

Three Realms 1731

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1731: The Bet Unfolds

Even the other factions from the Eternal Divine Nations were baffled by the match, House Xiahou included.

Xiahou Ying watched everything play out like great entertainment. In her eyes, Shao Yuan was all bark and no bite. He was beyond foolish to provoke Master Shi Xuan. Had the sacred land forgotten how Elder Ziju died?

She pursed her lips and murmured in a low voice, "He must be crazy, brother."

Xiahou Zong smiled faintly. "The young man's talented, but he's overconfident. He might've had a chance to win if he'd played some unexpected tricks. But after hearing his proposal, the only explanation I can think of is that he's out of his mind."

Shao Yuan had to be insane to think that he could win like this.

"How ridiculous for all of the sacred land to dance to his tune." Xiahou Ying shook her head. "I don't get why Teacher Ziju is so over the moon about him."

"Enough talk, Ying'er. He's going to get what's coming to him. Let's just watch the show. It's clear that the kid tells convincing lies. Why else would the three primes and Ziju Min let him do whatever he wants to?" Xiahou Zong had identified the key issue.

"Hmph, they're all possessed." Xiahou Ying didn't think Shao Yuan had any chance in winning. Her eyes swept to Yan Qinghuang, who was not far from her.

Her brows furrowed, she tugged lightly on her brother's sleeve and murmured provocatively, "Brother, it seems that the Yan girl really is in bed with Shao Yuan. Look at the way she's watching him. Tsk, look at how adoring her eyes are!"

Xiahou Zong's gaze grew frigid as he looked over at Yan Qinghuang, whose sole focus was on the two parties involved in the match. Every minute detail about her concerned expression betrayed her true feelings. Even a fool would be able to see them.

Xiahou Zong boiled with rage, his head spinning. He felt humiliated and betrayed. He didn't have any feelings for Yan Qinghuang, but since she was his possession, both her body and mind belonged only to him. And yet, her attention was so ardently elsewhere!

It was a brutal slap to Xiahou Zong's face.

"Unacceptable. Simply unacceptable!" he fumed. "What a slut. She's forgotten her place after her time in the human domain! House Yan is indeed a family of cheap whores."

Under different circumstances, he would've taken Yan Qinghuang away on the spot and taught her a lesson.

“You should make your move soon, brother,” Xiahou Ying commented, adding fuel to the fire. “I don’t want your possession to be claimed by someone else.”

“Shut up,” snapped Xiahou Zong.

Xiahou Ying giggled. “You always vent your anger on me. Go be mean to your girl, or that guy. I didn’t instigate the affair between the two of them.”

“Are you done yet?” drawled Xiahou Zong.

Xiahou Ying could tell from the tone that her brother was truly angry. She didn’t dare say another word. She stuck her tongue out and shut her mouth.

Jiang Chen and Shi Xuan each took a side of the stage. They had an hour to come up with their questions.

It wasn’t a challenge for Jiang Chen to formulate three questions. There was no arguing that Shi Xuan was among the top pill dao figureheads in Myriad Abyss, but in the heavenly planes, he would be of mediocre talent. In Jiang Chen’s past life, any of his pill dao disciples was considerably more talented than Shi Xuan.

In terms of knowledge alone, Jiang Chen had learned almost everything there was to know about pill dao from different dimensions and schools of thoughts. As a result, even though every opponent he encountered was stronger than the last, he could still defeat them easily like an adult on a child’s playground.

After some deliberation, he picked three that he was almost sure Shi Xuan wouldn’t be able to answer. After that, he waited patiently.

He knew that Shi Xuan must be confident in himself. He’d destroy that confidence soon enough!

Shi Xuan came up with three questions not long after. He made his choices with great care, sure that the young man wouldn’t have a clue, let alone give a correct answer. His lips twisted into an odd grimace. His win was inevitable.

“I’m done, brat, but no rush,” Shi Xuan spoke up when he noticed how silent Jiang Chen was, trying to rattle his younger opponent. “You may take your time. I won’t be seen as bullying a junior.”

Jiang Chen opened his eyes and smiled lazily. “Finally? I almost fell asleep waiting for you.”

He knew Shi Xuan was trying to shake him, but he wasn’t going to back down. This understated comeback was the most effective.

Shi Xuan frowned, his expression clouding over. The brat was already done? Had he come prepared? But that couldn’t be. He’d come up with the rules according to their conversation. He couldn’t have predicted what Shi Xun would say.

Shi Xun fell silent. The more he talked, the more mistakes he might make, which would open himself up to more mockery from the young man. Since he wouldn’t win the war of insults, he’d let his pill dao do the talking. In the end, that was the only thing that’d determine the winner.

Both had decided on their questions. The bet could officially begin.

“You’re the guest, Shi Xuan,” Jiang Chen said with a smile. “How about I let you ask the first question?” They’d agreed to take turns asking questions.

Anger flamed in Shi Xuan’s heart again. The young man was truly arrogant! He really knew how to push Shi Xuan’s buttons. Again, the older man reminded himself to keep calm and stay focused.

“Seniors should make concessions to their juniors. I’m not going to take advantage of you, kid. You may ask your question first.”

It didn’t really matter who went first. Thus, Shi Xuan was more than willing to play up the generous senior.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Are you sure?”

“A man lives by his words. What does it matter if you go first?” Shi Xuan affected a careless tone and continued derisively, “But what can someone as inexperienced as you come up with? I’m all ears.”

Jiang Chen flashed a wide smile and nodded. “Then your wish is my command. My first question has to do with the Trinorary Sages' Puzzle. Twenty-seven herbs can be used to refine twenty-seven different pills. You consider yourself among the top ten pill dao figureheads in Myriad Abyss, Shi Xuan. Can you give me all the combinations?”

Ziju Min barely stopped himself from bursting out in laughter. Naturally, he knew about the Trinorary Sages' Puzzle. He’d asked Jiang Chen about it out of curiosity, and Jiang Chen had deeply impressed him by revealing all of the combinations.

He was deeply amused that Jiang Chen would use the puzzle as his first question. He was sure that Shi Xuan didn’t know the answer. There was no mention of a Trinorary Sages' Puzzle in the Myriad Abyss’ records. Some combinations had been preserved, but at most three to five of them.

Shi Xuan frowned. The Trinorary Sages' Puzzle? He’d never heard of it.

His frown deepened as he stared at the twenty-seven herbs he’d been presented with. He could immediately come up with three or four combinations, but twenty-seven? That couldn’t be possible.

After contemplating for fifteen minutes, his expression darkened further. He couldn’t help but ask, “Are you sure there are twenty-seven combinations? How can that be?”

Jiang Chen laughed. “Didn’t you say the Taiyi Skymender Pill was the only one you didn’t know out of all the pills I know? Then you should know about the Trinorary Sages' Puzzle.”

Embarrassed, Shi Xuan huffed. “Are you sure there really is an answer?”

Jiang Chen smiled. “I’ve sworn an oath. Empyrean cultivators have an even stronger connection to the heavens. If I give you a false question and thus go against my oath, the heavenly law will punish me. You should know that.”

