

Three Realms 1681

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

Chapter 1681: A New Way of Thinking

Ziju Min smiled, then spoke once more. "Patriarch Yan, I'd like to speak with young Shao Yuan once more in private. Would that be alright? Don't worry, I won't take your treasured genius from you by force. If he's unwilling, I won't coerce him."

The patriarch knew that this was a request he couldn't refuse.

"I will take you to him," he nodded in acquiescence.

"After you."

They arrived at Yan Qingsang's living quarters very quickly.

Ziju Min furrowed his brows slightly. He didn't expect such a slight against a genius of Shao Yuan's caliber. Did the boy not deserve even his own residence? Why was he bunking with Yan Qingsang? Not that the conditions were really so bad, but this detail alone reflected the absurd treatment House Yan was giving Shao Yuan.

"Patriarch Yan. I don't mean to criticize the way you do things here, but you really do seem to be neglecting Shao Yuan here." The pill sovereign exhaled, then shook his head several times.

The patriarch was regretting this as well. Ziju Min was absolutely right; a genius that even the patriarch appreciated so much should've absolutely had his own lodgings at House Yan.

To have not provided it was indeed somewhat insulting.

"Young Shao Yuan, I am Ziju Min. I've come to visit. Might I have a word?" Ziju Min smiled serenely.

Having returned to his rooms, Jiang Chen was a bit surprised to hear the man's voice. He was even more amazed to see House Yan's patriarch and the others accompanying him.

"Master Ziju, how did you come all the way here?"

"I was thinking about you, so I came to take a look. I'm frankly appalled by the plainness of your living conditions. I reprimanded House Yan's patriarch just now for this very thing. Geniuses shouldn't be snubbed like this."

The patriarch was too embarrassed to stay. "Master Ziju," he smiled wryly. "Feel free to speak with Shao Yuan at your leisure. We won't be disturbing you."

Moments later, only Ziju Min and Jiang Chen remained in the courtyard.

"I'm a bit startled at your visit, Master Ziju." Rather than make tea, Jiang Chen brought out two wines to entertain Ziju Min. It was his Shennong Liquor and Drunken Immortal.

"Oh? These are two different kinds of wine, yes?" Though Ziju Min hadn't drunk any yet, the scent tipped him off immediately.

“Yes. Taken individually, the two wines are both quite tasty. If drunk one after another, they will yield an even more unique flavor. Feel free to try some, sir.” Jiang Chen poured out two cups before placing them down in front of Ziju Min.

The pill sovereign’s interest was piqued. He laughed easily, his appetite for drink entirely whetted. The alcohol in the cups disappeared in a mere moment.

Ziju Min smacked his lips in the aftertaste. “Incredible! Superb! There are two more great wines in this world, I see. You’re full of unlimited surprises, young Shao Yuan.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “Wine embodies the smallest of daos. And yet, it contains a microcosm in its own right that contains truths from the greatest dao of all. So is everything between heaven and earth.”

Ziju Min reacted to this comment with high praise. “You are clever indeed, young man. I knew that I wasn’t mistaken. It seems that you’ve made enormous progress already in your understanding of dao. When you reach peak great emperor, you’ll have no problem at all breaking through to empyrean.”

Empyrean realm only involved comprehending the heavenly dao. The depth with which this young man understood it amazed Ziju Min.

Jiang Chen poured out two more cups for the pill sovereign. “If I may, senior. For what reason did you come here today?”

“Same as our last meeting. I’m here to invite you to join Eternal Sacred Land. A youth of your talents ought to stand at a higher vantage point. In our nation, the sacred land is the tallest peak. The other factions are insignificant at best. I hear that House Xiahou has demanded you for itself. Well, you can ignore that outright. The same is true for any potential requests from the Jade Lake Sect. You need only think about whether you’d like to join the sacred land.”

Jiang Chen inclined his head. “Of course I would consider Eternal Sacred Land ahead of everywhere else, senior. I’ve never thought about House Xiahou or the Jade Lake Sect.”

“Have you ever thought about leaving House Yan?” Ziju Min looked at him expectantly.

Jiang Chen replied with a soft sigh. “I have, but I cannot. I may not.”

Disappointment flickered across Ziju Min’s face. “I respect your resolution, but I don’t understand it. What reason is there for you to stay here, Shao Yuan? Is it your bond with Yan Qingsang? If that’s the only reason, I can bring him in as well.”

The pill sovereign was taking a very low posture for the sake of winning Jiang Chen over, for which the latter was immensely grateful. “That’s only a bit of it, Senior Ziju. I have another difficulty that I’m not sure I can speak about.”

“Difficulty? Please sate my curiosity. There’s no difficulty that the Eternal Sacred Land can’t solve in the divine nation, my friend. If I help you resolve this difficulty of yours, will you reconsider?”

“I’m truly chagrined at your great fondness for me, sir.” Jiang Chen laughed helplessly.

“Haha, I’m glad you can see my sincerity. Why not be honest with me? Even if you don’t join the sacred land in the end, I will still treat you as a friend,” Ziju Min smiled.

"I won't hide it from you any more then, senior. I came to House Yan for one person, and one person only."

"For whom?"

"Yan Qinghuang." There was no need for Jiang Chen to hide things any further.

"Ah, her?" Ziju Min was taken aback. He knew about the circumstances between Yan Qinghuang and House Xiahou.

"Yes. When I first saw her and heard her zither in the Bluesmoke Isles, it was as if I knew her from a hundred lifetimes ago. I desperately desired to meet her, and when I found out about her fate, my sympathies got the better of me. I swore that I would change her destiny. That's why I need to stay here at House Yan..."

There was some manufactured information in Jiang Chen's speech, but his intent was clear enough. He had come for Huang'er and no one else.

Ziju Min fell into silence for quite a while when he finished. There was some admiration in his gaze, as well as ambiguity and amusement.

He broke the lull with a long sigh. "There have always been deeply sentimental men in the world. When they fall in love, they do so for the rest of their lives. Born out of music, forged in compassion and tenderness... such is your love, my young friend, and it reminds me of the ancient sages. Those who are deeply sentimental often achieve greatness in the realm of martial dao. Perhaps you will be the next to do so, eh?"

"Ah, Senior Ziju, you humor me."

"Not at all. I don't mean to chastise you for it. Quite the opposite, I only respect you all the more. In the world of martial dao, everyone wants to be at the top. Everyone acts for his personal gain only rather than engage in any altruism or sacrifice. Your distinctness from the crowd is a mark of wisdom. Respect aside, though..."

"How can you break the links of fate between Yan Qinghuang and Xiahou Zong with your status and strength? If you stay here, you may be able to face Xiahou Zong in a few centuries. But your beloved will be long dead by then, and your passion turned to despair."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "You're not optimistic about my chances, senior?"

"It's not that. Xiahou Zong is a rare genius in his own right. Even among the sacred land's geniuses, none can claim superiority over him. In fact, he styles himself the foremost genius of Eternal's younger generation. It will be hard for you to challenge him in the next three to five years, by which time House Yan will have made good on its promise."

Everyone knew about the predicament between Houses Xiahou and Yan.

Jiang Chen sighed softly. Ziju Min had a very good point. Unfortunately, it was impossible for him to yield on this matter. Allowing Huang'er to become Xiahou Zong's cultivation vessel had never been a possibility.

"It's difficult, Senior Ziju, but I won't give up as long as there's even a glimmer of hope." Jiang Chen couldn't go into more detail with the pill sovereign.

If that day came, he wouldn't mind eloping with her. When his strength was perfected, he could then return to Eternal Divine Nation and House Yan, uprooting House Xiahou in the process.

Ziju Min smiled faintly. "The Eternal Sacred Land cannot interfere easily in this affair. However, if you become one of our geniuses and propose marriage to House Yan, perhaps there is still room to maneuver. Provided you're not worried about angering House Xiahou, of course."

"If I recall correctly, Senior Ziju, House Xiahou's Xiahou Ying is your personal disciple. Aren't your words unfair to her?"

Ziju Min chuckled. "There were several reasons for her to have become my disciple. I'm not at liberty to discuss them here. However, I've taken a personal interest in you, my young friend. In this, you are very different from her."

"Aren't you worried that I'll make trouble for you and the sacred land, senior?"

Ziju Min beamed with serenity. "Doesn't a genius of the sacred land have the right to cause some trouble once in a while? We live in Eternal Divine Nation, do we not?"

Jiang Chen blinked. The pill sovereign was right. The Eternal Sacred Land was the actual foremost faction in Eternal Divine Nation. It was the real ruler of the land.

Xiahou Zong was strong and House Xiahou's momentum fierce, but Eternal Divine Nation wasn't theirs in the end.

The young man sank into thought. He'd never seriously thought about joining the faction before because he'd wanted to stay by Huang'er's side. He was very much anxious that some mishap would happen to her in his absence.

Ziju Min's suggestion shone a light before his eyes. The suggestion was very doable!

"Young man, I think you can definitely pull something like that off, but there are a few hurdles in front of you. First, you need to show tremendous potential to earn its support for any... mischief you intend to commit. Second, you need to display sufficient strength with which to challenge Xiahou Zong." The older man cracked a crooked grin. "Allow me to let you in on another secret. We don't want a genius from outside to call himself the foremost genius of the nation. Do you understand? Xiahou Zong has too much edge. If someone can quash him, so much the better!"

These words were the most important of all. Jiang Chen immediately brightened.

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

Chapter 1682: Joining the Eternal Sacred Land

Jiang Chen was wrapping his mind around Ziju Min's point. The Eternal Sacred Land was the core faction of Eternal Divine Nation. If House Xiahou was left unchecked, it'd grow to be a threat.

Xiahou Zong claiming to be the top genius of the nation was a blatant insult. The subtle currents of tension between the two factions were obvious enough, despite them never being voiced aloud. Jiang Chen was naturally sharp enough to figure out Ziju Min's point without further prompting.

"Xiahou Zong is extraordinary, Senior Ziju, but I believe it's not impossible to surpass him. I'm confident even though I haven't ascended into empyrean realm yet. I'll be even more confident once I do." Jiang Chen really did think so.

Since Ziju Min had asked, he didn't want to put himself down to appear humble, especially not when Xiahou Zong was the one he was comparing himself to.

Ziju Min was rather surprised. If they were discussing talent in pill dao, he wouldn't think there was anything wrong with Jiang Chen's claim. However, they were obviously chatting about martial dao — which Xiahou Zong was wildly famous for. He turned to consider the boy wordlessly.

Jiang Chen met the gaze calmly and didn't waver after making the declaration. He knew he was being assessed.

