very well get carried away with arrogance. A single accident or mishap could send it down into the dust. It's quite possible, wouldn't you agree?"

"I'll wait for that day, then," Yan Qingsang spat out spitefully.

"Rather than wait, I prefer making a full effort to actualize it." Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

Yan Wanjun's impression of Shao Yuan was deepened by the two young men's conversation.

The old man suddenly chuckled. "Little brother Shao Yuan, what would you do if you met Xiahou Zong one day in person?"

"It depends on the circumstances," Jiang Chen mused. "If there's a chance to eliminate him without a trace – like at Yellow Dragon Ridge, back in Bluesmoke – then I'd take it without question. If we were under the public eye, I see no reason to go toe to toe with the entirety of his house. Assessment of the situation is key."

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

#### **Chapter 1663: Attending the Banquet**

Jiang Chen was quiet the entire way back to Yan Qingsang's abode. His companion, however, seemed to be brooding about something. The young man knew that Yan Qingsang probably hadn't recovered entirely from the conversation yet and saw no reason to show undue concern.

But Jiang Chen's silence seemed to be a bit uncomfortable for the other. "Why aren't you saying anything?" complained Yan Qingsang. "You said quite a lot in front of my grandfather."

"It's just a birthday banquet, no?" Jiang Chen smiled. "What's the point of being depressed for something like that? Are you really that scared of House Xiahou?"

"Me, scared of House Xiahou?!" It was as if Yan Qingsang's tail had been stepped on. "Ridiculous!" he shrieked. "I just don't want to talk to them."

"Tsk tsk. That's a nice way to put it, but you're scared. That's why you want to hide from them."

Jiang Chen's declaration was met with some annoyance from his friend. "I said I would go, didn't I? That's enough. My grandpa told me to listen to you, so out with it. Any sneaky ideas?"

"I don't know anything about House Xiahou right now." Jiang Chen shrugged. "What idea could I possibly have? We have to go to this party, but I doubt we'll enjoy the experience. House Yan isn't in such a good spot that you can expect any stellar treatment."

"Well, yeah, obviously," Yan Qingsang agreed readily.

"So our strategy is simple. We must preserve both ourselves and our reputations. House Xiahou is strong now, and House Yan weak. It won't be too embarrassing even if we eat a loss or two."



“Was that supposed to be encouraging? That was horrible.” Yan Qingsang shook his head wordlessly.

Jiang Chen laughed, but said nothing more. Honestly, he was as unwilling as Yan Qingsang to attend this banquet. If Yan Wanjun hadn’t designated him to go, he wouldn’t have any interest in it whatsoever.

Of course, there was the additional benefit of testing House Xiahou’s waters. His understanding of that house was based on superficial information from members of House Yan. He didn’t have a good idea of how strong the house was, or where its strengths lay.

“Your answer to my grandfather’s question about what you’d do if you met Xiahou Zong... you sure had balls, huh?” Yan Qingsang suddenly changed the topic.

“Why wouldn’t I be?” Jiang Chen felt little reason to conceal what he thought.

“Do you even know who Xiahou Zong is?” Yan Qingsang was at a loss for words again.

“Yes? The foremost genius of House Xiahou, rumored to be the best in Eternal’s younger generation. But I can guarantee that his life will be cut short.” Jiang Chen laughed.

“How so?” Yan Qingsang couldn’t help but ask.

“Is House Xiahou the strongest faction in Eternal Divine Nation?” Jiang Chen asked instead.

“No,” Yan Qingsang replied with some disdain. “They’re just an unworthy upstart. It has no qualification for being the strongest faction, and its position as the second or third is tenuous at best. The strongest faction will always be Eternal Sacred Land. Anyone who dares deny this fact will be visited with great trouble.”

“Well, there you have it. A faction that’s not the strongest has a genius that calls himself the strongest. That’s reckless confidence at best, suicidal rebellion at worst.” Jiang Chen sighed when he got this point. “If Eternal Divine Nation only has Eternal Sacred Land as the permanent foremost faction, I can understand why the rest of the houses wax and wane so frequently. The current House Xiahou may very well be a reflection of the House Yan of yesteryear, and the current House Yan, its future.”

These words were mildly philosophical. Yan Qingsang dwelled on them awhile, looking pensive.

Jiang Chen walked towards his residence without another word.

“Hold on a sec, brother.” Yan Qingsang caught up to his friend in a few broad strides. “Hey,” he smiled ingratiatingly. “You sound pretty reasonable. You think House Xiahou will fall someday?”

“Definitely. Whether you’ll be able to see that day is another matter.”

“And why wouldn’t I be able to?” Yan Qingsang huffed.

“A house’s rise and fall may take decades, centuries, or millennia—perhaps dozens or more. If they one day earn Eternal Sacred Land’s ire, their destruction will soon follow.” Jiang Chen sighed upon seeing Yan Qingsang’s slow comprehension.

“Come. Let’s pick out two pieces of good quality ancient jade. We need to get through the little predicament before us first, or I won’t be able to stand before your grandfather.”

Yan Qingsang was displeased, but followed Jiang Chen anyway.

Jiang Chen chose the gifts after little consideration. "These should be fine. They match your relative prominence and status."

Yan Qingsang sighed. "What has the world come to? I have to simper in front of a bunch of people I hate and give them presents. House Yan really has fallen pretty far. What a shame. My uncle was a genius of his generation, and the house thought he would be able to restore our former glory... but his current fate is rather ignoble."

Yan Qingsang's uncle was Huang'er's father.

"You're talking about Miss Huang'er's father, right?" Jiang Chen asked a question that he knew the answer to.

"Yes, brother. Since there's no one else here, I'll lay it on you straight. Remember what I joked about earlier? If you can off Xiahou Zong like you did Xiahou Xi—I mean, without anybody finding out, you could very well win my cousin's heart. Everything will be possible then!"

Jiang Chen was both upset and amused at Yan Qingsang's pretend secrecy. He smiled. "About your uncle. Did he show incredible talent in his youth? How was he back then, compared to Xiahou Zong now?"

"Hard to say. They're from two different generations. But my uncle was praised even by those from Eternal Sacred Land. They thought he was the most outstanding representative of his own generation. But maybe you've heard of what happened next."

Jiang Chen nodded slightly. "I've heard stories and talk of the enmity between your two houses. Your uncle was rather radical in his own way. He's worthy of admiration from younger cultivators."

"I suppose, but it's no fun to be stuck in the Boundless Prison. I wonder if he's still alive after all these years. If uncle knew that his daughter was going to suffer too though, he'd surely break out to save Huang'er if he were strong enough."

"Would it really be that easy?" Jiang Chen inquired curiously.

"No way. Super, incredibly, impossibly difficult!" Yan Qingsang shook his head. The Boundless Prison had been inherited from the time of the ancients, and possessed an ancient formation to match.

"I hear that the Boundless Prison imprisoned experts in the ancient times. In fact, Myriad Abyss as a whole was a place for Divine Abyss' exiles. But such talk is forbidden here nowadays."

"How trustworthy is that rumor, then?" Jiang Chen blinked.

"Reasonably so. The more the official sources try to deny something here, the more likely it's true. But that doesn't really matter." Yan Qingsang didn't seem to be all that interested about the subject.

"Hmm, perhaps," Jiang Chen fudged. In truth, he was very curious about what the other youth had just said. He'd always felt Divine Abyss Continent to be intimately related to his past life. He didn't have enough evidence for it, but plenty of details pointed to how worthwhile investigating the prospect would be.

Thus, Myriad Abyss Island was an important place for him to study as well.

Jiang Chen hoped he could dredge up the secrets hidden within his chain seal sooner rather than later. He had a feeling that it contained—if not the ultimate answer—then at least a few clues. If his father really had designed the seal for him, there was sure to be some explanation accompanying it.

After Yan Qingsang's departure, Jiang Chen began to cultivate without wasting a moment. He had nothing on his mind except breaking through to empyrean realm as quickly as possible. Only then would he solve the chain seal's mystery.

In three days' time, Yan Qingsang found Jiang Chen quite early.

"You agreed to come with me, brother. You can't get cold feet now. Today is that Xiahou bitch's birthday. I hear that her house has made a big affair of it, and a marriage partner is being sought from among the attendees."

"Another arranged marriage?" Jiang Chen wanted to throw up. After witnessing what Bluesmoke's imperial family had done, he was somewhat put off from the idea in general.