Shi Xuan paused, speechless, before turning back to the question.

it wouldn't be difficult to solve if he'd seen the puzzle before. Since he hadn't however, it was impossible for him to figure out the answer in an hour.

After a while, he sighed dejectedly. "Fine, you got me. However, you have to announce the correct answer. Who knows if you made up the question?"

Jiang Chen threw out a scroll. "I knew you'd say that. Here's the answer. Read and learn!"

His tone was mild, but the way he acted and held himself stunned the spectators.

Most had thought he was reckless to challenge Shi Xuan in the beginning, but many now had put aside their patronization and was reevaluating Jiang Chen. The young man did seem arrogant, but his confidence was turning out not to be unfounded.

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Chapter 1732: An Immense Blow

The tinge of soberness in Shi Xuan's expression complicated the mood of everyone who'd looked down on Jiang Chen earlier. They hadn't anticipated the young man from Eternal to take the lead as soon as the competition began.

Though Master Shi Xuan seemed relatively unaffected, things no longer looked as easy as they did moments prior. This meant that Shao Yuan's provocation had been premeditated rather than impulsive.

Taking the scroll of answers in hand, Shi Xuan furrowed his brow as he perused it. Truthfully, his pill dao knowledge was insufficient to fully understand the Trinonary Sages' Puzzle. Even if he'd been given the answer, he remained perplexed about a portion of the recipes.

"The scroll doesn't prove anything, kid. Who knows if you made it up? If you want to convince everyone, you need to present more evidence."

"I knew you'd say that," Jiang Chen chuckled. "Well then, what kind of proof would you like?"

"Hmph. You say that these pill recipes all exist? That means you should know how to refine any that I pick at random. I'll choose three momentarily. If you manage to refine all of them, you pass." Shi Xuan persisted in his skepticism.

Jiang Chen grinned with exaggerated confidence. "I know you're a sore loser, but your resistance is futile."

"You're the guest here. Pick as you like – if you manage to stump me, we'll count it as your win then." The young man's attitude was positively flippant. His irreverence only lent more credence to his claims.

Shi Xuan sank into thought for quite a while before carefully making his three selections.

"Refine these three on the spot. If you pull this off, then we'll take your word for it."

Jiang Chen laughed. "You really are a bad sport, Shi Xuan. Fine, I'll crush your hopes. Your ignorance doesn't mean that the Trinonary Sages' Puzzle doesn't exist."

The materials prepared, he got to work right away in front of a rapt audience.

Jiang Chen had entered this duel solely in order to make his name known. He allowed the full measure of his pill dao skill to be seen by all. During the refining process, he intentionally added unique flourishes to improve the splendor of his technique.

He won over the hearts of some for his showmanship. Though other heavyweights were opponents of unnecessary flair in the world of pill dao, they found nothing to critique about his craft's fundamentals.

The Trinonary Sages' Puzzle had been meant as amusement. Though some of the pill recipes were comparatively more esoteric, none were difficult to refine. It took Jiang Chen just short of two hours to deliver all three requested types of pills.

"Please take a look at the pills presented here." Jiang Chen snapped a finger, prompting a ready and delighted Yan Qingsang to carry a platter with them to the various representatives.

The pills themselves weren't particularly impressive, but Jiang Chen's artful approach had imparted them with an exceptional aura. All of the pills were technically flawless. They were so masterful that they might as well have been works of nature.

Many pill dao giants didn't spare their praise after viewing the young man's handiwork. "To imbue simple creations with such impressive mastery... Well done, young man. Very well done!"

"Will you make a gift of one of these pills to me, young man? As a souvenir?"

Though the world of pill dao emphasized seniority, its masters granted the utmost respect to those who exhibited surpassing skill.

Jiang Chen's superb expertise was more than enough for them to retract their two-part bias: both his youth and the Eternal Sacred Land's past inadequacy had colored their perceptions. The young man's commanding prowess was winning him widespread recognition, even reverence.

Many no longer thought that he'd bitten off more than he could chew with his challenge to Shi Xuan. He clearly had enough talent to teach his opponent a serious lesson, even if he didn't end up winning. Plus, who knew how things were going to play out? With phenomenal performance and a little bit of luck, a miracle was always possible.

Having been presented with the three pills in turn, Shi Xuan was entirely expressionless. "Fine, you pass," he stated with a blank look. "However, I haven't given my question yet this round. Don't celebrate yet!"

There were three rounds in total. Both participants had the opportunity to present their opponent with a question. Right now, Shi Xuan had merely failed to answer Jiang Chen's. If Jiang Chen couldn't answer Shi Xuan's question in turn, this round would be a tie.

Shi Xuan had plenty of confidence in his own question. He regretted his earlier failure to answer, but he firmly believed that he would stump the young man in turn.

Producing a different scroll through a flick of the wrist, he shook his right hand to unfurl it. "This question is also related to pill recipes. This is an altered recipe with nine materials, but some of these are false. Your job is to revise the recipe with the correct materials so that it's useful again."

He tossed the scroll right in front of Jiang Chen, who casually snatched it out of the air.

Shi Xuan was composed and confident. He had found the ancient pill recipe in a fragment of text, and had repaired it through two to three decades of research. He adamantly believed that the source of it was one-of-a-kind; in fact, he was doubtful the author himself had possessed the full recipe. There was no way the young man could do what he had done on the spot.

Jiang Chen opened up the scroll leisurely. A single sweep caused him to burst into laughter.

He was all too familiar with pills of every stripe. A myriad of materials and recipes were imprinted in his mind as rigidly as unchangeable formulas. Vivid images appeared in his consciousness out of instinct.

He combined the materials together automatically, resulting in a dozen or more possibilities. The process of elimination produced three most likely candidates.

After some further consideration, Jiang Chen flashed a leisurely grin.

“Are you trying to trick me with your question, Shi Xuan?” The trip down memory lane had stimulated his powers of recollection. He now remembered what the three recipes were associated with.

What he had in front of him was a different puzzle. Less famous than the Trinonary Sages’ Puzzle, but also much more deceptive in nature. The nine types of materials and their permutations meant there were multiple possibilities as to the correct answer.

Entirely different recipes were obtained depending on whether two, three, or four types of materials were swapped out. Therefore, there were no fixed ‘wrong materials’ to speak of.

Shi Xuan raised an eyebrow. “There’s no need to posture if you can’t answer, kid. How am I trying to trick you? You’re the uninformed one here.”

Jiang Chen sneered. “No, you’re definitely trying to pull the wool over my eyes. I’m lucky I know how sinister of a puzzle this is, so I need to ask this in advance: which kind of answers are you looking for?”

Which kind of answers? So... were there multiple?

Jiang Chen’s daring comeback caused an eruption of interest. Everyone was curious exactly what kind of devilish puzzle deserved the young man’s condemnation. “What do you mean?” Shi Xuan countered icily. “How can there be multiple answers?”

“Hmph. According to what I know, there are at least three. If I were to say just one of them, you would definitely declare it incorrect. That’s why I have to know: do you want the answer that changes two, three, or four materials?”