After a long while, Ziju Min gave a quiet sigh. "You know, Shao Yuan, it's been a very long while since a young man like you has appeared in Eternal Divine Nation."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen smiled. "Does Xiahou Zong stand out so much that all the other geniuses can't even keep their heads up? Are they too afraid to even talk big?"

He was rather curious now. Was Xiahou Zong really powerful enough to stop young people from even daring to dream? That would be ridiculous.

"It's not that no one dares dream about defeating him, but that many think of him as an insurmountable obstacle. Over the years, a good number of young geniuses have challenged him. Even those from the Eternal Sacred Land challenged him as well. However, no one has ever defeated him.."

There was a bleak tinge to Ziju Min's tone. "Alright. We're going on a tangent here. Consider my suggestion, young Shao Yuan. I won't judge you for daring to hope. I welcome you to join us and prove yourself right. Prove that someone in Eternal Divine Nation is able to defeat Xiahou Zong."

Jiang Chen was already half-convinced. The only thing that concerned him was Huang'er. He wouldn't be able to stay at her side once he left. Something might happen in his absence.

"I may not be able to promise you anything else, young friend. House Xiahou and House Yan had been at odds for generations. The Eternal Sacred Land won't intervene without a good reason. That is, unless you impress us with your ability and make us feel we must become involved. Do you understand?"

"I do, Master Ziju. What I'm worried about now isn't my potential. I just worry that I won't be able to return in time if Xiahou Zong suddenly exits closed door cultivation."

"Don't worry about that either. If he comes out of closed door cultivation, we will be informed as well. Besides, he can't come to House Yan for Huang'er immediately after he exits. Preparing a human vessel takes time and multiple steps. He'll never come so soon."

Jiang Chen chewed over the words. They made sense.

Besides, he'd still be in the capital. It wasn't that long a trip to House Yan. As long as he was informed immediately when something happened, he would still be able to make it back in time.

For now, his top priority was to improve himself. The gap between Xiahou Zong and him was significant, and he wasn't sure if he'd be able to take out the other at the moment.

There must be something impressive about Xiahou Zong that enabled him to remain as the top genius. It wasn't that Jiang Chen was afraid, but he'd be more assured after improving himself.

Well, it seemed that he'd made up his mind.

"You've extended several invites, Master Ziju. It'll be rude of me to turn you down again. The Eternal Sacred Land is the most powerful faction in Eternal Divine Nation. Perhaps it is indeed a place that suits me more. I'll go with you. I've done my part for House Yan. Unfortunately, I'll be disappointing those in the house who support me. To pay them back, I'd like to ask you a favor."

"Do tell," Ziju Min said with a smile.

"Yan Qingsang from House Yan is my brother. Could he enter the sacred land as well? The opportunity alone will be enough."

"Haha, that's quite alright. However, if Yan Qingsang fails to meet our standards, he'll be expelled. You have to be prepared for that to happen."

"I won't complain if he falls short of your expectations. I'm asking this only to pay back House Yan and Elder Yan Wanjun in particular. This way, I'll be able to cultivate without distractions." Jiang Chen clearly laid out his points.

Ziju Min was delighted. "Good on you, young man. That's how a true man should be! There are people for you and against you in House Yan. The same will be true of the Eternal Sacred Land. I hope that you'll be able to stay true to yourself then. Don't let skepticism and difficulties knock you down."

Jiang Chen smiled. "Only I can defeat myself. No skepticism or difficulties will be able to keep me down." His tone wasn't particularly assertive, but it was convincing.

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Ziju Min was overjoyed that Jiang Chen had accepted his offer. He wasn't worried about House Yan's reaction at all. Before his visit, the patriarch had said that even though the family needed someone like Shao Yuan, they would let Shao Yuan go as long as he agreed.

The patriarch's stomach dropped when Ziju Min gave him the news. He laughed wryly. "You ended up persuading him in the end, Master Ziju."

Ziju Min couldn't be more pleased. "I'll be sure to compensate your house. I owe you one and the Eternal Sacred Land does too. When Shao Yuan makes a name for himself, he won't forget about his time here."

"That's true, but House Yan's fortunes didn't run deep enough. We failed to give him the treatment he deserves. He's talented, but also loyal. It's admirable that he offered to take Yan Qingsang with him." The patriarch was regretful.

Given Shao Yuan's personality, if House Yan had been more determined, if they'd treated the young man better and valued him more, he might've still stayed.

However, the patriarch knew that there were a lot of dissenting voices within the family. Shao Yuan would've still been forced out sooner or later.

He was quite dejected and deeply contemplative. Was the core of the clan truly rotten? A young genius with great potential had come to House Yan, but they'd failed to keep him. The boy wasn't leaving because he was unloyal, but because of the family's attitude.

During the meeting in the great hall, they'd discussed the young man's future like he was an item for sale. It had been a serious blow to the pride of a genius. Perhaps that was when Shao Yuan had started considering leaving.

The patriarch agreed to let Ziju Min take Shao Yuan away after a few days. Before that, Ziju Min was to resolve the conflict between the Jade Lake Sect and House Yan.

The pill sovereign naturally wouldn't decline. He knew House Yan didn't want to be the Jade Lake Sect's enemy.

Afterwards, the patriarch returned to the great hall with a dark and dejected expression.

The elders had remained in the hall. They didn't dare leave while Ziju Min was on the premises. If word got out that the house executives were dilly-dallying every which where, he might think they didn't respect him.

They had all been waiting for the patriarch and blinked when they saw the patriarch return on his own. "Where's Master Ziju, patriarch?"

"He's left," the patriarch responded remotely.

"He's gone?" Yan Wanyou couldn't help ask. "Has he seen that kid Shao Yuan?"

"He has. What else do you have to say, Venerated Elder Wanyou?"

Yan Wanyou chuckled. "It doesn't matter now. There's no need for us to argue over a young man who doesn't share our surname. In the end, it's Yan descendants who can make the family strong."

"You're right," the patriarch said in a frigid tone. "We don't need to agonize over the problem anymore. Shao Yuan has agreed to join the Eternal Sacred Land after Master Ziju made him another offer. He's out of your hair. You don't have to think about him anymore."

"What?" The news shocked all those assembled.

Yan Wanyou gaped, thinking the patriarch was joking. But a closer look told him otherwise.

"As... as expected, he isn't loyal to us at all! We can't depend on people from outside the family at all. See, I was right!" Yan Wanyou considered himself wise to have disapproved of the young man. Just look at the betrayal in such a short amount of time!

"Shut up!" The patriarch had had enough. "Proud of yourself, aren't you? Yan Wanyou, you played an important role in driving Shao Yuan away. One day, you'll realize what a genius the house has lost. We

wronged him, yet he didn't betray us. He's bringing Yan Qingsang to the Eternal Sacred Land with him. Master Ziju has agreed to mediate the conflict between us and the Jade Lake Sect, and he says he owed us a favor. This is all thanks to Shao Yuan."

The patriarch's tone was cold. "This young man has been ostracized and judged like wares in a marketplace. A genius' pride and dignity was trampled and affronted. And yet, he pays us back with kindness and didn't strike back despite his rise in status. Setting aside our young, how many of you old men would be able to show such magnanimity and clemency?"

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1683: A Heart-to-Heart

Silence stretched on.

The others were rendered speechless by the patriarch's words, despite any dislike they might've had for Shao Yuan.

What else could they possibly say? The young man had contributed greatly to the house despite his short period of time with the family. And when he left, he imparted another great favor even though he'd been furious with them. No one could find any fault in his treatment of others.

At the same time, some were secretly jealous of Yan Qingsang. The boy had always been mediocre, but he'd been blessed with great fortune again and again after the trip to the Bluesmoke Isles. His good luck was unstoppable.

Yan Wanjun had already stormed away in anger, but someone brought the news to him immediately.

He sighed with resignation when he heard that Shao Yuan was going to join the Eternal Sacred Land. "How can a family as big as House Yan have no place for a genius with a different surname? Is there any hope left for us?"

He was genuinely concerned. Ever since the death of the forefather, there had been a lack of absolute authority in House Yan, which left them directionless. As a result, the family failed to reach a consensus on many issues, intensifying the infighting. No one could ever agree on anything. Thus, the clan's strength steadily declined.

A breakdown in a family's operations led to problems in all aspects.

Mixed emotions assailed Yan Wanjun when he heard that Yan Qingsang would be leaving along with Shao Yuan.

He cared greatly for his grandson. The boy was almost the only thing that mattered in his life. He was genuinely happy that Yan Qingsang could enter the Eternal Sacred Land, as the latter's success was what made Yan Wanjun feel hope in life.

Yan Qingsang received the news immediately as well, but his immediate reaction was more lost than excited. He went back to his residence at once to find Jiang Chen standing in the yard, deep in thought.

"Brother Shao Yuan, have I wronged you?" Yan Qingsang sounded quite distressed.

Jiang Chen sighed softly. "No, you haven't."

"Has House Yan wronged you, then?"

Jiang Chen didn't respond immediately, taking a moment to slowly gather his bearings. "For your sake, I would've ignored how House Yan bullies and humiliates me, Brother Yan. There are other things I don't know how to tell you."

"Tell me," Yan Qingsang said urgently. "This makes me wonder even more why you decided to join the Eternal Sacred Land."

"Do you really want to know?" Jiang Chen asked faintly.

"Yes, tell me now or we can't even be brothers anymore." Yan Qingsang cared about emotional ties greatly. The only person he'd ever trusted over the years was Jiang Chen.

He couldn't have been more disappointed when he heard that Jiang Chen was leaving House Yan. His young heart even felt that he'd been betrayed by the friendship.

Jiang Chen considered Yan Qingsang patiently.

"Do you have a dao partner, Brother Yan?" Jiang Chen asked out of the blue.

"No." Yan Qingsang was caught off guard and scowled. "Don't try to change the subject."

Jiang Chen ignored the response and continued, "If you have a dao partner that you've sworn an oath that to death do we part, would you save her at all costs if she was in danger? Would you be willing to die for her?"

"If there's a woman like that, I would," Yan Qingsang replied without hesitation. "We've sworn our lives to each other. Of course I'd risk my life to save her."

"We're on the same page then. That's why you'd understand my decision if you were in my shoes."

"In your shoes?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "Yes."

Yan Qingsang looked owlshly at him. "What do you mean? Who's your dao partner?" Realization dawned on him. He stared at Jiang Chen with wide eyes. "Do... do you mean my cousin Huang'er?"