A strategy that used a woman as a valuable token wasn't worth very much. However, it did tend to be simple and effective. A marriage between two factions naturally led to an alliance.

House Xiahou's real intentions were thinly disguised at best.

Jiang Chen looked at Yan Qingsang with pity. "I offer you my sympathies, Brother Yan. If that Xiahou girl is looking for a marriage partner today, countless young geniuses will try to use House Yan's youngsters as stepping stones. The more they embarrass you lot, the more she'll be pleased."

Yan Qingsang was unsurprised. "Oh, I'm sure that bitch helped plan this. She's pretty young, but she's already an expert at seducing men and manufacturing controversy."

"If you can't avoid it, then face it head on, eh?" Jiang Chen glanced at Yan Qingsang teasingly. "Oh yes," he added with some nonchalance. "What's that girl's name?"

"Xiahou Ying."

"Not a bad name," the young man laughed. "What's her relationship to Xiahou Zong?"

"His younger sister by blood. Why else do you think the birthday of someone ordinary like her would be anyone's concern? Not to mention a special banquet."

The conversation had carried the two of them out of their own residence toward House Xiahou. As they walked, Yan Qingsang explained the various internal connections and associations of the largest factions.

His knowledge was far from comprehensive, but Jiang Chen found it helpful to fill in the gaps in his own understanding. After all was said and done, he had a reasonable grasp of the affairs here in Eternal Divine Nation.

## Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

### **Chapter 1664: Foremost Genius of House Yan**

Six of House Yan's young geniuses had been invited to the birthday banquet. Yan Qingsang ranked among the bottom, with only Yan Jinnan at his level. The other scions of House Yan were stronger than him.

Being the outsider he was, Yan Qingsang travelled by himself, bringing Jiang Chen to House Xiahou's manor on his own, rather than go with the other youths.

House Xiahou had several manors in the capital. Most of the younger generation resided in Green Lotus Manor. Although the neighborhood around the manor wasn't the most prosperous in the capital, it was the most prestigious. Almost all top tier factions had a house or manor here.

Green Lotus Manor was bustling with activity. It was festooned with lamps and decorations, creating a magnificent atmosphere. It seemed more like a festival than a simple birthday celebration.

Yan Qingsang handed the invitation to the guard at the door. He was let inside without any questioning, Jiang Chen trailing after. He was here as Yan Qingsang's attendant, so he was quite relaxed. From the arrangements House Xiahou had made, he was able to gain a basic understanding of the family.

It cared deeply about projecting a grandiose image.

Many young talents from around the nation had come to the celebration and were conversing in groups. They seemed to be having a good time. Jiang Chen looked up to see Yan Jinnan sitting in a corner with a downtrodden expression. It was clear that he was unhappy.

Jiang Chen speculated that the members of other factions must be ignoring him due to their low opinion of him.

Yan Qingsang also noticed Yan Jinnan's plight, but turned a blind eye to it.

Jiang Chen had to admit he felt sorry for the youths of House Yan. They would've regretted not coming to the celebration, but there was nothing interesting in attending either.

His eyes darting to the door, Yan Qingsang caught the silhouette of a man. Jiang Chen followed his gaze. From a distance, the proud man held himself like a statue. He stood out from the crowd, and was dressed like a member of House Yan.

Yan Zhenhuai.

Putting a name to the face, Jiang Chen was almost a hundred percent sure that this was the top genius of House Yan, Yan Zhenhuai.

Yan Qingsang hurried over to the man. As the top genius, he held a high place in Yan Qingsang's heart that couldn't be overlooked.

"Brother Huai," greeted Yan Qingsang.

Yan Zhenhuai was tall and fit, and the lines of his face strong and sculpted. He presented a striking figure. Throwing a glance at Yan Qingsang, he nodded. "There you are, Qingsang. I hear that you performed well in the jade festival. You've made the family proud."

"Haha, that's because you didn't go." Yan Qingsang was surprisingly humble.

Jiang Chen stood silently on the side with a slight smile.

Yan Zhenhuai flicked a glance over and asked Yan Qingsang, "Is this your sworn brother?"

"He is. Brother Huai, this is Shao Yuan. He's a good man with great talent. You'll grow to like him." It was evident that Yan Qingsang held Yan Zhenhuai in high regard, or perhaps there were less than a handful of people in House Yan that he respected.

Yan Zhenhuai nodded. His speculating eyes swept over Jiang Chen before he turned to Yan Qingsang. "Tell the others to come to me. The family should stick together. If someone's going to start trouble, they'll at least give me some face."

His tone was free of arrogance or pride. He was simply taking on the responsibility of the oldest brother. This earned him some respect from Jiang Chen.

"They'll come on their own, Brother Huai," responded Yan Qingsang. "I'm not gonna get them."

Yan Zhenhuai smiled faintly. "I heard that you had an awkward time with Yan Jinnan in the jade festival. Is that true?"

Yan Qingsang admitted to it with a nod. "It's true, but it's in the past now. You may not know what happened, Brother Huai. I was just too angry..."

Yan Zhenhuai nodded. "Alright, you don't have to say anything. I know the details. You did the right thing."

At this moment, the other youths of House Yan spotted Yan Zhenhuai too. They made their way to him with surprise and delight.

"You really did come, Brother Zhenhuai!"

"I heard you were exiting closed door cultivation recently. We were just speculating if you would attend!"

"We can be at ease with Brother Huai here."

"Haha, Brother Huai is our backbone."

They were genuinely happy to see him. They knew that Yan Zhenhuai's attitude would determine if they could preserve their pride and avoid humiliation. If he protected everyone, they would be met with less jeering and attacks.

Yan Zhenhuai scanned the group. "I was told there would be six of us, me included. Why are there only five?"

"Xinmei has gone inside already. I think Miss Ying had someone summon her."

One of the six Yan youths was a female cultivator called Yan Xinmei; she was the only one not present.

In addition to Yan Zhenhuai, Yan Jinnan, and Yan Qingsang, there were two other young men. They both veered on the quiet side. One of them was reserved, and the other detached and aloof. Neither of them seemed particularly amiable.

Jiang Chen observed them impartially as an outsider. He could tell that Yan Zhenhuai was the only leader among the group.

The others refused to take their peers seriously. Jiang Chen sighed inwardly. The decline of House Yan seemed to stem from many contributing factors. The death of their venerated forefather wasn't the only cause.

Or perhaps it was the forefather's death that'd led to the deterioration of the family culture, which in turn gave rise to a series of problems.

"Alright, it's about time. You've all brought your gifts, haven't you? Come with me!" Yan Zhenhuai waved his hand. The others trailed after him to the inner courtyard.

An extravagant banquet came into view. The setup was luxurious, magnificent, and sumptuous. A large platform rose up in the center of the garden. Around the platform were circles upon circles of tables.

It was an interesting layout for an event. The elevated platform was clearly the center of attention. House Yan's table was placed at the outer edge of the first circle, a seemingly harmless arrangement that put them on a lower level.

One sacred land, three great sects, and seven aristocratic houses. In addition to House Xiahou, there were ten other first rate factions.

Among the ten factions, it was House Yan's table that was placed furthest from the stage. It couldn't be considered an open insult, but anyone observant would recognize it as an attempt to marginalize House Yan. The guests didn't find that strange. They too felt that House Yan couldn't compare with the other houses now.

Yan Zhenhuai raised a slight eyebrow, but quickly schooled his expression into one of impassiveness. "Take your seats."

With a wave of his hand, the other youths found their spots and sat down. As Yan Qingsang's attendant, Jiang Chen naturally didn't have a place at the table.

Yan Qingsang was a little embarrassed by that.

Jiang Chen didn't care. He wasn't here for a seat at House Yan's table. He was here to get to know House Xiahou. Otherwise, no one would be able to convince him to come as an attendant.

The table could fit ten. Even if all six of the group had taken a seat, there were still four spots left.

Yan Zhenhuai glanced at Jiang Chen, who was standing behind Yan Qingsang. "Have Brother Shao Yuan to take a seat, Qingsang."

Yan Qingsang paused. "What?"

Yan Zhenhuai smiled slightly. "Brother Shao Yuan has been approved by the patriarch and the board of elders. He's one of us now. He should have a seat."

Yan Jinnan stilled and objected disapprovingly, "Brother Zhenhuai, we're all lineal descendants of House Yan. People are going to talk if we let an outsider—an attendant—sit with us."