The collective curiosity in the crowd turned to astonishment. How long had it taken the young man to come up with such an insightful response? Had Shi Xuan really been unlucky enough to ask a question that Shao Yuan knew the answer to?

If that were the case, the Flora master was in big trouble this round. Was he going to concede the first point?

Shi Xuan was in the dark himself. His years of research had yielded only a single answer: the one that swapped out two materials. He had no idea about the ones that swapped three or four. How was he supposed to answer?

He could feel his mouth dry up. Calming down his agitated heart, he harrumphed. "Answer the one that swaps out two materials. Stop pretending like you know more than you do."

"Two materials? That's the most rudimentary answer," Jiang Chen replied coolly. "Too easy."

He immediately started to draft his answer, taking special care to announce exactly which two materials he'd swapped out afterward. Furthermore, he announced the question itself to the public to garner more witnesses.

Jiang Chen didn't believe Shi Xuan had any ethics to speak of. He was worried that the older man would have some other ploy up his sleeve, hence the insurance policy. He wanted to nip any potential conspiracies in the bud.

Shi Xuan was petrified when he heard Jiang Chen's words. The fruits of decades of research into an ancient pill recipe – rudimentary?!

This was an immense blow to his ego.

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Chapter 1733: Bedraggled Beyond Belief

Shi Xuan remained somewhat unconvinced. He hoped the kid was nothing more than a fluke. What if he really was just pretending?

Alas, Jiang Chen's answer shattered his unrealistic hopes. The answer was exactly the same as his research.

He wanted to pick a bone, but didn't know where to start. He looked several hundred years older in that instant, his expression preoccupied and gloomy. There were only three rounds. For him to lose the first round was very bad. He rather regretted being so careless.

If he hadn't agreed to the format of this battle, he might not be at such a disadvantage right now. At the time, he hadn't thought much of such a green-looking kid. How could he lose to a rookie in any aspect?

That overconfidence had been his bane. He was at a serious disadvantage after only round one.

He needed to win one of the ensuing rounds now. Otherwise, he would lose overall even if both the second and third rounds were ties.

He hadn't tasted a single loss ever since making his way into the world, despite competing against countless pill dao masters.

If he were to tarnish his pristine record today before all of these peers, he would no longer have a reputation to speak of, even without that bone-chilling bet. Moreover, he had far too much at stake to afford to lose.

Shi Xuan had recovered his wits by now. He finally realized that the young man he'd underestimated had been scheming against him all along. Shao Yuan had provoked him at all costs in order to make use of the long-prepared trap right in front of him.

Alas, he had wandered into trouble thanks to his pride.

It's fine, it's fine. There are two rounds left. As long as I win one and tie one, I will still make this match a draw! His worldly experience allowed Shi Xuan to calm down very quickly.

It was necessary for pill dao masters of his achievement to possess tenacious wills. He wouldn't panic simply because he was at an initial disadvantage.

Shi Xuan quickly adjusted himself to his new circumstances. He couldn't allow his opponent to take the lead anymore. How was he supposed to win without taking back the initiative?

Thus, he interjected before the young man could speak. "You had the first move for the first round, so now it's my turn!"

Shi Xuan was embarrassed as soon as he uttered this. The other heavyweights from the Flora Sacred Land shared in his chagrin. They'd never been so awkward when it came to pill dao before. They were losing face for something as trivial as the order of questions in a battle!

Jiang Chen smiled coolly with magnanimity. "Let's not bother with arguments. Why don't I give you the initiative for the next two rounds, eh?"

Pfft!

The already joyous Ziju Min spat out the tea in his mouth when he heard the concession.

That kid had a rather venomous tongue. The words sounded harmless on the surface, but the impact of their humiliation was incredibly vicious.

Considering that a young man was making an accommodation for a touted top ten pill dao giant of Myriad Abyss... it was a stinging blow against Shi Xuan's self-esteem.

As expected, the older man became even more upset.

Shi Xuan was on the verge of exploding. Thankfully, he retained his reason; he knew the young man was using every chance possibly to discredit and antagonize him.

He became cooler despite his annoyance. "The battle should be fair in the first place. There's nothing you're giving me. However, I'm definitely going to win the second round. Don't think that you can dominate the whole world just because you had a lucky run-in with buried knowledge! You're far from being at the top."

"Say all that after you win this second round. I think that will be far more convincing." Jiang Chen smiled serenely. "Alright, I know why you're trying to waste time. Ask your question! I'm listening."

Shi Xuan couldn't match Jiang Chen's acerbic manner. He took a deep breath to retain his composure, then segued into the second question.

“My second question relates to a pill dao formation. I have a formation diagram here, and you have to tell me which parts are problematic.”

Pill dao formations were very convoluted affairs. Any ordinary person would have a headache just by glancing at a diagram, much less analyze it. Shi Xuan’s second question really was much harder.

Jiang Chen’s smile was as nonchalant as ever. He didn’t seem to care much about the prospect of a pill dao formation. He seemed to feel that everything was in control regardless. His confidence won him quiet approval from part of the audience.

Not everyone in the Ten Divine Nations liked the Flora Sacred Land. Because of Shi Xuan’s rise, Flora had angered a fair few of them. Aside from the Flora Sacred Land’s allies, there were numerous factions willing to see it stumble here.

Unfortunately, there were some who didn’t like the Eternal Sacred Land either. In fact, not even everyone in Eternal Divine Nation wanted Shao Yuan to win much glory in this battle.

House Xiahou was probably the most representative example of this.

Currently, Xiahou Ying was green with envy. Nearby, her brother Xiahou Zong was even more displeased than she.

He’d already marked Jiang Chen down as a potential opponent because of various factors. He wasn’t happy about the rise of an enemy that he wanted to quash. Yan Qinghuang’s sincere smile at the first round’s victory made a viper to crawl inside his heart.

But House Yan had a vastly different attitude.

Every attendee was overjoyed by the battle’s proceedings, the patriarch and Yan Wanjun most of all. The house and the sacred land were in a honeymoon period of good relations. After all, Shao Yuan had been their contribution.

Any honor that Shao Yuan won positively reflected upon the house as well. In fact, the patriarch and Yan Wanjun were conversing with some enthusiasm at this very moment.

Yan Zhenhuai was more of an introverted man. The slight smile upon his face was all he showed of his emotions.

Although Huang’er was the happiest of the bunch, she couldn’t openly cheer for her beloved given the situation. But she saw no reason to hide her own radiant smile, and exchanged whispers with an equally content Ling Bi’er from time to time.

As Jiang Chen’s friend and follower at this festival, Yan Qingsang had gained a bit of recognition as well, further improving his house’s mood.

Ziju Min practically brimmed with excitement. If he hadn’t been the host of the festival, he would have burst into laughter himself with a slap his thigh. He was too mirthful for words.

He hadn’t expected everything to go so smoothly. That Shao Yuan could corner Shi Xuan in such a convincing manner was almost incredible!

Shi Xuan vying to be first for the second round meant that he was really stressed. Even Elder Zimu had never threatened him in this way.

Though the three primes refrained from commenting due to their lofty status, the looks they exchanged were full of wholehearted satisfaction and admiration. In this moment, all had become staunch supporters of Shao Yuan. They wanted the young man to crush his opposition in the second round more than anything.