Jiang Chen wasn't surprised that Yan Qingsang would come to the correct answer. There'd been more than enough clues given. Yan Qingsang would have to be a right fool to still not connect the dots.

"Brother Yan, everyone in your family, including you, has been overprotective of Huang'er. You're afraid that someone may sneak in and take her away. However, have you ever thought of the possibility that Huang'er and I already have a history together? That we've already sworn ourselves to each other until the end of time?"

Yan Qingsang gaped at him. He wasn't stupid. It didn't take much time for him to think through everything.

Elder Xi had made a report about Huang'er's experience in the human domain when he returned. Yan Qingsang had been informed as well. She'd had a young genius for a dao partner while in the human domain.

Yan Qingsang didn't take it seriously at the time. What genius could there be in a place like that? He's even thought that Huang'er had lowered her standards when she was there. But, the man standing before him was that precise genius!

Jiang Chen didn't pay any attention to a petrified Yan Qingsang. He declared with conviction, "When Elder Xi took Huang'er away from the human domain, I told him that one day, I'll come to Myriad Abyss Island to take my woman back. I won't let anyone stop me! Not you, not House Yan, not House Xiahou. Anyone who tries will be my enemy!

"I must make choices that will best further my goal. I have time, but Huang'er doesn't. The moment Xiahou Zong ends closed door cultivation will be the moment her life ends. You of House Yan may have accepted that she must be sacrificed in exchange for your peace and safety, but I haven't! I haven't grown numb. I won't give up! Even if everyone in your family has given up, I refuse to abandon her. I'll persevere even if the whole world is against me!"

Yan Qingsang imitated a statue for a good while until he recovered, taking some time to digest the new information. A trace of anger broke through his calm face. "Does that mean you approached me with a purpose? That it was all part of your plan?"

"Yes," Jiang Chen admitted.

Yan Qingsang's eyes blazed with fury. He charged at Jiang Chen and slugged him in the chest. Jiang Chen took the hit with no intention of dodging and crashed right into a pillar.

Blood streaked down the corner of his mouth.

"I owed you that punch." Jiang Chen got to his feet without wiping off the blood.

Yan Qingsang's resentment subsided somewhat upon seeing Jiang Chen taking a hit without defending himself.

"Why didn't you dodge my punch?" Yan Qingsang fumed. "Do you think that'll make me feel better?"

"I never do anything against my conscience, Brother Yan. I may have approached you for Huang'er, but I've never harmed you. I've never wronged you or House Yan. And I've always considered you my brother.

"But you continue to intervene and keep me away from Huang'er." Jiang Chen sighed. "You'll never understand what Huang'er means to me. You don't have a dao partner."

Yan Qingsang didn't have a comeback for that.

After a good while, he punched the ground angrily and clutched his head with both hands, agonized. "So what? Can you stop Xiahou Zong? He's ending his closed door cultivation in a few years. Once he does, Huang'er's fate is set in stone. You can't change that! Do you think I don't want her to be happy? Do you think I don't know you like her? That I don't want you to chase her? I want the best for House Yan, for

Huang'er, and for you. If I let you get close to Huang'er, you'll disappear from the world in less than a month!"

Yan Qingsang's voice was hoarse. He sounded on the verge of tears. "You'll never know what atrocities House Yan and House Xiahou are capable of committing. You don't see the gravity of the problem. I consider you my brother. I can't let you get yourself killed!" He swallowed a sob.

Jiang Chen stayed silent. He understood Yan Qingsang's sentiments. House Yan and House Xiahou wouldn't let any men get close to Huang'er. If anyone did, both houses would immediately get rid of the man.

Yan Qingsang plainly knew that, which was why he'd constantly issued severe warnings that Jiang Chen shouldn't even think about pursuing Huang'er.

"Alright, I've told you everything there is to know. You're the first person to know my secret. Not even Master Ziju or my disciple Hua Ming knows the truth. No one else knows that Shao Yuan is a toad from the human domain!"

Surprisingly, Yan Qingsang didn't retort or snap back. Instead, he stared fixedly at Jiang Chen with great concentration. He sighed after a long pause. "So your real name is Jiang Chen?"

"Yes." There was no point for Jiang Chen to hide anything now.

"I know all about you and Huang'er. Before I met you, I thought you were a scumbag, a toad who wanted to eat the meat of a swan. Both I and everyone in the house have underestimated your competence and determination." Yan Qingsang's tone turned wry. "I'd always thought you wouldn't possibly have the courage to come to Myriad Abyss Island, but here you are. You killed Xiahou Xi for your own reasons as well, didn't you?"

"He's not the only one," Jiang Chen responded indifferently. "I killed Xiahou Jing and his thugs as well. Xiahou Xi wasn't the first one I took out, and he won't be the last. My goal is Xiahou Zong!"

Yan Qingsang wasn't at all surprised after their conversation. In fact, he'd heard similar from Jiang Chen before.

When Yan Wanjun had asked, Jiang Chen had resolutely responded that he wouldn't hesitate at all if he had the opportunity to kill Xiahou Zong. It looked like he'd made plans for this long ago!

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

Chapter 1684: Brothers Come To Terms

Yan Qingsang's anger dissipated as quickly as it had come. The heat of the moment had gotten the better of him. Once he calmed down, rational analysis from Jiang Chen's point of view enabled him to understand his friend better.

How could the undying bonds of love be broken so easily? Any hot-blooded man wouldn't sit idly by while another robbed him of his beloved. And as a cultivation vessel, to boot!

Such an end was perhaps the cruelest of all. It would cost the girl both her chastity and life. As a man himself, Yan Qingsang found it equally unacceptable.

Thus, he understood Jiang Chen after his fury subsided. He had opposed Shao Yuan's approach of Huang'er in the beginning because he considered the other youth a brother. He didn't want Shao Yuan to die uselessly, nor did he want a mishap to occur to the house's fortunes.

Now that he knew the truth, compassion welled up. Huang'er had always been his cousin, and he'd been upset at the whims of fate from the start. Alas, he hadn't had the strength to alter it himself.

But Huang'er's dao partner was now here; he'd gotten so far with step after painstaking step! It was easy enough to imagine the difficulties he'd encountered along the way.

Under these circumstances, Yan Qingsang felt that he could no longer cruelly suppress his friend's efforts.

It would be to the ire of man and heaven alike if he did so.

The duo sat side by side on the edge of the courtyard, both silent after the fight and spat. Any more words now would feel feeble.

After a while, Yan Qingsang couldn't hold it in any longer. "What should I call you now?"

"Shao Yuan, still," Jiang Chen replied coolly. "I won't announce my actual identity without an absolute grasp on the situation. Not that I'm worried about trouble for myself, but I don't want Huang'er to be dragged into anything else. Plus, I'm concerned about potential predators sizing the human domain up for retribution."

Yan Qingsang harrumphed. "So now you're worried about dragging Huang'er into things, are you? If not for you, Huang'er wouldn't have been watched so closely after coming back."

"If not for me, you wouldn't even have gotten a live Huang'er back. How would you appease House Xiahou then?" Jiang Chen was positively frigid. His comment was completely true.

When Jiang Chen had first met Huang'er, the Generation Binding Curse had already taken a severe toll on her. If it hadn't been dealt with in a timely manner, she wouldn't have lasted much longer.

Yan Qingsang cracked a wry smile. "Now I understand why Huang'er is so faithful to you. It's not just talent that you have, but courage and intellect as well. Plus, you're able to keep your cool. Given enough time and a proper stage, you might really have the potential to challenge Xiahou Zong."

"Challenge Xiahou Zong?" Jiang Chen snickered incessantly. "You'll know one day that he's only an insignificant clown to me. A small interlude in the grand scheme of my life, one that won't cause much trouble in the end."

"You're certainly presumptuous, aren't you? I guess it makes sense. How long has it been since you've arrived at Myriad Abyss? You might not understand exactly how strong Xiahou Zong is yet."

The corner of Jiang Chen's mouth curled, but he didn't reply.

"Brother Yan, I've cleared a road ahead of you. Think about coming to the Eternal Sacred Land. I haven't been in House Yan long, but I can see the high hopes your grandfather has for you."

"I know." Yan Qingsang sounded a bit sad. "But I've disappointed him more than I've impressed him. I'm lucky to have met you. I've been able to hold my head higher in front of grandpa because of you, and the same is true with him and the house at large. I should say that you're the one who changed my fate." His tone encroached upon self-deprecation.

"People's fates aren't decided by others. We were destined to become brothers, you and I. Truthfully, I hated House Yan as a whole before I came here. How could a family be so ruthless as to give away a granddaughter in its direct line?"

"It's really not my grandfather's fault," Yan Qingsang asserted gloomily. "The house is too complacent and divided between petty disputes. All of them want to sacrifice Huang'er in order to ensure their own survival." The young man's tone grew indignant upon the mention of this.

"I've seen all of that myself. House Yan is a melting pot of chaos. The patriarch is an ambitious man, but lacks experience and charisma. He can't keep all of the venerated elders and regular elders in line. When differences in opinion mount, the house will focus on internal strife and hasten its own decline. Once that happens, a collapse of some sort will be imminent." Jiang Chen was completely blunt with his assessment.

House Yan's administration had a myriad of issues. However, no one in the entire house had the ability to change it for the better. Their differing positions and interests ensured that it would stay that way. Who was willing to lose so that others might gain?

"What do you think we should do? Does the family really not have a future?" Yan Qingsang was immensely sad and disillusioned.

"If a faction or sect wants to rise, it must do so on the back of a superlative genius. An ambitious hero of sorts may lead a house out of the swamp of its troubles. When a man like that appears, all petty strife will cease. House Yan's decline began after the death of your venerated forefather."

"You're right, but the house is missing someone like that. I doubt he will appear anytime soon."

"Why haven't you considered yourself?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Your talent isn't bad, and neither is your mentality. Why not believe in yourself a bit?"

"Who says I don't believe myself? But it's important to have some self-awareness as well. Even Brother Zhenhuai doesn't think that highly of himself. How can I have such delusions of grandeur?"

Yan Zhenhuai was the only other man in House Yan that Yan Qingsang respected.

"Brother Zhenhuai is indeed remarkable, but you're not half bad either. The Eternal Sacred Land is an opportunity for you. Are you going to give it up?"

"Of course not." Yan Qingsang's voice grew louder. "I'm not going to give up a chance like this. Even if I won't last in the sacred land, I need to grasp it to drive myself forward."

Jiang Chen smiled serenely. "Come with me then. I have my reasons for recommending you. One day, you will rise to the top – as long as you have the resolve and daring to become one of the future drivers of House Yan."