Yan Jinnan had never liked Yan Qingsang. His own follower was standing behind him. How dare Yan Qingsang's take a seat with them?

The aloof-looking genius nodded in agreement. "Jinnan's right. Masters should be masters; attendants should be attendants. The hierarchy must be maintained."

Yan Qingsang's blood boiled, but noticing Yan Zhenhuai's expression, he managed to keep ahold of his anger and stop himself from slamming a hand on the table.

Yan Zhenhuai leveled a pointed look at Yan Jinnan and the other genius. "Don't forget that the patriarch and the board of elders have accepted Brother Shao Yuan. He's a comrade-in-arms, not a mere follower. Keep that in mind."

The house's leading genius had made himself clear. Even though the two young men were upset, they didn't dare argue with him. He might truly grow angry if they did.

Yan Qingsang snickered and grabbed Jiang Chen. "Take a seat, brother. As Brother Huai said, you're entitled to share our table."

Jiang Chen smiled. Since Yan Zhenhuai had spoken up for him, he wouldn't turn the invitation down. He didn't mind standing, but he wouldn't mind taking a seat either.

When they were all seated, a pretty young woman showed up out of the blue. She put a hand over her mouth to muffle her cries as she ran.

"Xinmei?" The members of House Yan recognized her immediately.

The young woman's eyes reddened when she spotted her family. She rushed to their table and dropped into a seat, laying on the table with her face buried in her arms, sobbing.

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

### **Chapter 1665: Gifts**

Yan Xinmei cried pitifully, weeping up a storm. The other youths of House Yan exchanged various looks. It was unusual for her to lose control of her emotions on such an occasion.

The expression on Yan Zhenhuai's sculpted face turned dark. As the top genius of the house, he knew how to gauge the situation. He could tell that Yan Xinmei must've been bullied.

"Keep your chin up and wipe off your tears, Xinmei. Don't embarrass the house," he transmitted. "Did someone do something to you? Which family was it?"

His voice calmed her somewhat. Her tears slowly ceased, and she wiped her face before straightening up.

"I'm sorry," she said quietly. "I've embarrassed everyone."

"Why were you crying, Xinmei?" Yan Qingsang had to ask. "Did someone do something?"

She paled and shook her head vehemently. "Stop asking. I'm fine."

Yan Qingsang shook his head. "You don't look fine."

"I will be in a while." She tried putting on a brave face, but the attempt wasn't entirely successful.

Even an outsider like Jiang Chen could tell that something bad had happened, and rather severe at that. However, given the circumstances, it was impossible for them to strike back for whatever maltreatment they'd suffered.

Even top genius Yan Zhenhuai could only prevent them from being bullied. It was impossible for them to regain face and intimidate the room.

"Be patient. Many are waiting for an opportunity to stir up trouble for House Yan. A reckless move may be exactly what they're waiting for." Yan Zhenhuai's eyes swept across the table. "None of you have to do anything today. I'll shoulder all of the burden. Even if they want to slap our faces, it's my reputation they'll damage. As long as I'm here, their main target won't be you. Understood?"

The youths stilled.

"How can we do that, Brother Huai? We're a family. We should stick together through thick and thin. We'll shoulder the burden together!"

"Together? How? This isn't a battle. False friends are more dangerous than an honest enemy. You need to keep a level head and your wits sharp." He was more observant and experienced than his peers and could grasp the situation better than they could.

With his warning, the other youths managed to slowly regain control over their emotions. They were no fools. They knew that they couldn't do much with their limited power and status. If someone was to make trouble for House Yan, it was Yan Zhenhuai who would have to deal with it.

Jiang Chen considered Yan Zhenhuai with appreciation. He was deserving of his reputation as the top genius of House Yan. There were differences about him that were different from the other geniuses in the family. In fact, Jiang Chen saw the bearing of a leader in him.

"Miss Ying is coming!" someone called out, breaking the awkward atmosphere. "Keep your eyes sharp and welcome her!"

Almost all the guests had arrived, allowing for the young daughter of House Xiahou's fashionably late entrance.

She was dressed in a pale-pink long skirt. As her name suggested, she was as beautiful as a cherry blossom. She was taller and more limber than the average girl; her slender waist accentuated the curves of her body.

She walked in with a bright smile, escorted by the geniuses of House Xiahou. She waved her hand at different directions to express her welcome and gratitude.



As soon as she arrived, the master of ceremonies launched into his opening speech.

“Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the birthday celebration of Miss Xiahou Ying of House Xiahou! All of you are remarkable geniuses in Eternal Divine Nation. You were invited because you are the future of the nation. Perhaps one of you will become her dao partner one day!

“With that, we shall proceed to the first stage of the celebration. All of the guests will present their gifts, which won’t be displayed to the public until Miss Ying picks three of her favorite gifts. Of course, she’ll pick her least favorite three as well.”

Was there really a need for gift-giving to be its own ceremony?

Jiang Chen was speechless at this, but he didn’t dwell on it.

However, Yan Jinnan was plainly determined to stir up more trouble. He scoffed. “Sir Shao Yuan, Brother Huai has given you a seat as a show of his recognition. You were a guest the moment you sat down at the table. Did you come empty-handed to mooch off the free food and drink?”

Yan Qingsang couldn’t let that slide. “What do you mean by this, Yan Jinnan? I’m handing out two pieces of Bluesmoke ancient jade. We’ll split them between us.”

“Tsk, are you going to split one gift into two?” he jeered. “People are going to laugh at House Yan for really having come down far in the world. I’m really not trying to start trouble, Brother Huai. If the other factions found out, they’ll mock us for not displaying proper manners.”

But no matter what he said, he was indeed stirring up trouble.

Yan Qingsang opened his mouth to say something, but Jiang Chen smiled and cut in, “Who told you I didn’t prepare a gift?”

“Haha, what gift can a wandering cultivator like you possibly prepare on such short notice? Are you giving out ancient jade as well? That’s all just trickery.” Yan Jinnan refused to stop. “Besides, it’s unsightly to give the same gift?”

“Who told you I was giving her the same gift?” Jiang Chen had had enough of this clown. He flicked over a cold glare.

Yan Jinnan felt a chilly wind breeze past the back of his neck.

Jiang Chen took out a jade gift box and put his two gifts inside.

The master of ceremonies came to the table to collect their gifts. Yan Zhenhuai put his gift on the tray, the others following suit as well. The tray then came to Jiang Chen, who smiled slightly and offered his jade box.

The master of ceremonies glanced at him curiously. “Who is this, Sir Zhenhuai?” He was rather taken aback. They’d issued only six invitations to House Yan. Why were there seven people at the table?

“This is our newest allied young genius.”

The master of ceremonies was in no place to complain since Jiang Chen had given a gift. All of the gifts were brought back to the stage.

Jiang Chen's gifts were two jugs of wine - Drunken Immortal and Shennong Liquor. The two were completely different styles of alcohol. Back in the human domain, he'd treated reclusive empyrean experts to the two wines. Even on such an occasion, they were worthy gifts.

Yan Jinnan scoffed at Jiang Chen, finding the wandering cultivator pretentious. "Your last minute gift can only be a pale imitation of the real thing. I hope you won't embarrass House Yan."

Yan Qingsang had had enough. He retorted, "You should take care not to embarrass us, Yan Jinnan. You're in no place to worry about others. You've done quite enough to shame us at the Jade Revel Lodge."

Yan Jinnan's face flushed red. That had become a permanent stain on his record. When he thought about it, he realized that he'd made a grave mistake. Xiahou Xi's death made his actions even more ludicrous.

There were quite a lot of guests milling around. The gifts were brought to the centerstage one table at a time. Xiahou Ying stood tall among the crowd with a poised smile. Her every move gave her an air of a great daughter of nobility.

However, Jiang Chen didn't hold a high opinion of her.

"Xiahou Ying's one of the sixteen beauties, brother," Yan Qingsang explained seriously. "She's always styled herself as the most beautiful and graceful one out of the sixteen women, but that's to be debated."

Jiang Chen threw her a glance. She was as overweeningly haughty like a proud, white swan. He knew where she came from though. She was loved and spoiled by everyone around her. Very few young women would be able to remain humble in her shoes.

He was the way he was only because he was living his second life. Even so, his emotions got the better of him sometimes and caused him to make a different decision.

Thus, it was natural for Xiahou Ying to be a little arrogant, vain, and pretentious at her age.