That would bring an early, decisive conclusion to this battle, which would in turn restore the reputation lost so shamefully several decades ago.

Go, Shao Yuan! All three primes shouted in unison from the bottom of their hearts.

Shi Xuan would be forced to pay the price, and the sacred land and Elder Zimu would be vindicated!

Jiang Chen had his hands on the pill dao formation diagram.

In the human domain, such formations were essentially nonexistent. There'd been countless examples in ancient times, but every pill dao faction had been eradicated in the demon-sealing war. The grounds of some had survived, but only as undiscovered secret realms.

Meanwhile, pill dao formations were scarce in Myriad Abyss, but far from nonexistent.

Just like regular formations, pill dao formations had their own complexities according to level.

Jiang Chen was in no haste to study the diagram right away. Instead, he knocked on the table with a smile. "Shi Xuan, you can take this time to mentally prepare yourself."

"What?" Shi Xuan retorted coldly. "Don't change the subject, kid. You're only wasting your time."

"I have more than enough to spare, thanks. Have you considered that if you lose here, the battle will be over prematurely? From now on, you'll be my pill slave until the end of your days!"

This was a cruel possibility indeed. The older man couldn't accept such a thing, even though he didn't think he'd lose. He glared daggers at Jiang Chen. "Everyone knows how to boast, kid. Why don't you do it after you win your part first?"

Jiang Chen roared with laughter. "I have a feeling I'm going to very soon. I'm especially proficient with pill dao formations, hahaha!"

Truthfully, there was nothing that he wasn't skilled at when it came to pill dao. He had said this to intentionally anger and confuse Shi Xuan, as well as wear down the other man's fighting spirit and faith.

The tactic wasn't necessarily effective, but it did serve to humiliate Shi Xuan further. The three primes and Ziju Min would be happier because of it, and the sacred land thirsted for vengeance against Shi Xuan in any case. Why let any opportunity to humiliate his opponent slip by?

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Chapter 1734: A Swift Visitation of Karma

Shi Xuan knew that Jiang Chen was intentionally shaming him as part of overall tactics. He was too important to take it sitting down regardless of his own tolerance for such actions; not that he had much of it in the first place.

I need to get rid of this kid after all this is over. My hatred cannot be sated otherwise.

The older man was truly angry now.

He knew deep down that the young man was doing exactly what he'd done when he was younger, issuing his own challenges against the older generation of pill dao giants.

His own methods had been rather extreme and underhanded at times; but the same couldn't be said for this young man so far. His openness seemed to be even more effective. Getting a taste of his own medicine gave Shi Xuan a rather different impression—everything seemed thoroughly malicious.

A thought flashed through his mind. Was this karma?

He had challenged many pill dao giants through unorthodox methods, and he was now being challenged as a pill dao giant by a younger man in turn?

Malice filled his heart. This can't be. Absolutely not! How can I, the great Shi Xuan, be aggravated by this clown? I'm going to kill this kid after the battle, no matter the cost!

Infuriating others was his personal hobby, a way to quickly climb up the social ladder. But he didn't brook the same from others at all. To him, it was the gravest of sins.

Even the top ten pill dao masters in Myriad Abyss wouldn't be able to make heads nor tails of my formation diagram in the heat of the moment. I doubt that kid will find half a clue in the time given, much less its problems.

Shi Xuan had a lot of faith in his formation diagram. Therefore, he considered it impossible to lose the second round. He was already beginning to ponder whether he could fend off his opponent's counterattack.

However, the young man chose this moment to laugh. "I thought this diagram would be a lot harder," he sighed. "This seems almost too trivial to be serious. Isn't this just rudimentary doodling? What worth is there in this diagram? Shi Xuan, did you give me the wrong one?"

Shi Xuan felt something rise to his throat. He was furious enough to cough up blood.

The wrong one?

He was very proud of the diagram. Though it had been hastily drawn, it had been imbued with the profound essence behind the actual formation. And yet, the kid had called it a doodle! From a beginner, no less?! Was there anything more insulting?

Shi Xuan was well and truly enraged. Without being constrained by his circumstances, he would've wanted nothing more than to charge at his young opponent and land a few well-deserved punches.

Thankfully, reason overcame impulse in the end. If he really did that, his good reputation would be lost for life.

Suppressing his anger with visible effort, he took a deep breath before continuing icily. “Looks like you can’t stop running your mouth. You say my diagram’s a doodle of a beginner, but where’s your answer? Don’t tell me you can’t figure out what’s wrong with something this simple?”

Frankly, Shi Xuan didn’t believe Jiang Chen for a minute. He was firmly of the opinion that the young man was pretending.

Stretching lazily, Jiang Chen drawled, “Something as crude and amateur as this diagram is a failure in itself. The idea that you want me to find one specific problem is too difficult. There are problems everywhere, honestly. But since this is a battle, I’ll trouble myself to...

“Ah, that’s too much effort. I’ll just draw the right diagram perfectly. The wiser observers should understand my work.”

A formation diagram that may have been convoluted for Shi Xuan was simplicity itself for Jiang Chen. It seemed that Myriad Abyss was uncommonly backward when it came to formation diagrams. In the young man’s expert opinion, the diagram was incredibly primitive.

The pill dao formations common to the heavenly planes possessed overwhelming complexity that was headache-inducing. The formation in front of him was really only fit for a child.

In his previous life, Jiang Chen didn’t care to use diagrams of this caliber to teach even the most artless of students. He got to work swiftly, keeping his eyes closed all the while. In fact, he drew so quickly it seemed like he was the one doodling.

It didn’t take long for him to depict the formation in its entirety.

“Here, that should be it. Take a look. I’ve labeled every issue with your diagram on my version. Don’t try any tricks!” Laughing, Jiang Chen turned to Yan Qingsang. “Brother Yan, come. Take the diagram to any audience members interested in it.”

Since there was no judge, it fell to the pill dao giants watching to maintain fairness. There was a basic amount of that much objectivity present, at least. Fundamentally, truth couldn’t be twisted into falsehood.

After the review, everyone marveled at the intricacy of Jiang Chen’s diagram. Many pill dao giants were speechless at his skill. What kind of young man was this? He could draw such amazing pill dao formation diagrams despite his youth. Every stroke in his diagram was the work of a master.

Jiang Chen’s diagram quickly made its way into Shi Xuan’s hands.

The older man paled as soon as he glanced over it. A heavy blow hammered his chest. He could almost visualize a mocking expression in place of the diagram; it brought him such shame that he wanted to bury his head in the sand.

Nondescript panic filled his heart, plunging him into a frozen abyss of terror. His pride and joy had been crushed so easily and effortlessly—and demeaned in the process to boot!

The ‘doodling of a beginner’...

A comment like that was the harshest of slaps to a pill dao master. Was something so valuable to Shi Xuan considered worthless trash?

The others from the Flora Sacred Land felt a shadow travel through their hearts when they saw Shi Xuan's expression and reaction. They were far from thrilled about the battle's proceedings.

Though the second round wasn't yet over, there was more than enough cause for concern. If Shi Xuan couldn't complete his opponent's question, then...