Yan Qingsang pondered his friend's serious expression. The sight of it was somehow powerfully encouraging. He saw hope within, and it bolstered his fighting spirit tenfold. In that moment, his passions got the better of him. "Alright, I suddenly feel that we're somewhat similar."

"How so?"

"No one is optimistic about either of us, but we'll prove all of them wrong!"

Jiang Chen curved his lips. "You're wrong there. I've never thought about proving myself to anyone else. I pursue one thing and one thing only: that no one else will be able to halt my step or impede my will beneath the heavens.

"Do you understand what I mean?" His smile was full of wisdom and determination.

Yan Qingsang sank into a reverie as he looked on at his friend. After a long intermission, he sighed softly. "I'd always thought that Huang'er fell in love with you because you saved her life. It seems I was foolish to have thought so."

"From this day forward, Brother Yan, are you on Xiahou Zong's side? Or mine?"

There was no need for Yan Qingsang to even think about it. "Is that even a question? From the bottom of the heart, I've always been on yours. It was reason that told me not to indulge your attempts at wooing my cousin. Xiahou Zong? I wish he would drop dead right this very moment! Even if you were to kill me a hundred times, I'd still not take his side."

Jiang Chen grinned with leisure. "That's why I picked you, Yan Qingsang. There are only two men among House Yan's younger generation: Yan Zhenhuai and yourself. The others are spineless worms!"

He really didn't care for the other Yan youths.

His animosity with Yan Qingsang thus concluded, he no longer felt like he owed anything to House Yan.

The morning of the second day, Ziju Min came to visit once more to inform House Yan that he'd made an arrangement with the Jade Lake Sect to have a rematch on the Mirage Introspection Pill.

"The Eternal Sacred Land has taken responsibility for this little disagreement. It is no longer tied to House Yan, and the sect bears no other grudge against your house. That should be enough to alleviate your worries," Ziju Min explained to the patriarch.

Now that things had gotten to this point, House Yan's patriarch had no room to comment.

As long as the grudge with the Jade Lake Sect was erased, the house could at least comfort itself with the prospect of resting easy once more. Since Shao Yuan was destined to remain no longer, House Yan didn't want to touch the matter at all.

Early next morning, Yan Wanjun brought a large batch of the house's elites to Cloud Camel Mountain. Since his grandson was heading on to bigger and better things, there were no more worries clouding his heart.

Ziju Min himself cared quite a bit about the Mirage Introspection Pill. Clearly, he wanted to burn the new judgment about the pill into the public consciousness as authoritative fact. Only then would the Jade Lake Sect have no room to salvage their position.

Therefore, he made every effort to advance the affair.

“Shao Yuan, the Jade Lake Sect doesn’t know when to quit. Several old coots have been invited, all of them adamant that Illusory Spirit Grass is the best choice. They’ve tested using Silverstripe Grass several times, with disastrous results each time. Therefore, they feel that your refinement process included some kind of special method. In fact, they go so far as to suspect that the Eternal Sacred Land’s set everything up to strike down the sect.”

Jiang Chen grinned when he heard all this. “The Jade Lake Sect has such an overactive imagination, doesn’t it?”

Ziju Min smiled wryly. “It’s too late to say anything about it now. You need to prove it to them with your actions so that they will finally give the subject a rest.”

“That’s not hard at all. Will they accept the results, though?”

“They’re the ones bringing humiliation upon themselves. They can’t possibly blame it on you,” Ziju Min shrugged.

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

Chapter 1685: Old Immortal Brightstar

The second battle over the Mirage Introspection Pill was several magnitudes larger and more important than the last. This time, even the Jade Lake Sect’s heavyweights were present. Almost every expert from the sect was here, and a few other invited pill dao greats as well.

They were in clear disbelief that Silverstripe Grass could replace Illusory Spirit Grass. How could a truth that was public knowledge be so easily overturned?

The battle was held in a place neutral to both sides. Leading on Jade Lake’s side was Old Immortal Brightstar. He was an ancient savant of the sect who’d lived for many, many years. Within his sect, he was considered the best of the best. His presence here showed the gravity that the Jade Lake had assigned to the situation.

“Daoist Ziju, I have no intention of offending the sacred land with this battle. It’s solely my fixation with pill dao technique alone. I want to solidify our current authoritative understanding of the Mirage Introspection Pill once and for all.”

Old Immortal Brightstar had some right to put on airs before even Ziju Min. He was so much older and had a much longer history in the world. In fact, he technically was a senior to Ziju Min.

Ziju Min smiled slightly. “You’re right, Daoist Brightstar. The truth must be brought to light and protected. Let us take this opportunity today to find out what that truly is.”

Both men were polite on the surface, but a hidden undercurrent of rivalry was clear enough.

Brightstar cackled. "Exactly. Let's use today to get to the bottom of this. We have so many pill giants and gurus here that no one will be able to pull off any tricks. Let's get back to the main topic at hand. Daoist Ziju, please introduce Shao Yuan onto the stage."

Ziju Min glanced at Jiang Chen without further ceremony. The young man strode out calmly from his position at the older man's side. There would be no courtesy spared for people looking to cause him trouble.

Old Immortal Brightstar scrutinized Jiang Chen closely, pride flaring upon his wrinkled face.

"Extremely young." He proclaimed this with the tone of a wizened senior.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "You are as astute as your name suggests, Old Immortal Brightstar."

"Young man, I have some doubts about the Mirage Introspection Pill. What sleight of hand did you use to trade the Silverstripe Grass for Illusory Spirit Grass?"

"Hardly, sir. If Silverstripe Grass is the best choice in the first place, what need would I have for sleight of hand? It's no fault of mine that the Jade Lake Sect has put Illusory Spirit Grass on a pedestal all these years." Jiang Chen could hear the obvious undertones in the old man's words. He implying that Jiang Chen had used deceitful methods!

Thus, he didn't hesitate for a moment in firing back.

"You've a glib tongue, young man." A helper whom the old immortal had invited rebuked from the opposite side.

"Isn't that right? A youngster's talent is wasted if not applied to the straight and narrow. I hear that you've become a student of the Eternal Sacred Land, young man. You're blessed to have Daoist Ziju's guidance. I hope you learn some morals and ethics from him. It's not good to resort to dishonesty in the world of pill dao. We have a zero tolerance policy for that around here."

A different man was speaking up, using his age as a cudgel. He was going so far as to declare that Jiang Chen had cheated.

Ziju Min didn't wait for Jiang Chen to strike back. He smiled himself. "Stop scaring the young man, fellow daoists. The young should be encouraged for their innovations, even if they aren't necessarily correct. If you only frighten and threaten, you will demoralize all those in the field who are your juniors. Plus, others will get the wrong idea that you're trying to keep them down."

And who was Ziju Min?

Though he didn't possess great seniority in the world of pill dao, he was backed by the Eternal Sacred Land. He spoke with the commensurate confidence to match it.

Frankly speaking, he greatly despised that these pill masters were leaning on their seniority. Since they'd already agreed to a battle, they should've been fine with putting their skills to the test, rather than this juvenile name-calling.

Jiang Chen behaved with perfect magnanimity. "Master Ziju," he smiled, "words have never been able to truly defeat someone before. I thought only young men enjoyed the sound of their own voice, so

today has been an eye-opening experience. I maintain that I will teach them the necessary lesson through my actions.”

He was brimming with displeasure for these old codgers as well. However, he didn’t want to get into a shouting match right now. The quicker this pointless charade could conclude, the better.

If not for Ziju Min’s enthusiasm for this, he would have no interest in participating in the first place. Why would he want to prove something that had already been proven?

Moreover, he didn’t care about these people’s approval. Their denial of the truth only served to highlight their stupidity. What was there to prove to a bunch of idiots?

“Alright, that’s enough. There’s no reason to waste time in pointless argument. Why not let the battle commence?”

“Absolutely. Let’s start!” Many pill dao representatives had been invited; most had remained neutral arbiters. They were more interested in an exciting contest than anything else.

Jiang Chen’s eyes focused. “Let’s.”

“Bring out the materials for examination.”

Aside from the difference of respective grasses, all the materials given to both parties were identical.

Ziju Min was excessively cautious. He appraised the materials with hands-on interest, worried that an issue would arise in this stage. After ensuring there were no problems whatsoever, he nodded. “You may begin.”

Worried about cheating, the Jade Lake Sect wanted to test Jiang Chen’s materials as well.

After a period, both parties and the judges were satisfied with the veracity and nature of their ingredients.

“The materials have been examined. Let the contest... begin!”

The last time Jiang Chen refined the Mirage Introspection Pill, it’d been his first. Thus, he had been somewhat unfamiliar with the process despite its success. His second time felt rather different.

Most importantly, he had a different attitude this time around. The last time had been a simple competition, but this time, he wanted to vent his fury.

He poured his entire being into the refinement process as a result. Whenever he fully devoted himself to refining a cauldron of pills, the results tended to be terrifying.

Compared to his last two hour refinement, he was aiming for a completion time of approximately one hour. Despite that, he didn’t rush for the sake of cutting down on time.

Each step was neatly and cleanly executed. The methodology within contained many unexpected surprises. Seemingly ordinary steps contained the essence of his pill dao knowledge from his previous life.

Though only pill dao experts were present, they were nevertheless collectively astounded at the perfection in the minutiae of Jiang Chen's pill refinement. The smallest of movements to warm the cauldron seemed inconsequential at first glance, but actually contained tremendous detail.

Kindling flame was done with an elegant but effective flourish, pleasant merely to behold. Many of the observers found this remarkable indeed.

Even Ziju Min was somewhat moved.

He had known Jiang Chen's pill dao talent to be tremendous; he'd seen the youth in action and considered the latter's foundations extremely solid. But things no longer appeared as simple as that. This young man was a humongous treasure trove, possessing finds seemingly without end.

The rapidity of Jiang Chen's refinement condensed his actual time into two-thirds of his prior experiment's.

One hour was barely up when his cauldron hummed loudly.

Over at the Jade Lake Sect, Old Immortal Brightstar was overseeing the refinements of several pill dao experts. They proceeded at varying paces, but none were able to match Jiang Chen's pace.

This odd phenomenon elicited uniform seriousness from every Jade Lake attendee. Pang Wei was especially incredulous. It hadn't been long since they'd last seen each other, but that kid had gotten even faster!

"Pang Wei, what is this? How come his speed is different from what you said?" An executive from the sect had noticed the discrepancy.

Pang Wei felt large beads of sweat drip down his back as uncertainty and doubt visited him. These developments were entirely beyond his expectations.