Nonetheless, it was ridiculous for someone with her personality to think of herself as the best of the sixteen beauties. No matter how he looked, Jiang Chen couldn't imagine anyone considering Xiahou Ying better than Huang'er.

Beauty was in the eye of the beholder, but he believed that Huang'er was objectively the better woman.

Hundreds of gifts were delivered into Xiahou Ying's hands. She slowly went through them to make her six choices.

Yan Qingsang didn't care if the girl liked his gift. He'd be happy as long as his gift wasn't among the bottom three.

She finally made a decision after some deliberation.

"Quiet, quiet. After careful consideration, Miss Ying has chosen her favorite and least favorite gifts!

“Her third least favorite gift is the bolt of blue silk. The blue is too dull and lifeless. The color is displeasing to the eye.

“Her second least favorite is this marble. It’s incredibly old-fashioned and doesn’t fit her image.

“And what of her least favorite gift? These two ancient scrolls! Yes, the ancient scrolls!” The master of ceremonies sucked in a breath as if he could barely suppress his rage. “Our Miss Ying isn’t object to ancient scrolls in general, but these scrolls are counterfeits! The giver’s character is questionable!” His sharp gaze settled on House Yan’s table.

Jiang Chen paused. It seemed that the prologue had begun on the House Xiahou plot against House Yan.

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

#### **Chapter 1666: Two Great Seniors**

Two ancient scrolls? And they were both fakes?

Well this was a rather laughable spectacle. If there was no sincerity behind the presents, why give them in the first place? Giving out fakes... had that been intentional?

Jiang Chen found it odd as well. The glance had been directed at House Yan, but who was stupid enough here to give out fake scrolls? He recalled the handing over of presents a moment ago. Only Yan Jinnan’s boxes had been large enough to contain scrolls.

Everyone else looked at Yan Jinnan, who bristled all over.

“Impossible! The scrolls I gave were chosen after a very long time of browsing in the capital! How could they be fake?” Yan Jinnan didn’t dare shout too loudly. He roared at his own table in a low voice instead.

“Brother Yan Zhenhuai, so it seems the fake scrolls came from a scion of House Yan.” One of the Xiahou youths glared coldly at Yan Zhenhuai.

Yan Zhenhuai’s eyes flashed with fury. He was different from the others and didn’t come to a quick, easy conclusion. He wanted to know whether a genuine present had been swapped with a false one. But it wouldn’t have been easy to do that under so many watchful eyes, no?

“Whose present was that?” Yan Zhenhuai swept his cold gaze across the other attendees around him. “Is it yours, Jinnan?”

“The scrolls I gave were real!” Yan Jinnan protested loudly.

The young man from House Xiahou onstage sneered. “That’s enough. Miss Ying was just a little curious about the oddity. The world is a big place, and there are all kinds of people in it.”

Yan Jinnan was red in the face. He was very upset because he felt he’d been seriously wronged. He wanted more than anything to go up and check for himself. From beginning to end, he thought there’d been no problem with his scrolls.

His gift being chosen as Miss Xiahou Ying’s most disliked for no reason at all depressed Yan Jinnan. He had put a lot of hope on his two scrolls. In fact, he had wanted them to draw the young miss’ attention. Alas, they’d attracted the negative kind instead.

Yan Qingsang breathed a sigh of relief. At least his ancient jade hadn't suffered the same fate. As long as he wasn't the absolute worst, he wouldn't have a real problem on his hands. The two pieces of ancient jade he had given were quite decent, but were far from either extreme of good or bad.

As expected, the three favorite presents were shortly announced thereafter. None of them had anything to do with House Yan.

"Someone just now said something about losing face for the house with poorly chosen presents," Yan Qingsang interjected suddenly, his voice dripping with sarcasm. "I wonder who that was?"

Yan Jinnan's eyes were hot enough to spew flames. If Yan Zhenhuai hadn't been present, he would have charged over to duke it out with Yan Qingsang.

"Yan Qingsang, don't you dare look down on me! There was no problem with my scrolls. They must be pulling some trick because they want to suppress us!" Yan Jinnan's explanation was weak and powerless.

"Why didn't they target us then? Maybe you look like the more hateable type, yeah?" Yan Qingsang provoked Yan Jinnan with a half-smile.

"Enough. Shut up," Yan Zhenhuai interceded coolly.

The two young men immediately descended into silence.

"Friends, Miss Ying is very happy about your enthusiastic courtesies. House Xiahou has been fortunate enough to invite two esteemed seniors to attend this event as well...

"First, we have our very own, Eternal Divine Nation's advisor of the state, Senior Duan Zhiyuan. Second, Senior Ziju Min, a pill sovereign from Eternal Sacred Land." House Xiahou introduced the two seniors with great ardor and zeal

The large curtains at the back was drawn back. Two seniors stode out slowly, one on the left and one on the right.

The atmosphere immediately boiled over at the sight. These two were famous even in the nation at large. One was a national official, the other a veritable pill dao master. A pill sovereign was none other than a legendary pill immortal, an expert who'd attained empyrean rank in pill dao!

Either senior would walk unchallenged in Eternal Sacred Land.

The audience became frenzied in the seniors' presence. Even Yan Zhenhuai was a little moved when he heard their names. He couldn't help but stand in respect when the two seniors came out.

Since Yan Zhenhuai had stood up, the others from House Yan didn't dare remain seated and followed suit. In fact, all the youths from the various factions stood to offer thunderous applause.

Neither senior put on any airs. They waved to the crowd amiably and strode onstage. Xiahou Ying approached them delicately. Her voice was almost sickly sweet. "Senior advisor, Teacher Ziju."

Teacher Ziju? Everyone paused at the address.

The young man from House Xiahou laughed smoothly. "Perhaps everyone wasn't aware yet, but Miss Ying became a student of Senior Ziju just last month. The master has acknowledged her talent and believes she may very well become the next pill sovereign!"

Those of House Xiahou let out a deafening cheer, raising a ruckus out of pride for their own house.

The other houses had mixed reactions. Some maintained their smiles without skipping a beat. Others were completely impassive, as if what had been just announced was none of their business. Still others furrowed their brows in secret, worried about House Xiahou's plethora of geniuses.

The difference in the expressions of the crowd was almost a work of art, spanning across all walks of life.

Yan Qingsang was among those upset by the news. He pursed his lips, muttering something inaudible to himself.

Having cultivated the Ear of the Zephyr, Jiang Chen barely managed to make out the quiet cursing about House Xiahou's upstart nature. Apparently, Yan Qingsang believed that house had fallen on incredibly undeserved, 'dog shit', good luck.

Yan Zhenhuai was rather solemn as well. He inspected the girl onstage thoughtfully. Everyone had previously thought Xiahou Ying's fame had been due to her appearance and relationship to Xiahou Zong. But now it seemed like an inaccurate presumption. Xiahou Ying was worthy of respect in her own right.

Her pill dao talent had to be incredible to have been picked by a pill sovereign as a personal disciple. In the world of pill dao, empyrean rank pill sovereigns loomed above everyone else. This gave them a certain predilection for pickiness when it came to anything.

Any personal students they took would be subject to strict standards. They wouldn't do so casually at all. By their former understanding of who Xiahou Ying was, she would've never been selected.

And yet, Ziju Min had done exactly that.

Aside from that, House Xiahou had also managed to pull the advisor of the state, Duan Zhiyuan, as well. This came as just as much of a surprise as the other revelation.

Was House Xiahou's younger generation really this influential that they could influence an advisor of the state?

State advisors participated in the government of the entire divine nation. They controlled the fate of the land they lived in. Regardless of a faction's strength, could it become stronger than the imperial family? Than Eternal Sacred Land?

Everyone had been universally wary of House Xiahou so far. Many had thought that the sacred land would eventually feel threatened and quell it in turn. It seemed, however, that the conjecture had been born out of pure envy rather than solid fact.

Rather than being rebuffed by the sacred land, House Xiahou seemed to be growing closer to it. They'd even managed to invite a pill sovereign from there!

The two seniors' seats at House Xiahou's table was radiance in itself. The house was significantly emboldened by their mere presence.

“Friends, shall we ask our honored guests to make a few comments? We younger cultivators need pointers from our elders. Please give them a hand!”

House Xiahou’s people were intentionally creating momentum for their own purposes. And unfortunately, the two seniors seemed to be rather cooperative in this regard.

“After you, advisor.” Ziju Min smiled in obligation.