The unthinkable would occur.

Shi Xuan couldn't afford to lose the battle. Losing meant the destruction of his reputation and the surrender of his freedom as a slave. He was supposed to be a future pillar of the Flora Sacred Land, someone they absolutely could not afford to sacrifice!

Though he hadn't completely grown into his strength yet, he was already top three in the sacred land. Furthermore, he had plenty of unexplored potential.

Alas, he was being defeated by someone supposed to be his prey. His miserable failure here would be entirely unexpected, to say the least.

"Brother Shi," one of the Flora pill dao giants messaged. "Do you want us to find an excuse to stop this bet midway?"

"Yes, we can't let it go on."

Then, something astonishingly embarrassing occurred. The messages were intercepted by ripples from an unknown formation, which captured and played back the voices perfectly to the entire crowd.

There was raucous laughter from the other attendees.

The two pill dao giants from the Flora Sacred Land reddened with chagrin. They thought they were streaking in darkness, but their indiscretion had been spotlighted for everyone in the street to see. It felt more disgusting than swallowing a fly.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Look how helpful your peers are, Shi Xuan. They've thought of a way out for you already. Shall I helpfully wait for them to think of a good excuse? And then give you a push when they do?"

The laughter from the audience intensified.

Shi Xuan was on the verge of total breakdown. One humiliating thing after another had corroded his confidence. Even his peers' scheme was in the open.

If they called it off now, the Flora Sacred Land would forever have a stain upon its record. It would henceforth be one of the biggest jokes in Myriad Abyss's pill dao world.

Shi Xuan really wanted to extract himself, but he knew it to be impossible. He had to press on, no matter how uncomfortable it made him.

If he performed well, he at least had a chance to make this round a draw. If he could answer Jiang Chen's question, then win the third round later on, they would be tied. An excuse would be reasonable then.

Sometimes, elegance could be sacrificed for the sake of safety.

However, Jiang Chen clearly wasn't planning to give him the chance. For his question, he planned to dispense with scholarship in favor of a different approach.

"My second question doesn't relate to pill recipes or formations. Here's a chance for you to turn the tables. Under equal conditions, let us compare our kindling techniques. How about it?"

Kindling a flame was a very important technique when refining pills. Good fundamentals in this area meant improved control over the amount of heat applied. In other words, it intimately related to a pill master's true level.

Everyone was stunned at the simplicity of Jiang Chen's proposal. They had expected a very difficult problem from him. Wasn't he intentionally giving Shi Xuan an opportunity to come back?

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

Chapter 1735: Tremendously Wondrous Ar

At the end of the day, Shi Xuan was a pill dao master who'd enjoyed a lengthy career of success. His opponent Shao Yuan was just a young genius. Though he might have incredible talent when it came to theory, the expertise behind his practical technique seemed rather more nebulous.

Surely there was a marked difference between a young man and a proven senior? Wasn't it very unwise for Shao Yuan to fight in a field favorable to his opponent?

Even those from the Eternal Sacred Land felt that he had overreached here. Shouldn't he have brought out the Crowning Emyrean Pill, forcing Shi Xuan to lose on the spot?

After all, there was no way the other man could refine the pill, which would lead to an automatic loss for the second round. The bet would be absolutely over then.

Ziju Min exhaled a distraught sigh. He was pained by Jiang Chen's apparently reckless decision, a sentiment that the three primes keenly shared. However, they guessed correctly that the young man had a good reason behind his choice. Maybe he was so certain in his victory that it didn't matter.

Shi Xuan didn't know what his opponent intended, but he was pleasantly surprised when he heard what Jiang Chen had proposed. He'd been worried that the youth would ask another arcane question, just like the first. Whether he could muster up an answer in that case was still up in the air.

But kindling a flame was a technical affair. Shi Xuan considered himself too much of a veteran to lose to a youngster.

His inexperience and arrogance is showing through. He wants to beat me with his practical skills? What a joke!

He'd been in the depths of despair, losing himself in an endless night. But a ray of hopeful light shone through. He would be a fool not to take advantage of this opportunity. "Fine, fine," he cackled. "I'd like to see how good you are at kindling a flame."

Jiang Chen ignored the strange looks all around him. His eyes were placid, and a mysterious smile hung on his face. "I hear Elder Zimu was beaten by your control over flame. How good are you actually, I wonder? Perhaps you cheated all those years ago?"

Shi Xuan didn't care about the young man's mockery. His face didn't matter nearly as much as the result at this point. He needed to at least break even. Thus, the pill dao giant patiently waited for Jiang Chen to present the terms of the battle. He firmly believed he had a chance to come back when it came to practical technique.

Jiang Chen was as relaxed as ever. "I have two standard cauldrons prepared right here, of the exact same quality. The audience members are free to review them ahead of time. We will use the same kindling technique to see who warms his cauldron up first. Resonance marks victory. How about it?"

Everything about the proposal was commonplace and customary. However, Shi Xuan hesitated. He was worried that Jiang Chen might have fixed up the cauldrons in a deceptive way.

"I don't think we need to use two cauldrons," he declared. "One is fine. Also, it has to come from a neutral faction to be fair."

Everyone shook their heads at Shi Xuan's words. Was this the same proud Shi Xuan who'd challenged so many seniors? The man whose defining characteristic was how overbearing he was? Why did he quibble over the slightest details all of a sudden?

Still, his behavior was understandable. If Shi Xuan wasn't circumspect about everything he could be, he would lose even more badly than he already was. The young man from the Eternal Sacred Land was significantly more generous in comparison.

"You are the guest, Shi Xuan, so do as you like. Using only one cauldron is acceptable. Which friend is willing to contribute his cauldron?"

None of the divine nations' pill dao heavyweights were miserly with their cauldrons.

After a brief selection process, a cauldron from Polylore Divine Nation was chosen. Polylore had no relations with either Flora or Eternal, making this a very safe, neutral pick. There was no bias or assisted cheating to be wary of.

The cauldron underwent an examination from both contestants before the round proceeded. Neither found issue with the vessel they were presented with.

Since there was only one cauldron, the competition couldn't take place simultaneously. There needed to be an order, with an intermission to allow the cauldron to cool down. An hourglass or burning incense could be used to keep time.

Jiang Chen smiled serenely. "Shi Xuan, I'll be generous one more time. Why don't you go first?"

Shi Xuan didn't seem so eager for priority this time. "No, you can go first," he feigned charity.

The young man replied with a laugh. "You won't have a chance if I go first. I don't want to crush your confidence like this. What if you lose all hope of proceeding?"

Shi Xuan harrumphed. "If you can do that, that would be more than enough cause for my loss."

Going second actually had the advantage in such competitions. He wanted to see how his opponent warmed the cauldron, noting any characteristics of the vessel in the process. It was a good chance to get acquainted without actually getting hands-on.

Jiang Chen knew what his opponent was thinking. "I'll go first then, since you're being so kind," he nodded.

"Hold on!" Ziju Min interjected. "I think the latter is favored in this kind of competition. A chance to observe one's opponent and the cauldron can't be underestimated. I suggest that Shi Xuan be forbidden from watching Shao Yuan's technique."