"Don't worry, Elder Ge. That kid pursued speed exclusively, so I doubt his results will be any good. He's only shaming himself."

"Yes. I don't believe that the pill can be refined in just over an hour. Even the most expert pill dao experts in Myriad Abyss don't have that power."

"Look, he's about to open his cauldron. Maybe it's all trash inside, hahaha!" The sect members were entirely skeptical.

Ziju Min's eyes were glued to Jiang Chen's cauldron. A keen light exuded from them, radiating more anxiety than Jiang Chen himself.

Clang!

The lid opened to release bestial roars from within. Five-colored smoke poured out, wafting upward into the air. It was a scene extraordinary simply to witness.

Jiang Chen slapped his table lightly, making his cauldron to shake. In the next moment, the heart-shaped Mirage Introspection Pills leaped out like imps. They were crystalline and translucent, extremely beautiful to behold. Everyone was charmed by their splendor.

The finished pills this time numbered fifteen.

This exceeded Jiang Chen's previous record. A cauldron of fifteen meant that there had been barely any waste. More importantly, all fifteen were nothing short of perfect. There was no pill immediately worse than the rest.

The sight of such remarkable pills would be engraved into the mind for the rest of one's life.

Ziju Min's suspended heart settled back down into its original place. He could naturally tell that nearly all fifteen Mirage Introspection Pills were of supreme rank. There were one or two high rank ones. No medium or low rank pills were in sight.

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

Chapter 1686: A Judgement From An Advantageous Position

His productivity and quality were both incredibly high, with even more incredible speed of refinement. Jiang Chen's results had overturned the observers' collective understanding of the Mirage Introspection Pill in every respect.

His refinement finished, the young man placed the fifteen pills before the neutral judges. "Everyone," he smiled faintly, "actions speak louder than words. These are the results from my refinement. Please review them."

He'd intentionally increased his volume to attract the Jade Lake Sect's attention.

Several pill dao masters from the sect had participated in the battle, but none of them had even started on the finishing stages of the refinement process, much less be completely done. These words made a mockery of their efforts.

They'd desperately wanted to prove that he'd been dishonest, but he'd used the simplest and most aboveboard process to slap them in the face. And they, so-called upright and true pill masters, were showing everyone that no one was even close to finishing.

Without comparison, it was difficult to determine excellence in many things. The comparison between Jiang Chen and the Jade Lake Sect exacerbated the issue. How could it have been dishonesty that produced so many high-quality pills in such a short period of time?

After submitting the pills, Jiang Chen returned to Ziju Min's side without further prompting. "Master Ziju, I'm glad I didn't disappoint you."

Ziju Min smiled. "Very good. It seems I've underestimated you yet again, Shao Yuan. Each detail in your refinement hides great mystery in its simplicity. I feel that your pill dao knowledge far surpasses that of a normal young genius. Which great master did you have the blessing of studying under? Even if you'd started learning pill dao as a fetus, it would still be amazing for you to have accomplished this much."

Jiang Chen smiled back. "My family has passed down pill dao heritage for generations. When I was young, I was once enlightened. After that, I seem to receive pointers from another in my dreams. I always awake after learning many other things about pill dao."

An explanation like that would be laughed out of the room by ordinary people. But those in the world of martial dao believed such claims implicitly.

Ziju Min sighed. "Is that so? I see now. Rather than being taught by another in your dreams, I think you have memories from a previous life. Perhaps you were once someone extremely important and capable. The reincarnation of your spirit failed to erase all of your recollections, and they are manifesting in your current life."

Ziju Min really was a very astute man. Truth was, Jiang Chen was indeed carrying memories from a previous life. He'd just explained it in a more subtle and indirect way to make it more believable.

Yan Qingsang was right behind Ziju Min. He was astonished to see Jiang Chen finish the refinement so easily, but gave his friend a thumbs-up anyway.

Old Immortal Brightstar's usually reddish visage was darkly dismal. Jiang Chen's quick completion far surpassed their own results, and the old man knew they had lost.

The Jade Lake Sect wasn't the only loser today. The so-called truth they'd held on to for so many years had entirely collapsed. Perhaps Silverstripe Grass really was the best choice for the Mirage Introspection Pill?

Finally, the sect members finished their refinement one by one, displaying their results as they did so.

The best performer out of them all had managed to produce twelve pills, but only three were supreme rank. Jiang Chen had convincingly and unquestionably crushed his competition in every aspect.

The silence that ensued was quiet enough to hear a pin drop.

The pill masters who'd participated in the contest were numb with despair, their faces ashen. They had applied their utmost strength to the task, but this outlandishly capable youth had finished his own refinement in an overwhelmingly triumphant way. The gap between the two sides was far too large to bridge.

Ziju Min smiled serenely. "Daoist Brightstar, the results are out. I think I don't need to give a formal conclusion. We all have eyes, do we not?"

The old immortal was somber. After quite a while, he recited in a hoarse voice, "Daoist Ziju, the spoils go only to the victor. I have nothing to say. You may consider this affair concluded. The Jade Lake Sect admits defeat, although we will reserve judgment on the Mirage Introspection Pill. How the pill is defined in the future is entirely up to you."

His tone showed that he was still reluctant to yield the argument. The battle and bet was lost, but the pill's redefinition was left up to Ziju Min. The subtext was that the Jade Lake Sect wouldn't acknowledge it.

Ziju Min smiled easily. "Redefining the Mirage Introspection Pill isn't one man's business. The truth will be accepted by everyone sooner or later."

"Daoist Ziju," one man piped up in question. "Truthfully, I've tried replacing Illusory Spirit Grass with Silverstripe Grass in the refinement process. We all have, in fact, but none of us have succeeded. That's why we suspected him in the first place."

Jiang Chen curved his lips. "Gentlemen, the truth isn't limited to what you know. It's rumored that there's a pill that allows someone to attain godhood in a single instant, ascending from empyrean to the

divine realm. Does it mean that it doesn't exist if you can't refine it? Can you call those who can dishonest for being privy to that knowledge?"

He stood up suddenly, sweeping his sleeves about himself to draw a large circle.

"The worlds of pill and martial dao are both as vast as oceans. The amount you and I know constitute the area within this circle, and outside it lies the great unknown. If you think that your comprehension spans all possible truths, well... I think that's a patently ridiculous stance to take."

Jiang Chen's analogy was very accurate and embarrassed some a great deal.

That's right. Who would dare say that there were no truths save for what they knew? No one had the confidence to make such a bold claim. The knowledge of each and every man was limited in some way.

Many neutral judges who'd been invited today sank into contemplation with this philosophical comparison. The young man's explanation was excellent food for thought. Ziju Min was as amazed as the rest.

He was musing over the wisdom that Jiang Chen's words contained as well. The more he mulled it over, the more accurate he found the portrayal.

Ziju Min sighed. "Everyone lives within his own circle and works to enlarge it to the best of his abilities. But compared to the boundless infinity of the world, even the largest circle is limited by its own boundaries. None of you possibly believes themselves to have comprehended the world, yes?"

Old Immortal Brightstar was at a loss for words. He felt the same consternation as Ziju Min and the rest. He wavered in that moment.

Was Silverstripe Grass really better than Illusory Spirit Grass? Had common knowledge about the Mirage Introspection Pill been wrong all along? Had their staunch counterattack been unjust?

The old immortal let out a long sigh. His gaze upon Jiang Chen lost much of its hostility, curiosity welling up in its place.

"Young Shao Yuan, I've lived for more than ten thousand years, but I've never heard of the possibility that Silverstripe Grass is more appropriate for this pill. Perhaps we old men are the ignorant ones. I do have one unresolved question. What secret is there to using the Silverstripe Grass? How come our attempts have never resulted in complete pills?"

"Every detail in pill dao may affect the success of finishing the refinement. Silverstripe Grass is delicate in nature and requires great finesse to avoid ruining the whole batch. Therefore, plenty of experimentation and familiarization with the process is required before achieving success."

"Young man, do you have any tips on using Silverstripe Grass in the recipe? Can you share them with us, or is it an exclusive secret of yours?" Old Immortal Brightstar knew that the request was a bit unreasonable.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly. "It's nothing worth keeping a secret about. However, I'm currently a student of the Eternal Sacred Land. Publicizing these tips would thus require Master Ziju's approval."

All eyes turned to Ziju Min.

The pill sovereign nodded to himself and admired the youth all the more. There was no arrogance or audacity after the young man's victory, and he knew to respect the opinions of his seniors.

The more time Ziju Min spent with him, the more he liked him.

"Daoist Ziju, it would be supremely beneficial if Silverstripe Grass were to replace Illusory Spirit Grass in the pill's recipe. You are a pill dao giant in your own right – you won't keep that from us, will you?"

Ziju Min smiled indifferently. "I've never kept anything to myself that could benefit the entire world of pill dao. I steadfastly supported Shao Yuan in this not because I have some grudge against the Jade Lake Sect or my peers in pill dao, but out of my desire to improve our divine nation's pill dao skills as a whole. I hope that our nation's cultivators spend more time on pill dao and it sees more activity over time. Only then will we stay ahead of other factions to remain among the Ten Divine Nations' ranks."

Though his speech carried suspicions of self-promotion, his starting point did indeed consider all his stated considerations. He really did want the nation's pill dao level to increase as a whole, and for all the nation's factions to place more importance on it.

Eternal Divine Nation was certainly not the weakest among the ten, but its pill dao was nearly last place. As one of the Eternal Sacred Land's most esteemed pill dao masters, Ziju Min carried a great deal of responsibility on his shoulders.

The attention the Mirage Introspection Pill had attracted was very effective at stimulating collective passion for pill dao as a whole. Ziju Min's attitude won him public respect.

"Master Ziju, if the sacred land can share the secret of Silverstripe Grass, it would be the great fortune of the nation's pill dao factions."

"Yes. This will allow us to leave our own colorful mark in the pill dao history of the Ten Divine Nations!" All kinds of praise was showered upon Ziju Min.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1687: Shooting to Fame

Everyone's attention had shifted away from Jiang Chen, despite him being the one they were gathered here for. However, that was exactly what he wanted. He didn't want to be part of the limelight within the pill dao community.

The last thing he wanted was for people to chase after him even after entering the sacred land. He'd be too busy dealing with them to cultivate then.

Ziju Min was going to make good on his promise to disclose the secret of refining with the Silverstripe Grass. He smiled at Jiang Chen. "Shao Yuan, my friend, everyone's waiting for an answer with bated breath. If you don't mind, would you tell everyone how to replace Illusory Spirit Grass with Silverstripe Grass?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "I'll tell you, Master Ziju. Please explain to everyone else for me. I'm young and not good with words. I'm worried that I may not be able to fully express myself."