The advisor returned a similar expression, then looked at his rapt audience. “I see that more than eighty percent of Eternal Divine Nation’s young geniuses are here at today’s banquet. In all of you, I can see our nation’s hope and future. Our current crop of young geniuses are an especially talented bunch. A few are behind closed doors right now, and I’m sure they’ll give us even more of a surprise when they come out. In the competitions between the younger generation of the Ten Divine Nations, I’m sure that you’ll be able to bring honor to our nation’s name!

“My only wish is for all of you to keep up the hard work. On this common road of genius, any one of you could suddenly jump into the lead.”

Duan Zhiyuan’s speech sounded good on the surface, but was actually rather vapid. Perhaps this could be attributed to the typical slipperiness of government officials. His words angered no one and pleased no one.

“Brother Ziju, you are these youngsters’ idol. Why don’t you say a few things as well?” Still smiling, Duan Zhiyuan turned the conversation toward Ziju Min.

The pill sovereign was wearing scholarly attire today. He looked the spitting image of an academic. His wispy whiskers were well-kept, his visage rather lean. His entire appearance was clean and handsome.

“If our state advisor so wishes it, then let me put in a few words. The advisor just mentioned the incredible talent of our younger generation here. I don’t disagree with this, but our dear advisor must presumably only be referring to martial dao. In terms of pill dao, our young people have a long way to go ahead of them. We are quite a bit off from the best the Ten Divine Nations have to offer. Eternal Sacred Land has realized this issue, and we’ve adjusted the conditions for accepting pill dao geniuses into our fold accordingly. We will no longer be particularly stringent about miscellaneous conditions attached to our tutelage.”

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

#### **Chapter 1667: Facing Off With Pill Dao**

The young people present felt their blood heat up at Ziju Min’s words. Geniuses of Yan Zhenhuai’s caliber however, maintained their composure. The latter’s only reaction was a slight raise of the eyebrow. A hint of perplexity, and just that.

In the end, martial dao dominated the mainstream.

In the Ten Divine Nations, martial geniuses were the most welcomed kind. Many such geniuses were predisposed for pill dao greatness, of course, but basically none had made it to the peak of both categories.

This didn't mean that pill dao was unpopular in the divine nations though. Pill masters were quite prominent in their own right.

Because there were so many martial experts and so few pill ones, many cultivators who couldn't attain peak in the former often considered pivoting to the latter. Unfortunately, pill dao wasn't something that could simply be picked up.

In fact, it emphasized heritage even more than martial dao did. Without heritage or tutelage, it was difficult to achieve much of anything in pill dao – marking it different from martial dao.

The top geniuses who were born with the talent were another matter entirely, of course.

Ziju Min didn't go on a particularly long-winded speech. After a few casual discussions about pill dao, he passed the torch back to House Xiahou.

The master of ceremonies smiled. "Everyone, are you not excited? Senior Ziju has taken Miss Ying as his personal disciple, and now he's announced this great news to us. Why not take this opportunity to show off your skills to him? Today, we will give you that chance. We've discussed it with Senior Ziju as well as Miss Ying. The next segment will be a pill dao battle."

A pill dao battle?

The young people below the stage were uniformly curious.

How was that supposed to work? These geniuses weren't totally clueless about pill dao, but they were hardly experts. Thus, no one was particularly panicked about the prospect of the event.

They were already guests at House Xiahou. No matter how their host wanted to play, they would be happy to follow.

In fact, some were rather expectant. After all, Ziju Min represented the Eternal Sacred Land. If he took an interest in any of them, it would be a life-changing experience.

Geniuses at Yan Zhenhuai's level may not be interested in such a thing, but each house had plenty of geniuses at different levels. Resource allocation was a very real issue. Those who knew they didn't have much of a future would often have second thoughts.

Someone like Yan Jinnan for example, wouldn't hesitate to grasp at an offered straw. There wasn't much more that his house could offer him.

He would have to rely on himself if he wanted to achieve anything more. Because Yan Jinnan knew he was incapable of doing that on his own, he would have varying thoughts about what he wanted to do in a situation like this.

"Brother Huai, we aren't very good at pill dao."

"Well, observe then," Yan Zhenhuai retorted coldly. "We seek only self-preservation today. It'll be fine as long as we don't lose any reputation or face."

However, his plan wasn't going to work as the others weren't going to let him.

“It took us quite a while to think of a more interesting method of competing. Simply gathering everyone up to compare pill dao prowess would be too crass. For today, we’re going to have everyone participate in a quiz.

“There are twenty questions in total, and all of you have the chance to answer. The first that does so correctly receives ten points. To avoid malicious participation, an incorrect answer will lose twenty points. After all twenty are finished, the party with the most points will be crowned the victor. This competition isn’t a personal one—each house receives points as a team. We will see which house has the most pill dao knowledge and talent very soon!”

The method of the competition was still disappointingly mundane. But having the teams be house-based was a new spin on the genre.

“This method is interesting,” someone suddenly yelled. “But it’s no fun if it’s just for comparing against each other! Why not give out some prizes too?”

“Yes, we need prizes! It’s just less fun without them.”

“Absolutely. Something must be on the line.” The larger factions’ geniuses all wanted to contribute something.

Ones like House Yan however, kept quiet. They had the self-awareness to understand that their average status and prowess in the area meant they had nothing to back up anything they said. Therefore, there was no response from them to the calls for pitching in with prizes.

Even Yan Qingsang, who tended to be the loudest of the bunch, was a bit wilted. He didn’t seem to care much about the pill dao competition. He just wanted the birthday banquet to finish as soon as possible. He didn’t want to stay another moment in this deplorable place.

House Yan could remain quiet, but the others weren’t going to let them off the hook easy.

Very quickly, someone laughed jokingly to Yan Zhenhuai. “Brother Zhenhuai, isn’t House Yan keeping too low a profile? Aren’t you interested in a potential prize?”

“What, is House Yan too cowardly to make even casual bets like these now?”

These words were purely provocative in nature. Yan Zhenhuai knew that as well. Alas, the circumstances meant that the other factions had been driven into a frenzy already. Though he didn’t want to participate, he could hardly refuse.

House Yan would really be looked down on then.

“If you’re scared, Brother Zhenhuai, we can reduce the bet.”

“Yes, we hear that House Yan is tight on resources these days. We can accommodate them with a small bet.” These apparently concerned voices were filled with schadenfreude.

Jiang Chen had nothing to say about the others’ self-satisfied demeanors. Were they really that talented in pill dao? How were they so sure House Yan would lose?



Finally, the largest factions' geniuses came to a consensus. The large factions participating in the pill dao contest would contribute a hundred million each, which made nine in total.

Among the sacred land, three sects, and seven factions of Eternal Divine Nation, House Xiahou was the host and thus ineligible. Meanwhile, the sacred land was too lofty to engage in betting with the other factions.

That left three sects and six factions for the bet. Out of these, two houses had no desire whatsoever to be here. House Yan was one of them.

A hundred million spirit stones was an extremely hefty amount. Even Yan Zhenhuai wouldn't be able to produce that much offhandedly. In fact, it was rather exorbitant.

"Ole Brother Zhenhuai, everyone's waiting on you! Only House Yan hasn't responded. You can't be so down in the dumps as to not afford this little bet, can you?"

"It's just a hundred million. That's nothing at all. If you win, you'll get all the other stones!"

"You worried about your wallet, younger brother?"

The other factions attempted to rattle Yan Zhenhuai, their inflammatory words wanting to drag him into the event.

Everyone else firmly believed that House Yan was here only to add to the pot. A house with as little foundation as that had no right to be viewed as their equal in anything, pill dao included. Thus, their coaxing was simply a dig to raise the stakes for their own house on a potential win.

Yan Zhenhuai was stuck between a rock and a hard place. At this juncture, participating in the bet would only lose his house the contributed stones.

He had enough self-awareness to know that. It was precisely because of this that he didn't want to waste a hundred million sky spirit stones. The house wasn't what it had once been. A hundred million spirit stones was a significant sum.

But nonparticipation to save spirit stones would only disappoint the other houses, potentially leading to being sidelined even more in the future. That trend was already occurring, and available space for House Yan to survive would only grow tighter as time went on.

Yan Zhenhuai suddenly became rather anxious.

As an observer, Jiang Chen saw through Yan Zhenhuai's hesitation. "Go persuade Yan Zhenhuai to participate. Say you'll contribute half of the hundred million," he messaged Yan Qingsang.