His proposal was completely reasonable. The other observers nodded uniformly. The second competitor had a clear edge thanks to first hand observation.

Though Shi Xuan had wanted to secretly take advantage, he could no longer do so when the fact was brought out into the open.

"Why would I need that kind of edge?" he harrumphed.

His pretentious rigidity was a bit too obvious. Those from the Flora Sacred Land would be watching regardless of his presence. He left the competition area and sat back into his spot, turning his back to Jiang Chen.

The young man approached the cauldron. "You can start the count," he declared.

Time was kept through the burning of incense.

A single rub of his hands was enough to produce the pill-fire inherent in Jiang Chen's body. A flame appeared in the palms of his hands. He was in a very good mood. It was a damn thrill that he could use his own inner flame in this life for pill-related things.

Because he had been unable to cultivate in his previous life, he'd been forced to rely on external sources of fire. Even then, he had a superb mastery of fire control techniques. They were only amplified now that the fire came from inside himself.

The embers of the pill-fire leaped about in Jiang Chen's hands like dancing sprites, full of mysterious vigor. He pulled them gently through the air, producing a trail of afterimages.

Layers upon layers of these afterimages were produced, interlacing with each other.

Most remarkably, the afterimages—or so they appeared at first—were coming to life themselves at the beckoning of Jiang Chen's hand seals. They became as real as their original fellows.

This wasn't the first time Jiang Chen had used this ability to kindle a flame. He'd actually done so many times in the past. However, this was the first time he had done so in such a glamorous fashion.

Because he was an empyrean cultivator now, his pill-fire had become even more dazzling and magnificent than before. There were nine layers of flame in all, each containing nine embers. They surrounded the cauldron in a burning ring. This method was called True Fires of Ninety Nine.

It was the first time Jiang Chen used the method after breaking through. The mesmerizing visual effects that accompanied it fascinated his entire audience.

Every observer was silent. No one uttered a word or dared move even a little. In fact, many held their breaths in an unconscious attempt to preserve the beauty they witnessed. There was a widespread sentiment that this exquisite moment could be frozen in eternity, so magnificently divine was the spectacle.

Eighty-one balls of flame bloomed like crimson lotuses. Pure, noble, and splendid, they gave off a radiance that garnered the attention of whoever beheld them.

The cauldron was no ordinary vessel, either. It was one of the best cauldrons in Myriad Abyss, so preheating it was no easy matter.

However, the True Fires of Ninety Nine took not even two or three-tenths of an incense stick to bring the cauldron to a healthy roar. The sound was filled with an excitement that seemed as if the cauldron had been also won over by the marvelous flames. The cauldron rang far louder than it usually did.

Everyone was shocked by what they saw. It hadn't been long at all, and he was already done? The incense had barely burned!

Even the pill dao giant who'd loaned out the cauldron was astonished. He found it entirely unexpected that his cauldron was warmed so quickly. What did the brilliant sound of the cauldron mean?

Shi Xuan trembled when he heard the commotion from the cauldron. His mind almost crumbled on the spot. How can he be so quick?

He had planned on going second because he thought perhaps the person going first wouldn't be accustomed to the cauldron. He had wanted to begin turning the tables from this segment. Unfortunately, his opponent had heated up the cauldron unbelievably fast.

Though his back had been turned to the proceedings, the silence just now had been very strange. This disquieted him.

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

Chapter 1736: Complete and Utter Defeat

Shi Xuan's ominous foreboding had been proven right. The cauldron's resonance was a curse upon him and pushed him to near breakdown.

No matter how confident he was of himself, he knew he'd never break that record. His mind blanked in this denial of reality. How could an inexperienced brat possibly do this?

Jiang Chen smiled lazily. "You may turn around now, Shi Xuan."

Shi Xuan tensed, his expression contorted in a scowl. He knew better than anyone that he'd truly lost, and it was a loss that he couldn't deny. His mind was in morass as he wondered how his failure came to be. Where did the sacred land even find this youth?

Even with countless eyes watching them, Shi Xuan was tempted to go back on his word, but his heart spasmed when he thought of the oath he'd sworn. His reputation would never recover from the damage it'd suffered today.

Jiang Chen didn't rush his opponent. As it were, it would take some time for the cauldron to cool down.

The spectators made for a collage of odd expressions. Those from the Eternal Sacred Land could barely suppress their joy, while delegates from the other factions were stunned that Shi Xuan had lost.

If they'd heard about the match rather than witnessed it themselves, they would've never believed the outcome.

Shi Xuan had built up his reputation through defeating pill dao figureheads at a young age. No one had ever foreseen he'd one day be humiliated in the same way he'd treated others, his pride ground into the dirt. They'd witnessed an unbelievable feat!

The cauldron was about cooled by now. Jiang Chen remarked faintly, "It's important to win with integrity and lose with dignity, Shi Xuan. It's your turn. Are you going to play dead, or are you going to break your oath?"

Shi Xuan turned beet red. He wanted nothing more than to bury his head in the sand, to leave the place where he had lost his pride.

But, he couldn't.

There was no place for him to hide, and the heavenly laws wouldn't allow him to break his oath. Nonetheless, he hadn't tried his hand with the cauldron yet. He hadn't lost, yet. There was still a chance.

He decided to give it a go. Maybe the cauldron was easier to heat up than usual?

Sadly, his attempt to comfort himself was completely unfounded. Although he was highly skilled in controlling fire, more than one third of the incense stick had burned when the cauldron rang. He'd taken almost two times as long as Jiang Chen had.

Most importantly, though his cauldron had resonated brightly enough, it was nowhere near as arresting and dramatic as Jiang Chen's attempt.

Even those who knew nothing about pill dao could tell the difference. The sound signified the finesse of the heating process, and it reflected a pill expert's mastery and control over a cauldron. It was undeniable that Jiang Chen had defeated Shi Xuan in every aspect.

Shi Xuan's footsteps faltered. He itched to smash the cauldron to pieces and raze the entire sacred land, but neither was within the limits of his ability.

The bet was at an end. He had lost two rounds in a row, marking him the clear loser.

He'd claimed that the Taiyi Skymender Pill was the only thing he didn't know. Now it was clear that some boasts were better left unsaid. His hubris had destroyed his reputation and even deprived him of freedom.

Applause slowly started up from the assembly. It wasn't a standing ovation, but many followed the crowd and clapped. The tide applause made a clown out of Shi Xuan, who stood at the center of the stage.

The middle-aged man from Flora Divine Nation exclaimed, "Wait, wait! This is a conspiracy! A conspiracy, I say! Think about it. Master Shi Xuan's extraordinarily talented in pill dao! How old is this kid? How could he possibly have defeated Master Shi Xuan? This a trap carefully designed by the Eternal Sacred Land to set up my master!"

The man had to be Shi Xuan's attendant. He hopped and hollered like the court jester, trying to overturn the bet.

But Yan Qingsang wasn't going to let that slide. "Sounds like you're going back on your bet. Be my guest! See if the heavens make you pay! How dare you call this a trap!? Is there a brain in that empty head of yours? How could Shao Yuan have set up your master? Do you think he foresaw how your master was going to brag and planned the bet beforehand? Do you honestly think that's possible??"