He didn't want to be the center of attention. He'd rather give the opportunity to Ziju Min.

What's more, Ziju Min was a prestigious figure in pill dao. It would be easier for everyone to accept the explanation if it came from him.

Jiang Chen summarized the key points and went into detail regarding the use of Silverstripe Grass.

Being a titan of pill dao, Ziju Min was able to understand things immediately. He was deeply impressed and took some time to digest the information before fully sharing it with the others.

Besides, once everyone knew that Silverstripe Grass could replace Illusory Spirit Grass, they'd eventually discover the right method. He might as well let them owe him a favor.

Many factions knew how to refine the Mirage Introspection Pill. Even if they didn't know how to use Silverstripe Grass, they could make do with Illusory Spirit Grass. There was no trade secret to be kept or great profit to be made.

And so Ziju Min enlightened the others with his explanation. Some of the more impatient ones started refining right then and there.

Some pills were successfully formed less than an hour later. Even though the results weren't ideal, they were successful nonetheless. The more skilled ones saw a great increase of quality in their pills. The outcome was thrilling.

Jiang Chen however, was bored out of his mind. He wanted to leave this dull place as soon as possible.

Old Immortal Brightstar had finished refining as well. Once the lid was off, twelve Mirage Introspection Pills leapt into the air like sprites. Every single pill was endearing and clear as a crystal.

The elder was living up to his fame as the figurehead of the Jade Lake Sect. He was able to produce a lot more successful pills and ones of supreme rank in a cauldron.

The outcome convinced won over even him. He sighed. "It seems that we stubborn old men do have to adopt a different mindset. As you pointed out so eloquently before, there is no constant truth in the world. Today's experience has taught us frogs in the well a lesson, reminding us to be open-minded. We should encourage young people to think independently, rather than limiting them!"

Old Immortal Brightstar was extending a friendly hand and conceding on behalf of the Jade Lake Sect.

"That's right, young Shao Yuan. We've offended you with undue hostility." Those in attendance were sensible enough to see that it was Jiang Chen who had done them the big favor.

Jiang Chen maintained a faint smile on his face throughout, unaffected by neither mockery nor praise.

Ziju Min was pleased with the display of composure. In his opinion, Pang Wei from the Jade Lake Sect paled in comparison to Shao Yuan. Pang Wei had had several strong emotional responses today, and every time his emotions had been clearly displayed.

Shao Yuan's shrewdness and temperament convinced Ziju Min that he really had found a hidden gem.

Shao Yuan and Pang Wei were both young men. However, while Pang Wei was still engaging in petty arguments, Shao Yuan had already grown to the point that even figureheads in pill dao approved of his ability. It was amazing how enormous a difference there was between them.

The contest of the Mirage Introspection Pill made Shao Yuan a household name in the entire Eternal Divine Nation. Factions that hadn't known the young man before started to gather information about him.

House Yan's actions were exposed as well. They were mocked for the hostility and dislike they'd shown Shao Yuan. Everyone in the house was ashamed. Shao Yuan had been part of the family, and yet it had been their own members that refused to accept him and ended up pushing him away.

They'd lost a genius who could've changed their destiny for good. Ziju Min was the one who benefitted in the end.

Xiahou Ying, a noble miss of House Xiahou, was in a dark mood as well. She'd sent a letter to Shao Yuan to be a guest at her house, but had received no reply.

"Jerk!" In rage, she flung a small, delicate vase at the wall. Anger drained out of her as the vase shattered with a loud smash. She gritted her teeth and snapped out, "How dare you ignore my invitation, you little shit! I'll make you fall head over heels for me one day!"

She was a typical spoiled child from a large family — short-tempered, capricious, and at times manipulative.

She'd hosted the birthday banquet to evaluate the young geniuses from different factions. Many of the top geniuses had treated her with great respect. The fact that Xiahou Zong was her brother was enough to garner her their deference.

Moreover, she possessed the charm of a young lady from a powerful family. She was adept at socialization, and she was a great actress when she was with other people.

She had a great deal of support from the younger generation.

However, her charm didn't work on the young man, whose origin was unknown. He hadn't paid her any attention during the birthday banquet. After that, he'd turned down her invitations several more times.

This was a stain on her track record that she would never accept! This Shao Yuan was just playing hard to get. That's exactly what he was doing! To make things worse, her own teacher Ziju Min, had been working hard to bring Shao Yuan into the fold of the Eternal Sacred Land.

Not even Xiahou Ying had enjoyed such treatment.

She was his pill dao disciple, yet even she didn't have the right to stay in the Eternal Sacred Land for long periods at a time. She was only given the opportunity to meet with Ziju Min and receive his teachings every once in a while.

As a latecomer, Shao Yuan had surpassed her. He'd won Ziju Min's appreciation in a very short period of time. Her teacher clearly valued him more than he did her as he'd spent almost all his time on Shao Yuan lately.

"Teacher is so unfair. Why does he favor that kid who came from nowhere so much?" Xiahou Ying refused to accept the current situation. "Hmph! When I visit teacher, I'll trick Shao Yuan into falling for me and embarrassing himself!"

Xiahou Ying wasn't a generous person. On the contrary, she was a spoiled girl. Shao Yuan was now her rival for her teacher's love. She was as upset like a child whose candy had been taken away.

Moreover, the thief was giving her the cold shoulder. It made her all the more furious. She was an important woman of high status. She was destined to be admired by everyone like a phoenix that soared through the sky!

What gave the young man the right to ignore her?

.....

House Yan was in chaos.

With Yan Qingsang's help, Jiang Chen was able to meet up with Huang'er.

"You only have one hour, brother," Yan Qingsang emphasized. "Be quick with whatever you have to say. I can only buy you so much time."

He had now completely thrown his lot in with Jiang Chen; he would weather whatever adventures came their way.

Jiang Chen was able to meet with Ling Bi'er at the same time.

When Ling Bi'er first heard that Jiang Chen was visiting Huang'er, she'd instinctively tried to leave, but Huang'er stopped her by grabbing her tightly.

"You and I are sisters, Sister Bi'er. And we both have been through life and death with Brother Chen. There's no reason for you to hide now."

Heat rose to Ling Bi'er's cheeks. Jiang Chen entered the room when she was still dithering.

The three of them came face to face. Huang'er had a calm smile on her face, while Ling Bi'er looked as helpless as a thief who'd been caught red-handed. However, she couldn't look away when her eyes landed on Jiang Chen.

"Huang'er. Senior sister Bi'er." Jiang Chen was delighted to see the two of them.

Huang'er chuckled. "You're here to say goodbye, aren't you? Let's not talk about your departure, but about our shared past today."

Her light words made Ling Bi'er tremble with anticipation. Her heart sped up on its own accord.

"No matter where I am, Huang'er, my feelings for you will never change."

"We're past that, Brother Chen. I'll understand whatever decisions you make. Sister Bi'er, on the other hand, has been through a lot of hardships over the years, and she still holds you dear in her heart."

Ling Bi'er was a mountain of ice that was melting. She didn't know what to do with herself. The enthusiasm in the air both embarrassed and warmed her. For reason unbeknownst to her, she felt warm

every time she saw her junior brother. She'd always felt insecure, and yet her heart fluttered whenever she saw him. She felt the same now as she had ten years ago.

"Senior sister Bi'er, how have you been since we parted?" Jiang Chen was delighted to see Ling Bi'er again.

"Junior brother..." Ling Bi'er said in a low and quiet tone, her voice a little nervous. "I heard that you've taken my father and Hui'er in and rebuilt the Regal Pill Palace... The past few years must have been difficult for you."

Huang'er chuckled. "Sister Bi'er is still being too formal. Brother Chen cares deeply for the Regal Pill Palace, and about you and your sister. He never forgot about you in all the years you went missing."

Jiang Chen smiled. "It's quite a miracle that we're able to meet again after everything. Uncle Ling and Hui'er will be happy if they hear about our reunion."

The awkwardness between them dissolved. In its place was an easy familiarity.

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

Chapter 1688: The Eternal Sacred Land

The one hour they spent together undid several emotional knots that Ling Bi'er had been nursing. The three of them were able to open up more to one another.

Huang'er was greatly moved when she heard that Jiang Chen had decided to join the Eternal Sacred Land because of her.

"Don't worry, Huang'er. I'll be prepared. Even if Xiahou Zong exits his cultivation tomorrow, I'll do everything I can to take you away."

"I trust you, Brother Chen. I'll rather die in your arms than take a single step into Xiahou territory." Huang'er was as determined as he was.

Jiang Chen felt much better after validating each other's feelings again. He was a little less worried about going to the sacred land, but at the same time his new promise was another weight added to his shoulders.

The Eternal Sacred Land was the most powerful faction in Eternal Divine Nation. Even the royal family of the nation was raised in the sacred land.

It was a big deal to House Yan that Jiang Chen was joining the faction, but for the sacred land, it was trivial. Countless geniuses joined throughout the year. He might be well-known at the moment, but mostly for his ability in pill dao. Although pill dao was valued in the faction, it wasn't as noteworthy as achievement in martial dao.

Therefore, the Eternal Sacred Land didn't pay a lot of attention to Jiang Chen and Yan Qingsang.

Yan Qingsang, especially, was widely speculated to have entered through nepotism. He could only be considered a probationary disciple. If he didn't perform well enough during the probation period, it was very likely he'd be kicked out.

There wasn't a welcoming celebration for them, which didn't surprise Jiang Chen. Given the sacred land's status, two young men from House Yan weren't important enough to warrant a festive welcome.

"Shao Yuan, Yan Qingsang. Starting today, both of you are probationary disciples of the Eternal Sacred Land," said Ziju Min. "You will undergo a test one month later. It may not be particularly difficult, but it'll determine if you can stay for the long term. You're known for your ability in pill dao, Shao Yuan, so you should be able to stay even if you don't pass. Yan Qingsang, however, will be sent home if he fails.

"This is how we operate. I hope you'll understand." Ziju Min was upfront with them.

Reality was cruel, but it was as Jiang Chen expected. The Eternal Sacred Land was the top faction of Eternal Divine Nation, after all. They wouldn't be thus if they didn't impose high and rigid standards.

"Your ability is the only thing that matters here. The greater the talent and potential you demonstrate, the more valued you'll be. I know you're extraordinarily talented, Shao Yuan, but I'm the only one who knows at the time being. You have to prove yourself to others as well. I can pave the path and be the wind at your back, but you must work hard to win the other senior executives over on your own.