"Huh?" Yan Qingsang was stunned. "Brother, we're not going to get anything back. What's the point of giving away spirit stones to these animals?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "If you want to make some money, you should participate. Remember, you need to insist that profit be allocated in the same way as the stake is funded. No stake now means no stones later."

Yan Qingsang glanced at his friend, his resolve loosening. His trust in Jiang Chen almost surpassed that in Yan Zhenhuai. His brother gave him a very reassuring look back.

Yan Qingsang grit his teeth, coming to a decision.

“Brother Huai, we may be sure to lose our money, but we can’t lose our face right now. We’ll live even if we lose a hundred million. If we don’t participate, House Yan will be pushed away even further. Let’s bet with them. We can pool the hundred million together.”

“You can do that yourself,” Yan Jinnan stated coldly. “This bet is designed to ruin us. If you’re walking into this obvious trap, you must’ve lost your brains somewhere.”

The other two smiled wryly, shaking their heads as well. Neither was willing to put forward any stones.

Yan Zhenhuai squinted at Yan Qingsang, surprised at his clan brother’s eagerness. “Qingsang,” he couldn’t resist remarking, “you do understand that you’re giving away the stones, right?”

“So what if I am? Sometimes we have to take some pretty daunting risks. I have fifty million here. Are you in, Brother Zhenhuai?” Yan Qingsang gnashed his teeth.

His declaration shocked everyone else.

Fifty million sky spirit stones? Yan Qingsang really had hit his head somewhere. Why waste these stones on those bastards rather than spending it himself?

Yan Zhenhuai knew acutely that House Yan had to suffer this loss today. Others were referring to him by name, and every other faction had participated. They couldn’t possibly abstain. The prospect of losing money was no longer important!

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

#### **Chapter 1668: The Start of the Contes**

Even Yan Qingsang had offered to pay fifty million stones. Yan Zhenhuai could afford to front the rest. Determination flashed through through the eyes of the house’s leading genius.

“I’ve underestimated you, Qingsang. I’ll pay the other fifty million!” He looked over at the others, giving them a last opportunity to chip in. Even if they were going to lose, he hoped the youths of House Yan could be more proactive.

To his disappointment, Yan Jinnan had his eyes fixed on the ceiling while Yan Xinmei had been battered out of her senses. One of the two other youths was staring at the cups on the table, and the other had closed his eyes like he was meditating.

Yan Zhenhuai was rendered speechless by their denial of the reality.

He didn’t used to think much of Yan Qingsang, but it was turning out the latter was one of the more dependable ones among the younger generation. At least he knew to look at the big picture, and he cared about the house’s honor and glory.

The two of them pooled a hundred million stones together.

“Haha, Brother Zhenhuai, I thought House Yan wasn’t going to participate! Good, good. Even a starved camel like House Yan is bigger than a healthy horse. You’ve still got it.”

“Good for you, younger brother Zhenhuai.”

Those around them changed their tunes the bet was in, but Yan Zhenhuai maintained an aloof expression. He knew they only had their profit in mind. They were more friendly to him now simply because they considered him a cash cow.

That friendliness would only last until the end of the contest.

Yan Zhenhuai sighed inwardly. Many of those who called him younger brother were actually younger and weaker than he was.

However, his house’s had decline convinced them that they could climb all over House Yan. What they called him therefore completely changed as a result. He knew how fickle people could be, so he didn’t pay them that much attention.

With House Yan’s a hundred million stones, the betting pool now amounted to nine hundred million stones from the nine factions.

“Ladies and gentleman, our discussion concludes that only the top three participants would be rewarded. The first place will get six hundred million stones; the second, two hundred million; and the third, one hundred million. Does anyone have a different opinion?”

A wager had to have winners and losers, and there must be more people losing than winning. It wasn’t unreasonable for the winners to be limited to three participants.

“If not, then let’s get started!”

No one asked Yan Zhenhuai for his opinion after putting in the bet. Clearly everyone assumed that House Yan would just follow their lead and accept any conditions.

Just before the conditions of the wager were settled, Yan Qingsang suddenly stood up. “Wait.”

Everyone’s attention snapped to him. Even Xiahou Ying looked at him with surprise from the elevated stage. Someone from House Yan was bold enough to speak up, and it wasn’t Yan Zhenhuai?

A strange hint entered their gazes. None of them expected Yan Qingsang’s abrupt action.

“What do you have to say?” someone asked coldly.

“I do indeed have something to say. Since it’s a wager, we have to make sure the losers will honor the bet. What if someone refuses to pay up afterwards? We have the two seniors present here, and there are many masters from Eternal Sacred Land as well. I believe we should give our explicit consent to the wager, and we aren’t to go back on our words.”

That was something most hadn’t considered. They’d assumed that everyone would follow the rules on such an occasion. But what Yan Qingsang said did make sense. It would be better to get everyone’s promise first.

After some discussion, everyone gave their word that they would honor the wager. In truth, none of them thought that House Yan would win. Even though it was Yan Qingsang who had spoken up to remind them, they ignored him afterwards.

In particular, Yan Jinnan and the other youths in the family looked at him like he was out of his mind. Had he been drop-kicked in the head?

They had grown up with him. Even though they weren't actually close like regular brothers, they did know everything about one another. None of them believed that Yan Qingsang had enough talent to perform well in the contest. In fact, they believed that his level of pill dao was the worst among the young geniuses. They were ready to laugh at him once he failed.

"Wonderful! Everyone seems to be very interested in the pill dao contest. Please give me your attention. All factions have fifteen minutes to assign two members as your responders. Only they are allowed to compete for the chance to answer. We don't want the contest to fall into chaos with everyone trying to answer.

"Of course, if the two responders can't give an answer, the other members in your faction may jump in. You'll get your points still. Now, pick your responders. Remember, other than these two, the others won't get a chance to answer even if they raise their hands."

Yan Qingsang and Yan Zhenhuai were the ones who'd fronted the wager, so naturally they were the responders for House Yan.

The others weren't going to cause trouble, or they really would be making an enemy out of Yan Zhenhuai. His heavy gaze swept through every one of them. "This pill dao contest is tied to the honor of House Yan. You may not have chipped in for the bet, but don't keep an answer to yourself if you know it."

He knew the other youths very well. They were likely to stay on the sidelines because they considered the contest unrelated to them. He had to knock some sense into them first.

Because the youths were still very fearful of him, they nodded and promised their help.

"I won't keep it from you if I know the answer, Brother Huai."

"Me neither."

"It's all for House Yan. Even though we didn't chip in for the wager, we'll help for the family's sake." They paid appropriate lip service to Yan Zhenhuai.

He nodded slightly, a meaningful gaze sweeping through every one of them.

Yan Qingsang silently transmitted to Jiang Chen, "Brother, you were the one who prompted me to participate. What strategy do you have? I'm not very good at pill dao."

Jiang Chen smiled. "Watch me closely. Raise your hand as soon as my eyelid twitches. Don't hesitate."

"But...are you confident?"

"As long as you trust me." Jiang Chen didn't waste time in explanation.

Yan Qingsang had come to trust Jiang Chen unconditionally. He made up his mind to do as Jiang Chen said. As soon as an eyelid twitched, his hand would shoot up as fast as possible.

Fifteen minutes flew by. Every faction was ready and the contest officially commenced.

It was clear that Ziju Min of the Eternal Sacred Land cared a lot about the contest. He was personally moderating it.

“Attention, contestants, the first question has to do with spirit herb cultivation. In different seasons, Bonemending Sunflower can be cultivated with different spirit herbs to accelerate growth through a combination of spirit energy. Which the spirit herbs most suitable for raising along with the Sunflower? Please give two or more answers.”

The very first question was meant to intimidate the contestants. Many of them sucked in a breath when they heard it. A lot of them hadn’t even heard of the spirit herb before. Those who had thought it could only be found in nature, not cultivated.

The crowd quieted down.

A number of geniuses looked hesitant. They seemed to have some vague idea, but they couldn’t form a structured answer. At the moment, there were some who were considering raising their hands, but they didn’t have the courage to do so.

Every faction started out with zero points. Getting points deducted would put them in the negative. No one wanted to risk falling behind at the very start; they’d rather not give an answer instead.

Jiang Chen’s eyelid twitched. Yan Qingsang, however, was preoccupied and didn’t even notice it.

Jiang Chen moved his eyelid again. This time, Yan Qingsang was busy looking around, taking in everyone’s reaction.