He was no pushover either. He'd heard about Elder Zimu's defeat and how it'd driven him to death from an inner demon. He'd quite wanted Jiang Chen to give Shi Xuan a taste of the latter's own medicine.

Jiang Chen hadn't disappoint. He completed the Flame of Vengeance and more importantly, completely shredded Shi Xuan's dignity.

The moment Shi Xuan lost, his fate was sealed as Jiang Chen's pill slave, an utter catastrophe for someone as prideful as Shi Xuan. Of course he couldn't accept it.

"I don't care about all that nonsense," the middle-aged man persisted. "I just know that no young genius in Myriad Abyss can beat Master Shi Xuan in pill dao. The Flora Sacred Land denies the validity of this bet!"

Shi Xuan couldn't change his mind himself; naturally others had to do it for him. They didn't care if they appeared base or embarrassed themselves in the process. The Flora Sacred Land couldn't afford to lose Shi Xuan. Their foundations wouldn't be impacted that much, but their development in pill dao would suffer greatly.

Jiang Chen wasn't surprised by their reaction at all. He smiled. "You know how a heavenly oath works, Shi Xuan. Feel free to let your people argue you out of it. The heavenly law is inescapable. You don't want to try your luck."

Shi Xuan trembled with fury. He'd never been humiliated by his opponents like this in the past decades. He'd always been the one doing the humiliating, and he greatly enjoyed seeing his victims breaking down.

And now, retribution was here.

He was fully experiencing the despair and pain he'd once put his enemies through.

All eyes were on Shi Xuan, their gaze glinting with all manners of emotions. Some were delighted by his misery. Some lamented his fate. Others pitied him. And of course, there were those who wanted him to suffer more.

“You should admit your defeat, Daoist Shi Xuan. This is the unwritten rule of the pill dao world for many years. Besides, you’re bound by the heavenly oath.”

“That’s right. Don’t try to get out of this, fellow daoist. If the heavenly law senses your reluctance and punishes you, you’ll be in serious trouble.”

There were indeed such precedents. Shi Xuan didn’t dare repeat the mistakes of his forebearers. However, the middle-aged man refused to stop raising a ruckus.

“Enough!” Ziju Min snapped with a frown. “Just be frank if you can’t take the loss, Shi Xuan. Have this clown shut up. We feel ashamed for the Flora Sacred Land even if you don’t find him an embarrassment.”

When Elder Zimu lost to Shi Xuan, he’d also been angry to the point of madness, but he’d never questioned the result.

Shi Xuan, on the other hand, was dragging his heels to admit defeat. Of course people would disapprove of his reaction.

After all, the match had been an honest one. Nobody had cheated. Everyone was willing to offer their endorsement. Many criticized Shi Xuan for his reaction while some tried to placate him.

They knew the conflict could be traced back to the past, when Elder Zimu had lost to Shi Xuan. What’d happen next was clear.

If Shi Xuan went back on his word, it’d be an insult to everyone and even a show of disrespect to the rules of the pill dao world. It was the most fundamental principle to live with one’s defeat.

Shi Xuan couldn’t be more regretful with how things had turned out. Why had he let his greed get the better of him? Why had he lusted after the Taiyi Skymender Pill and ended up in the young man’s trap?

He regretted making the ridiculous bet at the young man’s prompting. He could’ve refused it on the basis that their stakes weren’t on the same level. But his overconfidence and pride had kept him quiet.

It was too late for him to argue now. What was done was done.

What he wouldn’t give to go back in time and take the first option proposed, to admit cheating in his match with Elder Zimu! That’d be a much better fate than the one awaiting him. Now, his dignity was the least of his concern. He was no longer a free person.

There was no pill for regret in this world.

His expression clouded with dejection, contorted with rage, and an overwhelming sense of despair.

“Fine, I concede. I’d been unrivaled in the pill dao world. I didn’t expect today’s match to be my downfall. What a mess...”

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1737: A Complete Change of Perception

Shi Xuan's tone was bitter and desperate. No matter how cunning and confident he'd been, no matter how much respect he'd garnered, he had no choice but to admit defeat.

He was a determined man. Given what'd happened, he recognized that the only thing he could do now to preserve his dignity was to commit suicide.

For him however, his dignity had never outweighed his life. He believed that one should always live to fight another day.

The thought placated him. He approached Jiang Chen with an impassive expression and dropped down to one knee. "Master, Shi Xuan hereby submits myself to you as a pill slave."

The pill sovereign's submission was more shocking than Jiang Chen's display of the True Fires of Ninety Nine.

Shi Xuan surrenders??

Many pill dao experts of the Eternal Sacred Land wept, tears streaming down their face. Sixty years after Elder Zimu's death, the elder could finally rest in peace. The sacred land had avenged him. Though Shi Xuan was still alive, his fate was even more humiliating than Elder Zimu's death.

Elder Zimu had at least died with his dignity intact. Shi Xuan was going to live the rest of his life in shame.

High emotion thrummed through the three primes. They couldn't believe their eyes. Who would've thought that Shao Yuan really be able to complete the mission?

What was more, the young man had made Shi Xuan his pill slave! Not even the three primes could think of a more satisfying way outcome.

They didn't care if the Flora Sacred Land would be offended. After all, that hadn't stopped Flora from making Eternal their enemy all those years ago. Besides, in terms of absolute strength, Eternal was far more influential than the Flora.

Flora had held a dominant position solely because of their foundation in pill dao. Many factions were unwilling to get on their bad side as a result. That had spoiled them, thinking that every other sacred land should submit to their whims and needs.

The two other Flora pill dao sovereigns were livid. One of them cupped his hands at the first prime. "First Prime, we came all the way from the Flora Sacred Land. Is this how you treat your guests?"

The first prime maintained a polite smile. "Daoist Zhou, there's nothing wrong with the way we treat our guests. The wager was merely for entertainment. No one expected things to escalate to this point. Besides, there's always a winner and a loser in a pill dao match. Is the Flora Sacred Land unable to take a defeat?"

They were indeed. Or, rather, they couldn't afford to lose Shi Xuan. They'd be blamed for returning to home without him. They couldn't possibly tell their primes that their most extraordinary pill dao master had been confiscated by the Eternal Sacred Land, could they?

"This is his whole life we're talking about here, First Prime," argued the old man surnamed Zhou. "Since it's a friendly match, it should end in a friendly way. Their stakes didn't match at all, with one betting on his life and the other betting a pill dao recipe. The uneven forfeit should render this match invalid."

The first prime shook her head. She didn't want to waste her breath. "If we forced Shi Xuan to make the bet, we'd let things slide. But he agreed to this. You may think you have good intentions, Daoist Zhou, but you're damaging Shi Xuan's reputation. The Eternal Sacred Land will not back down in this matter."

When Shi Xuan had suppressed Elder Zimu and mocked the late elder, dooming him to death with every move, Flora certainly hadn't showed any mercy. There was no way that Eternal was going to void the arrangement and let Shi Xuan off the hook. The humiliation they'd once suffered was still fresh on their mind.