"As for Yan Qingsang, your top priority now is to pass the evaluation next month. You don't have much time. You must be prepared for everything."

Yan Qingsang had been able to come because of Jiang Chen.

"If I don't do well here, Master Ziju, I'll never return to House Yan," Yan Qingsang responded with great conviction. "I'm a man. What other people can achieve, I can as well!"

"Good. I'm glad that you're confident. To be honest, I want you to stay as well. I don't want the other senior executives to use your failure against me."

"What does the evaluation entail, Master Ziju?" asked Jiang Chen. He wasn't worried if he could stay. He was more worried about Yan Qingsang. If Yan Qingsang failed, his recommendation would be all for nothing.

"The evaluation isn't needlessly harsh. I can tell you about it..." Ziju Min didn't keep the information from them. He explained briefly what the evaluation would be about, giving them a basic understanding.

Jiang Chen didn't find it that difficult himself. On the other hand, Yan Qingsang had a fifty percent chance of passing. But they still had a month. Jiang Chen believed that he would be able to help Yan Qingsang increase his likelihood to succeed.

"You should spend some time and go over the evaluation in more detail. There are other important things I have to tell you in advance about the Eternal Sacred Land.

"We have three heads known as the three primes. They are all half-step divine realm. It's also said that we have a venerated forefather, but that's above my position to know.

“In addition to the venerated forefather and the three primes, there’s also the Hall of Elders, which is composed of hundreds of elders. The elders are categorized into upper elders and lower elders. One has to reach at least seventh level empyrean to be an upper elder, and fifth level empyrean to be a lower elder. Only those who have made extraordinary contribution or possess unique talents can be lower elder at fourth level empyrean.

“You may think that it sounds easy to be one of hundreds of elders in the hall, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Might alone doesn’t make you an elder. Many sixth level empyrean experts are unable to become one. Cultivation is a prerequisite to be an elder in the Eternal Sacred Land, but it takes more than that to actually make be one.

“If you’re wondering what the specific criteria are, my apologies, there aren’t any. If someone is talented enough, the Hall of Elders will conduct an observation. If the person fails any part of the observation, the elders will consider him unqualified.

“The other sects and houses in Eternal Divine Nation may not have such high standards, but this is how it’s always been here.

“You have a remarkable talent in pill dao, Shao Yuan, but that’s no excuse for you to be arrogant. In the sacred land, your talent in pill dao may be able to win you many friends, but it won’t grant you any privileges. Only when you’re able to earn the approval of everyone with your pill dao skill will you be granted any real privileges.”

This was as Ziju Min had promised Jiang Chen. If he could show enough potential to win over the entire faction, he’d be given not only privileges, but also leeway to do whatever he wanted.

Such was the reality of the martial dao world. If someone had enough talent and potential to upset the balance of the world, he could have anything.

“Master Ziju, who are the noteworthy geniuses among the younger generation here?” Jiang Chen abruptly changed the subject. “What are they like?”

“There are a great number of geniuses among the youths in the sacred land. On average, our youths are much stronger than those from the other big factions. Xiahou Zong has styled himself the top genius in the nation, but the other young geniuses in House Xiahou are lesser than ours both in quality and quantity.

“Of course, there’s no telling if Xiahou Zong truly is the top genius yet. We will be hosting a sword competition next year for our nation’s geniuses, and one for all young geniuses in the Ten Divine Nations three years from now. Perhaps we’ll know the answer then. The general competition is when true geniuses will shine. Talented cultivators from all nations will pop up like bamboo shoots after a rain. Before then, rumors are nothing but rumors.”

A sword competition for all Eternal geniuses and then a further one for all geniuses from the Ten Divine Nation three years later? Jiang Chen had certainly come at the right time, when major events were on the horizon.

Three years!

“I’ll prepare a dossier on the geniuses in the sacred land for you so you have a rough understanding. Here, as long as you have enough potential and might, there’s no need for you to care what kind of genius your opponent is and where they’re from. We believe that a single flower does not spring make.”

Ziju Min gave them a few more pointers before leading them to the residential area for probationary disciples.

It was more simple and crude compare to the other areas, but Jiang Chen didn’t care. It was a rare bout of free time for him. First, he formulated a cultivation plan customized to Yan Qingsang’s needs, ruminating carefully to base it on the upcoming evaluation.

Yan Qingsang now implicitly trusted everything Jiang Chen told him. And the plan his brother had drawn up did indeed fit him and his martial dao style perfectly.

“If you follow this plan, Brother Yan, your chance of passing will reach seventy to eighty percent. As long as you perform at your usual level during the evaluation, you will become an official disciple of the sacred land.”

“You’ve changed my life for good, brother. I don’t want to leave either. I’ll show House Yan that I’m just as good as the other members of the family!” Yan Qingsang had been under a lot of stress over the years. He’d simply been keeping it bottled up.

Now, he was in Eternal Sacred Land’s territory, playing by the sacred land’s rules. Growing ambitious was a most natural reaction. The plan Jiang Chen put together for him allowed him to see many new possibilities and helped him better understand where his potential lay.

Meanwhile, Jiang Chen set out to reach peak great emperor himself. He was close to reaching that level and he still had an ace in the hole - the Emperor Supremacy Pill. He planned to use the pill to push himself to peak great emperor in a month.

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

Chapter 1689: Peak Great Emperor

Time spent in the Eternal Sacred Land was surprisingly peaceful. Only a few probationary disciples were around. The others were journeying to experience the world, leaving only Jiang Chen and Yan Qingsang the only two probationary disciples here.

The two of them took to their new life like a duck to water.

Jiang Chen began digesting the Emperor Supremacy Pill. Time was marching inexorably forward. He believed that right now was the best time to breakthrough.

Instinct told him that Xiahou Zong was likely to end closed door cultivation before the sword competition for geniuses next year. Jiang Chen didn’t have a lot of time, but one year was long enough for him to prepare.

He was quite confident that he’d be able to reach peak great emperor in a month. Even if he needed more time, it wouldn’t be that much longer.

Yan Qingsang also threw himself into cultivating under Jiang Chen's guidance. He improved himself in many different aspects. His cultivation level was at peak great emperor, which wasn't bad, it was actually higher than Jiang Chen's. In terms of fighting ability however, five of him wouldn't rival one Jiang Chen.

It wasn't because of a lack of talent, but a lack of understanding in martial dao. His foundation wasn't solid enough.

Having identified the problem, Jiang Chen knew that it stemmed from the limited resources from House Yan. It made for Yan Qingsang having only a rough grasp of many details in martial dao.

What Jiang Chen had to do was to help fill in those gaps.

It was unrealistic to expect Yan Qingsang to become a new person in a month, but Jiang Chen's understanding of martial dao allowed him to resolve many of the pre-existing problems.

As time passed, the Yan genius could feel keenly the amazing transformation he was going through. He marveled at his progress, which boosted his confidence considerably.

Ziju Min checked up on them several times throughout the month. He was pleased to see the two of them work so diligently. That was more than he could hope for.

He had especially high hopes for Jiang Chen. His biggest worry was that the young man's remarkable talent in pill dao would hinder his progress in martial dao. It turned out that these worries were unwarranted. The young man was more hard working than he could've imagined.

What put Jiang Chen at a disadvantage, compared to geniuses of Myriad Abyss Island, was the fact that he'd taken over the body of a boy over the age of ten when he reincarnated.

As a result, his cultivation history was more than ten years shorter compared to other geniuses. This was why he was still aiming for peak great emperor while the top Myriad Abyss geniuses had already reached empyrean realm.

If given ten more years, he'd be able to easily defeat any young geniuses in Myriad Abyss. That much he could say with confidence.

Time flew. More than twenty days had passed. The one-month mark was coming.

Thanks to the Emperor Supremacy Pill, the spirit energy in Jiang Chen's body was abundant and vigorous. Like beasts brandishing their claws, they were ready to rip away the shackles that held him down from reaching peak great emperor.

It was a sign that he was close to breaking through.

He was relaxed and calm, his mind was free of all unnecessary thought. His heart beat steadily as he awaited this reverent moment of great importance.

Everything seemed to naturally fall into place now that he'd reached this step. No one understood the difficulties he'd overcome to get to this point.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

His meridians expanded as the spirit energy in his body soared. A seemingly limitless stream of energy flooded through his system in a mad rush. Warmth rampaged out of his dantian, reaching every part of his body in an instant. He felt it in every pore and bone.

Jiang Chen had experienced the rush countless times, but he'd never been as excited as he was now. He'd finally reached peak great emperor!

It might not be that much of a milestone for geniuses in Myriad Abyss, but it was remarkable for him to catch up when he'd been ten years behind all this time. The most critical thing was, he hadn't arrived at Myriad Abyss for long.

There was far less ambient spirit energy in the human domain. If he'd reincarnated into Myriad Abyss Island, he'd have reached the same cultivation level as the top geniuses by now, if not much higher.

He could feel the seal in his consciousness become more active after his breakthrough. Signs that hadn't been present before started to show. He had a feeling that the secret of the seal would be revealed to him once he reached empyrean realm. He very much looked forward to that.

Although he'd been living in Divine Abyss Continent for a long time, the millions of years from his past life still held a special place in his heart. He never forgot, even for a single second, about the love and devotion that his father from his past life had shown.

Even after coming to a different world, he believed that their bond hadn't been severed after his reincarnation. There seemed to something unexplainable maintaining the link between him and his father. Their bond remained intact.

"Perhaps the nine droplets forming the chain seal is the clue that father left to me about my past life." He resolutely believed that he was getting closer to finding out the ins-and-outs about everything.

"The sword competition is one year away. I must reach empyrean realm before that no matter what. Only then will I be able to stand out among the other young geniuses."

Jiang Chen knew that he'd be able to take on many initial empyrean geniuses in combat. He could summon Confounding Puppets or set up the Nine Labyrinth Formation, to name just a few ways.

There were other methods that could effectively deal with the top geniuses, even when he remained at peak great emperor. However, he wouldn't necessarily be able to dominate the competition.

Eternal Divine Nation was among the most powerful entities on Myriad Abyss Island. The top geniuses in the nation ranked in the top of Myriad Abyss as well. There was no telling if the geniuses possessed powerful treasures themselves.

If the gap between their and Jiang Chen's equipment was smaller, it'd naturally be more difficult for him to fight them. That was, unless his cultivation could reach their level.

Ascending to empyrean realm was a necessity.

In Eternal Divine Nation, only those above empyrean realm could be considered first tier geniuses. Anyone below that could only be second tier.