Exasperated, Jiang Chen kicked him under the table. Yan Qingsang started and finally realized that Jiang Chen was staring at him. He raised his hand on reflex.

The room was shocked by his action.

When Yan Qingsang reminded everyone to promise to honor the wager, they took him as a joke. What was he planning? Was he a pill dao genius who had been hiding his talent?

They didn’t think it was possible. Yan Qingsang wasn’t even the strongest in House Yan. He was in no place to speak up now. He must’ve raised his hand on impulse in the heat of the moment.

Many people stared at him with a snide smile, waiting for him to embarrass himself. They wanted to see for themselves if this young man actually had an answer, or was simply so wrecked by his nerves that his hand shot up on reflex when no one had dared answer.

Just how would he humiliate himself?

Even Yan Zhenhuai was surprised. He didn’t have any hope that Yan Qingsang would know the answer, and hadn’t expected a hand to go up given the circumstances.

## Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

### **Chapter 1669: Eyes Bulging with Shock**

Yan Zhenhuai couldn't be more surprised by Yan Qingsang's actions. At the same time, he was concerned. He hoped the younger genius knew what he was doing, or he'd be asking for humiliation.

Yan Qingsang had become the center of everyone's attention. Even the top geniuses looked at him with bafflement.

Had the unreliable kid from House Yan lost his mind? The first question was plainly very difficult. Clearly it was meant to intimidate the contestants. How dared he raise his hand? Did his boldness stem from ignorance?

The crowd looked on with different expressions. Some scoffed derisively, some expected him to make a scene. Others considered him with a frown, trying to discern if he knew the answer, or had raised his hand in panic. Yet others shut their eyes and ignored him completely.

Yan Qingsang slowly got to his feet beneath their scrutiny.

He cleared his throat in an exaggerated fashion and smiled. "Autumn is the season of killing. There aren't a lot of spirit herbs that can meld with the Bonemending Sunflowers during this period of time, but there are still a handful of them. Flowercide Grass and Heart Crabapple come to mind. Autumn Reedgrass is another. There are other possibilities, but these three are the best options. What do you say, Senior Ziju?"

The thing about Yan Qingsang was that he was insensitive to the outside world. Given the circumstances, he was still able to grin and ignore the others' gazes.

Jiang Chen rather appreciated that quality about him. A strong mentality could be counted as one of Yan Qingsang's positives.

Back in the Jade Revel Lodge, he had spoken up against everyone at the table despite Xiahou Xi's forceful attitude. Now, even with all eyes on him, he was standing boldly and answering the question without fear, unperturbed by all the attention he was getting. He'd even asked Sir Ziju Min for his opinion, not something that every youth could do.

Many young people feared the seniors and experts like vicious beasts. Even if they weren't afraid, they remained respectful. Thus, Yan Qingsang's performance was rather surprising.

Even Yan Zhenhuai gave him another scan of careful consideration. This young man suddenly seemed like a stranger to him. Was this the Yan Qingsang he knew?

As the top genius of the younger generation, he knew better than anyone how ordinary the house's foundation in pill dao was. They were definitely mediocre when compared to the other big factions in Eternal Divine Nation. And Yan Qingsang had never shown any talent in pill dao whatsoever.

Why had he been able to respond to the first question before anyone else, and looked so confident when doing so? Had he not been taking a wild guess?

For some reason, Yan Zhenhuai had a feeling that the boy wasn't making things up as he went.

The other members of House Yan looked at him doubtfully. They were of different minds about him.

Some of them were thinking of the greater good of House Yan and hoped that Yan Qingsang wasn't messing around. Others hoped that Yan Qingsang would make a fool of himself. The more he embarrassed the family, the better.

Yan Jinnan was of course among the latter. His relationship with Yan Qingsang had always been poor. He secretly envied Yan Qingsang for splurging fifty million to partake in the contest, because he himself couldn't afford to do the same.

More importantly, a part of the fifty million came from the stones he'd lost to Yan Qingsang at the jade festival.

That intensified his resentment for Yan Qingsang. He wanted nothing more than for the latter to make a fool of himself. They were both youngsters of House Yan, so why should Yan Qingsang be able to do something that he couldn't do?

The other factions were more aligned and straightforward in their thinking. They were curious if Yan Qingsang's answer was the right one. They turned their attention to Sir Ziju Min.

Obviously they didn't want House Yan to be the first to win points. Any other faction would be acceptable, but not that house. They hadn't taken House Yan seriously to begin with. It was there solely to fill a spot and to be the cash cow of a hundred million sky spirit stones.

Therefore, no one wanted Yan Qingsang to be right, House Xiahou included. Even though the latter were the organizer and weren't participating, they looked down on House Yan.

The pill sovereign became the center of attention.

Originally, he'd his eyes half-closed as if in meditation, but he suddenly widened his eyes, a keen light shooting out of his eyes at Yan Qingsang, due to the boy's answer.

"Master, Yan Qingsang was only spouting off nonsense, wasn't he?" Xiahou Ying asked quietly.

Ziju Min sighed. "He was a hundred percent correct. I didn't expect him to know about Autumn Reedgrass. How extraordinary!"

Surprise rippled through the crowd. Had House Yan just made a lucky guess and earned the first ten points?

The moderator from House Xiahou had no choice but to announce, "First question, ten points to House Yan!"

It was a dramatic turn of events. The least regarded house had been the first to win ten points.

Even Yan Zhenhuai gaped at Yan Qingsang in surprise. For the moment, he didn't know how to react.

"Good job, Qingsang," he marveled. "You've got some tricks up your sleeve!"

Yan Qingsang grinned. "I'm just lucky! I encountered some opportunities in Bluesmoke and gained knowledge of pill dao from the heritage found in a piece of ancient jade. I didn't expect it to be of use! What a happy coincidence."

The others fell silent. A venomous glint flashed through and instantly vanished in Yan Jinnan's eyes.

Ten points on House Yan's scoreboard while the other factions were still at zero seemed far out of the realm of possibility. Yan Qingsang felt like he was in a dream as well. He hadn't expected everything to go so smoothly.

He even hadn't noticed when Jiang Chen's eyelids had first moved. He came to his senses only after being prompted several more times. He'd been panicking a little, but when Jiang Chen transmitted the answer, and he blurted it out without thinking.

Yan Qingsang sat down in delight after a correct answer. He wanted to say something to Jiang Chen, but Jiang Chen messaged him, "Focus. Don't get distracted."

It wasn't the first time he ended up benefitting from Jiang Chen, so he collected his thoughts and calmed his excitement.

He had a feeling that Brother Shao Yuan had urged him to participate in the contest with winning in mind. Shao Yuan wouldn't have joined in with a hundred million stones just for fun.

Yan Qingsang felt even more driven.

"Listen carefully to the next question. Here is the recipe of a pill. It's the right recipe, but two of the supplementary spirit herbs are problematic. Raise your hand when you find the two flaws. Remember, once you raise your hand, you must give your answer immediately, or it'll be considered cheating and you'll get ten points deducted! Therefore, peruse carefully before you raise your hand."

With a wave of his hand, a virtual scroll appeared in the air. Lines of text materialized on the scroll. It was a pill recipe.

Jiang Chen scanned it and smiled to himself. It was an ancient pill recipe, and an uncommon one at that. The pill was rarely used. Only pill grandmasters who had nothing better to do would study this.

As a pill grandmaster in his past life, Jiang Chen had had a lot of free time. He'd read more books than he could count and there wasn't a pill recipe in the world that he didn't know.

He recognized the recipe immediately.

The answer came easily to him as his gaze swept through the text. He threw Yan Qingsang a pointed look.

Yan Qingsang wasn't paying attention to the recipe. His sole focus was on Jiang Chen. He knew there was no use for him in looking at the recipe. He wouldn't be able to understand it even if he spent ten years studying it. Brother Shao Yuan was the only thing he could depend on.

As soon as Jiang Chen's eyelid moved, he raised his hand without hesitation.

That created an uproar. Frustration exploded because of him.

What was going on? Was Yan Qingsang determined to stir up trouble? Couldn't he let the others have some fun? How were they going to get a chance to win if he continued like this?



What mattered most was if he could give the right answer. Would he make another lucky guess? No one could be that lucky, could they?

“Again?” Xiahou Ying was surprised. She looked at him frostily from only the corner of her eye, her tone irritated.

Yan Qingsang cackled, paying no attention to her doubt.

He turned to Ziju Min. “This is the recipe for the ancient Bluespirit Pill. It can be used to enhance spirit energy. It possesses a cleansing quality for those who use methods of a particular element. The two flaws exist in the use of Watercharm Seed and Cleansing Grass. The names of the two ingredients may seem perfect for Bluespirit Pill from the name, but in truth, the two herbs are too potent for a refining pill like it. That’s my answer.” He bowed dramatically to Ziju Min after delivering his words.

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

#### **Chapter 1670: The Way of Balance**

Yan Qingsang’s performance was so striking it amazed even Ziju Min. He stared at Yan Qingsang deeply, unable to believe his ears.

“Your name is Yan Qingsang, isn’t it?” he asked after a deep breath.

“Yes, this junior is Yan Qingsang.”

“You’ve correctly answered two questions in a row. Where does your knowledge of pill dao come from? Has House Yan been hiding deep foundations in pill dao all along?” Curiosity had flared to life about this sudden competency. The two questions might not seem particularly difficult, but they took a stunning amount of experience and understanding to answer correctly.

“Senior Ziju, it’s happenstance that I’m able to answer the two questions. Some time ago, I went to the Bluesmoke Isles for the jade festival and received some heritage from ancient jade. One of them was from a pill dao senior, which contained many of his memories about pill dao. Therefore...”

The crowd broke into a furor of discussion. Jealousy flashed through the expressions of those assembled. How ridiculously lucky this genius was!

If he’d inherited the memories of an ancient pill dao master, didn’t that mean he would dominate the contest?

Ziju Min didn’t know what to say.

No wonder this young man was performing so well. The goddess of fortune had smiled upon him. However, that put him in a difficult position. If Yan Qingsang continued the way he was, it would be a heavy blow to everyone else’s ego. It would be an utter slaughter.

Not even Ziju Min dared say he was better than an ancient pill dao master, let alone these young geniuses. Curiosity yet flared. “What level is the master whose memory you inherited at?”

“Just a pill emperor,” Yan Qingsang responded humbly. “He hadn’t yet reached empyrean realm.”

Lower than empyrean realm? Ziju Min relaxed slightly, but he wasn't going to just take Yan Qingsang's words for it. He gave the boy a once over. "Are you sure he was just a pill emperor?"

"I'm sure. I wanted it to be an empyrean expert's memory, but if that were the case, I wouldn't be able to refine his heritage." Yan Qingsang played the part of a disappointed man perfectly.

His reasoning was convincing. If the level of the heritage had been too high, Yan Qingsang, who hadn't reached empyrean realm himself, wouldn't be able to fully take it all in.

"Alright, you answered the second question correctly." Ziju Min had no further comments. If it was just heritage from a pill emperor, at least he wouldn't end up dominating the entire contest.

House Xiahou was stuck between a rock and a hard place given the circumstances. The one faction they didn't want to see winning was performing the best so far. The other factions had had no opportunities to even answer the first two questions. It would be ridiculous if things continued as was, and they would risk offending the other factions. If the contest ended up benefiting only House Yan, it would be a slap to the face for the others.

House Yan had nothing to lose, like a dead pig that didn't fear hot water. House Xiahou, on the other hand, was in the stage of rapid growth. Naturally, they didn't want to make enemies and cause the other factions to turn on them.

Therefore, Xiahou Ying barely stopped herself from warning Yan Qingsang to restrain himself. She even thought about kicking him out.

The birthday celebration was a way to increase her value. Top geniuses had been invited to boost her fame, and she could make use of the opportunity to build relationships with them to lessen the tension between House Xiahou and other factions.

Yan Qingsang was a nobody in her eyes. No one from House Yan was to be taken seriously, not even the most remarkable Yan Zhenhuai, let alone the lesser Yan Qingsang.

The problem lay not in Yan Zhenhuai, but in House Yan as a whole. Xiahou Ying was a proud woman. She despised House Yan and wouldn't for her life consider any of its members a potential partner.

That was why Yan Qingsang's performance upset her so much.

Nonetheless, she knew it wouldn't do for her to kick House Yan out now. That would make the two houses' relationship completely unsalvageable. Additionally, people would see her as nothing but a snob. That would be detrimental to her efforts to build a good image.

She threw Yan Qingsang a pointed look, warning him to read the room and show some restraint.

He pretended to not notice her at all.

Yan Zhenhuai gave him a thumbs-up. "Good work, Qingsang. Don't feel pressured. Show everyone what you've got!"

He realized that even he himself could only play sidekick in the contest. He wasn't that talented in pill dao, but as the top genius of House Yan, he took his responsibility to the family seriously.

He knew if Yan Qingsang stood out too much, the other factions would be offended. At this moment, however, House Yan couldn't afford to let any opportunities slip by if they hoped to recover their status.

They had to make a showing even if they would offend House Xiahou and other factions. It was imperative that they recovered their reputation and rise again. If they missed this chance, there would be increasingly few opportunities such as these. Thus, Yan Zhenhuai would sooner cheer on Yan Qingsang than stop him.

The one most depressed and perturbed was Yan Jinnan. He was sitting right across from Yan Zhenhuai and could clearly see how differently the top genius was looking at Yan Qingsang now. Clearly, Yan Qingsang was now solemnly considered an equal.

Who among the youths in House Yan had ever won such respect from Yan Zhenhuai?

Yan Jinnan's heart was filled with venomous thoughts. He couldn't be more jealous.

Jiang Chen appeared to be meditating, but he was silently taking in the reactions of every member of House Yan. Yan Jinnan was undoubtedly the most hostile.

He'd have to pay more attention to that one in the future. This young man was narrow-minded prone to jealousy. He didn't care about the honor of the family, and felt no sense of belonging. He wouldn't hesitate to betray his house if it came down to that.

The other youths were equally fairweather. The only exception was Yan Zhenhuai. He lived up to his title as the top genius in House Yan. He was a dependable young man.

Jiang Chen silently evaluated the scions. He was planning on staying in House Yan for a long time, so he had to gain a basic understanding of everyone.

Members of the other factions kept looking at House Yan's table. This house was now a strong opponent in the contest. Jiang Chen kept his eyes open and his ears keen. He knew people were getting antsy because of Yan Qingsang. He was on high mental alert.

He told Yan Qingsang to answer two questions in a row because he wanted him to take the initiative and intimidate the others. With that accomplished, there was no need for them to keep going at full speed.

If they didn't let other people have an opportunity to answer, the contest wouldn't go on. And if the other factions gave up prematurely, their efforts would be in vain.

Therefore, when Ziju Min announced the third question, Jiang Chen played dumb even though he knew the answer. His eyelids remained motionless.

Yan Qingsang stared at him doggedly, his shoulders trembling slightly in preparation to raise his hand. He was a little disappointed to see a genius from the Jade Lake Sect answer the third question and receive the ten points.

Jade Lake Sect had a good foundation in pill dao compared to other sects in Eternal Divine Nation. Their success wasn't that surprising.

Everyone had been distracted when the third question was announced. They were nervously waiting to see if Yan Qingsang would once again answer immediately. Almost all of their attention was on him. Thus, they were highly surprised when he didn't say anything or show any reaction.

Once again, they lost their chance to answer before they realized it.

With it, however, brought relief. At least Yan Qingsang's impetus had been interrupted. Twice was coincidence, but third time was a pattern. If he did it again, the others would completely lose their confidence.

Fortunately, that hadn't happened and the contest could go on.

His silence gave the others hope. They regained motivation and shifted their focus back to Master Ziju Min.

Yan Zhenhuai wasn't disappointed. It was normal for Yan Qingsang to not have an answer. It would be rather ridiculous if he could answer everything. Even though he wanted his clan brother to continue dominating the contest, he was realistic enough to stop himself from expecting too much.

Every genius present was remarkably talented. Other than those absent due to closed door cultivation, almost every talented youth in Eternal Divine Nation was in attendance. They were anything but mediocre.

When the the fourth question was announced, Jiang Chen still knew the answer. But once again, he played dumb and didn't give Yan Qingsang a chance to wow the crowd.

As long as he played dead, the genius could only remain silent.

The fourth question was answered by a genius from House Feng, one of the seven biggest houses. That put House Yan at the top with twenty points, followed by the Jade Lake Sect and House Feng.

Yan Qingsang keeping silent twice made the others relax their guard. He'd just been lucky enough to encounter two questions he happened to know. So he'd inherited the memories of an ancient pill emperor. So what?

It seemed that an ancient pill emperor was no better than an average pill expert.