Take Yan Qingsang and Yan Jinnan, they were at peak great emperor. Even then there existed a difference in power between those at the same level. As for geniuses who'd reached empyrean such as Yan Zhenhuai, they were the top geniuses in the nation.

The numbers of top geniuses differed between the great factions.

According to the dossier from Ziju Min, there were roughly twelve young geniuses who'd reached empyrean realm in the Eternal Sacred Land.

Meanwhile, there were at most six in the other great factions, and even the lowest possessed at least one. It made for an impressive final figure. These were the true best of the best in Eternal Divine Nation.

There were tens of thousands of second tier geniuses like Yan Qingsang, and countless third tier geniuses.

There existed a large gap between the first tier and second tier geniuses. If one could cross that gap, then he too would become one of the leading figures within the nation. If one failed to bridge the gap before age sixty, it'd be close to impossible to surpass the others in their lifetime.

Nothing was constant in the world of martial dao, but there was a pattern to it most of the time.

The higher one's potential was when young, the more advantages later in life. Different starting point led to differences in the foundation of cultivation and mindset, which in turn led to different levels of success.

Of course there was the rare exception. Some were able to change their fate and catch up after gaining a special heritage or a fortuitous encounter. That happened more often than one would think, but in the end, the lucky ones were in the minority. Perhaps one struck gold out of a hundred, or even one out of a thousand.

Jiang Chen had gained a basic understanding of the composition of geniuses in Eternal Divine Nation. The nation wasn't among the top in the Ten Divine Nations, but it was above average.

The Ten Divine Nations weren't all equal in power, but the differences weren't significant.

As long as he could ascend to top rank within Eternal Divine Nation, he'd be among the top in all of Myriad Abyss.

He'd been unrivaled in the human domain. Coming to Myriad Abyss had helped him recover his passion in the race to the top of martial dao. It was as if he was back to his time in the Precious Tree Sect, Regal Pill Palace, or Veluriyam Capital. However, this time he was faced with even greater challenges.

As usual, Jiang Chen upgraded his various methods, techniques, and equipment after breaking through. He possessed a great variety of resources, and they all needed periodic tending to.

A month was just about enough for him to do all that. Soon enough, the evaluation to become a formal disciple arrived.

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

Chapter 1690: The Evaluation Begins

The entrance evaluation for the Eternal Sacred Land had a set of strict standards. Even though Jiang Chen had been recommended in, he wasn't spared from participation.

After a month of grueling cultivation, Yan Qingsang had improved with remarkable rapidity as well. He could already sense traces of the heavenly dao, and it seemed likely for him to break through at any moment.

Although he was peak great emperor, he hadn't made much progress with empyrean comprehension for a long time. Over the past month, the details of his martial dao were adjusted to perfection under Jiang Chen's imperceptible hand and eye, repairing his flaws. Because of this, he was finally beginning to sense what he hadn't before.

The change manifested in him as a flash of divine inspiration. Due to this, Yan Qingsang prepared to receive the exam in prime condition.

On the eve of the exam, Ziju Min felt a mixture of emotions well up.

He occupied a quite prominent position in the Eternal Sacred Land — one of the upper elders in the Hall of Elders, one of the ten most important. Aside from the venerated forefather and the three primes ranking directly beneath, no one else could claim seniority over him.

Still, his recommendation of the young men had resulted in considerable pressure. Not so much with Shao Yuan, whose pill dao talent and expertise was well known, but the accessory Yan Qingsang was a source of ridicule.

Some felt that it was a joke for a second or third-rate young genius from House Yan to enter, and that it brought shame upon the faction. They didn't want Ziju Min to start such a harmful practice, since they were concerned that the precedent would result in even more lawlessness.

Ziju Min didn't defend himself. He had known as well that bringing Yan Qingsang into the fold would give those who opposed him an opportunity to criticize.

But he wasn't really concerned with that. His status as a master of pill dao afforded him courtesy from even the three primes. As for the elders who were on the same level with him, he didn't care about what they said.

"Elder Ziju, the exam is tomorrow. The Eternal Sacred Land carries its own set of rules and principles. If that House Yan kid can't pass the exam, we'll have to kick him out."

"Haha, it's not just the House Yan kid. If... what was his name again? Shao Yuan? If he doesn't pass, the rules stipulate that he can't stay either."

Ziju Min was a respected and dependable man in Eternal Sacred Land. Still, he had a few that he didn't get along with. The handful of elders who were hostile to him came forward now to poke at him.

Ziju Min smiled. "Don't worry. I can't guarantee anything on Yan Qingsang's behalf, but Shao Yuan will pass the exam for sure. No question about it. Unless—"

The pill sovereign paused intentionally here before continuing. "Unless someone deliberately interferes with the process or doctors the exam."

“Who dares do so? The sacred land’s rules are far-reaching and publicly recognized. Anyone who does challenges its authority. No matter his position, he will be punished.”

“Yes, Elder Ziju. No need to worry about that. As long as they are real geniuses, the sacred land will only welcome them. Why would someone meddle with the exam? No, no.”

Ziju Min’s customary magnanimity earned him quite a bit of support. Many others sounded their opinions in reassurance.

The pill sovereign smiled. “My fellow daoists, I have no doubt Shao Yuan will persevere. Keep your eyes peeled. I firmly believe that he will become an influential character in his own right one day.”

“Haha, you certainly have high hopes for him.”

“No matter how good his pill dao talent is, it’s not to the point of creating miracles, no?”

“Perhaps Daoist Ziju is planning to make Shao Yuan his successor?”

“If Eternal Sacred Land gains a second Daoist Ziju, that would be a wonderful thing.”

“Truly. The sacred land’s pill dao masters are too few in number.”

“It seems you all have underestimated Shao Yuan’s talent. My intention isn’t for him to become a copy of myself. Given enough time, his achievement in pill dao will be ten times mine. It’s quite likely he will be able to surpass all the divine nations’ pill dao masters.”

Ziju Min’s remarks were entirely heartfelt, but they sounded like colossal jokes to others.

Achievement ten times that of Ziju Min’s own?

What did that even mean?

Ziju Min’s pill dao achievement wasn’t necessarily the best in the Ten Divine Nations, but he was definitely among the top ten.

Ten times that was unimaginably eminent. The idea that the boy would surpass every other pill master in the Ten Divine Nations was absolutely incomprehensible.

Even the elders closest to Ziju Min chuckled without comment. Clearly, they felt that Ziju Min’s prediction was exaggerated as well.

“It’s not easy to surpass everybody else in the divine nations. Perhaps you’re overselling him a tad, Daoist Ziju? Out of his greatly promising talent, I’m sure.”

“I can’t even begin to fathom such a thing. The Ten Divine Nations have countless experts, some hidden from view entirely. You have very high hopes for this Shao Yuan, Daoist Ziju.”

Ziju Min remained silent. Actions spoke louder than words. Any declarations he made right now wouldn’t be believed. As a pill dao senior, he was very sensitive to all matters relating to his expertise. He recognized the true genius in Jiang Chen.

Those so-called pill dao geniuses in Eternal Sacred Land were like children before Shao Yuan, not fit to be mentioned.

Ziju Min knew that some of the elders doubted Shao Yuan because they too had children and grandchildren who were important pill dao geniuses.

They didn't want the rise of a young man who had more talent and attracted more attention than their descendants. Genius could only outshine genius. Thus, he found it pointless to argue with biased individuals.

Tomorrow, Shao Yuan would use his actions to deliver a resounding slap to these old men's faces.

On the day of the exam, Jiang Chen and Yan Qingsang came to the evaluation hall. There weren't many being assessed today.

The material in Jiang Chen's test was somewhat more extensive than that given to Yan Qingsang. Aside from martial dao, there were pill dao topics as well. His friend, on the other hand, was solely to be tested in martial dao.

Jiang Chen gave Yan Qingsang a meaningful glance. "Brother Yan," he transmitted in consolation, "I've always had faith that you can pull this off. Prove it to them!"

Both young men were fired up as their exams began.

The martial dao exam was identical for Yan Qingsang and Jiang Chen. The exam tested the examinees' combat abilities.

The Eternal Sacred Land had a geological formation high up in the mountains known as the Nine Winding Caves. Each cavern contained a trial.

According to the rules, passing three of the trials in succession rendered one an official disciple of the sacred land. Four, an elite disciple. Five, a core disciple; and passing six, a personal disciple of one of the masters. This was the best treatment one could hope for. Every successive trial passed meant a drastic change in accommodation and privilege.

In the history of the Eternal Sacred Land, the best record had been set by an extremely capable genius who passed through eight, only to be stopped by the final one.

Passing three trials was pretty good for a fresh disciple. Passing five was exceedingly rare. Eight? Unthinkable, since it'd occurred only once.

Yan Qingsang was up first, Jiang Chen behind him.

In truth, Jiang Chen was more anxious for Yan Qingsang than he was about his own trials. The Yan genius needed to pass to bolster his self-confidence. If he succeeded and received that tremendous boost, it would help him rise from a second-rate genius to a first-rate one.

The first trial didn't pressure Yan Qingsang at all. The second trial cost him quite a bit more time, but he steadfastly pushed through.

The third trial was the most important. Jiang Chen broke into a sweat when the attempt started. The keeper of the trials had said that the third was significantly more difficult than the second. It was used to separate the wheat from the chaff.

If he could pass that, Yan Qingsang would become an official disciple of the Eternal Sacred Land – a status that no one could strip from him.

Jiang Chen silently prayed for his brother's success.

Yan Qingsang managed to power through in a crucial moment, pulling through with a fierce struggle.

Jiang Chen was overjoyed to see the youth emerge from the third cave. The young man looked somewhat fatigued, but his fighting spirit had only increased.

"I want to challenge the fourth." Yan Qingsang was raring to test his mettle.

"Well said!" Jiang Chen clapped. He could see that Yan Qingsang had more than enough fighting spirit left to fight on. Thus, he would only encourage his friend in his enterprise.

Yan Qingsang entered the fourth cave.

It was evidently much more difficult than the third as well. Yan Qingsang sank into embittered contention and failed to come back out after an hour and a half. But that he hadn't been automatically ejected meant he hadn't lost yet.

He was still exerting every ounce of his being to staying in the fight. This was where his will would be most sorely tested.

Jiang Chen believed that Yan Qingsang had a more than 50% chance of breaking through the fourth level, especially after his month-long training session.

If he did, his future determination would be empowered by this success. Jiang Chen sincerely hoped his friend would succeed here.

Perhaps passing the fourth trial would be Yan Qingsang's current limit, but it was no means his overall limit in martial dao. Rather, it would be a new beginning for him.