"Have some mercy, First Prime. We'll owe you a great favor and we won't forget about it," the old man persisted.

The first prime frowned. "Enough. If people can just take back their word as they wish, what's the meaning of a bet then? I believe we've done nothing wrong here."

Shi Xuan had sworn an oath of his own accord, which he had now no choice but to honor. He could escape servitude only if Jiang Chen simply wanted to humiliate him and didn't intend to take Shi Xuan as his pill slave, but that plainly wasn't the case.

"Can't you make an exception, First Prime?"

"An exception?" The first prime scoffed. "Why didn't you make an exception for Elder Zimu? Why didn't you show him mercy to maintain our friendship? You were the one who made us your worst enemy. We're simply returning the favor."

The first prime presented a powerful image as she made her argument.

The old man was rendered speechless. He knew that when all was said and done, they didn't have the moral high ground here. Shi Xuan's fate was set in stone.

Shi Xuan shook his head and went up to his companions with a pale face, muttering something soundlessly. They'd learned from having their messages intercepted and opted for a different method of communication.

In the end, he waved his hand at his compatriots, seemingly determined to stay as a pill slave.

Zhou fell silent. It was clear from his brooding expression that he wasn't taking the outcome well, but he couldn't say anything when Shi Xuan had given up himself. They were in the Eternal Sacred Land. If they made a scene, they'd join Shi Xuan in being kept here.

Someone laughed loudly. "Congratulations to the Eternal Sacred Land for not only winning the match, but also gaining a competent pill slave!"

His words started a chain reaction. One by one, people congratulated the Eternal Sacred Land. Those from the Flora Sacred Land watched in absolute silence.

Such was the way of the pill dao world. Anyone could fall from grace anytime.

Take Shi Xuan as an example, he'd made a name for himself when he was a young man, and he'd sailed through to success without difficulty until now. Yet unexpectedly, he'd lost everything when he'd reached just a hundred years old.

"The bet is over, Daoist Ziju. Would you mind giving us some information about the Taiyi Skymender Pill? It's what we came here for."

Ziju Min was very pleased to hear this.

"The Taiyi Skymender Pill was developed by our genius, Shao Yuan. No one's more qualified to introduce the pill than he.

"Come on, Shao Yuan! Let's hear from you!" The other participants prompted in unison, determined to get an answer.

Having just defeated Shi Xuan, there was no doubt that he'd been the one who invented the pill. He definitely wasn't just a red herring that Eternal had brought out. Who else could it be?

Jiang Chen had cemented his place in the pill dao world after the match.

"Since the beginning of time, the most difficult obstacle for a cultivator to overcome is the threshold between great emperor and empyrean," he began with a smile. "Only less than one out of a hundred is able to ascend to empyrean realm. The Taiyi Skymender Pill aims to address that issue."

Jiang Chen elaborated on the basics. He'd always had a silver tongue. Presenting the pill wasn't a difficult task, not to mention that he knew the pill like the back of his hand.

The listeners weren't fully convinced of the effects of the pill, but he didn't try to change their mind. Many of them had a pill themselves. As long as they weren't spectacularly blind, they'd be able to tell that the pill was legitimate.

"We now know about the pill's effects, young Shao Yuan, and we know the main ingredient is the Taiyi Dragonscale Fruit. Would you mind telling us what the complementary ingredients are?" This speaker had crossed a line.

"The ingredients aren't that complicated," said Jiang Chen. "However, please don't assume that knowing the ingredients will be enough for you to refine the pill. Without mastering the refining method and process, you're better off not knowing anything."

"Don't try to scare us of, young man. We just want to know what the ingredients are. We aren't scared of failures."

In truth, Jiang Chen was cautioning them against experimenting without restraint and wasting ingredients.

The ingredients, especially the Taiyi Dragonscale Fruit, were scarce. It'd be a disaster if they were wasted. Moreover, Eternal wouldn't be able to acquire any Taiyi Dragonscale Fruit if everyone gave it their go at refining.

Therefore, he wasn't going to tell them anything.

"Please don't think about refining the pill yourselves. I can guarantee that you won't be able to refine it even if you know the ingredients. It's highly technical. One single wrong step can lead to failure!"

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1738: Talk of Marriage

Jiang Chen was hardly exaggerating.

However, the others thought he wanted to hog something precious. It was understandable, since it wasn't reasonable to expect the valuable pill recipe to be shared for free.

No one in attendance was nearly so naïve. They'd made the request in order to guilt Jiang Chen into agreeing to what came next.

"Young Shao Yuan, we all know that the Taiyi Skymender Pill is your exclusive secret. We're not going to push you for it. However, can we ask you to visit when convenient to refine the pill for us? We're be happy to pay whatever fee you ask, as long as it's not too outrageous!"

This was what most factions really wanted.

They had Taiyi Dragonscale Fruits, but no idea how to turn them into pills. If Shao Yuan could do that for them, their objective of getting more pills would still be accomplished in the end.

Such a service was common in the pill dao world. Obviously, it was very lucrative for the master doing the refining. Most didn't refuse these requests unless they were already of paramount importance in their own factions.

There was no need to get paid if one had a bevy of resources at beck and call. Jiang Chen wasn't quite at that point yet. This proposal was attractive indeed. The monetary aspect was actually secondary. Rendering this service would allow him to expand his circle of connections to the entirety of the Ten Divine Nations. Knowing people in the high places would be advantageous to his future plans.

In the short term, they would be useful in his bid for Huang'er. In the long term, they could help him find clues about the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement. Not having enough friends made his reach quite limited in Myriad Abyss when it came to anything.

Therefore, he didn't outright refuse the request.

"I'm not an unreasonable person," he smiled. "I can understand everyone's strong feelings on the matter. If I happen to have time to travel Myriad Abyss and pass by your locale, I won't disappoint you."

This promise was made without the approval of the three primes, who could scarcely make decisions on the young man's behalf anymore considering his strength and achievement.

They were none too pleased about it, but they weren't in a position to arbitrarily reprimand a genius of this caliber. It was better for them to take good care of their talent. What if he flew off elsewhere one day?

All nine of the other divine nations would be overjoyed to have him—even Flora Divine Nation.

Shi Xuan was remarkable, but Shao Yuan was clearly superior. Recognition of this fact cleared away the three primes' unhappiness.

The others' impression of Jiang Chen was much improved by his acquiescence. The young man wasn't so callous after all!

It seemed that his provocations and insults of the Flora Sacred Land and Shi Xuan had been entirely due to the enmity between Flora and Eternal, and not his own abrasive personality.

"You're not just saying nice things to dismiss us, are you, young friend?" someone joked.

"That's right, we're definitely looking forward to your visit."

Jiang Chen smiled. "My promises are set in stone. I won't shirk any chances that do arise, you have my word."

There was no need to doubt his sincerity after this second round of affirmation.

The Skymender Festival proceeded in a very relaxed atmosphere. Because of his Taiyi Skymender Pill, Jiang Chen inadvertently became the highlight of the festival.

In pill dao discussions, he often made astonishingly insightful comments and conversed easily with the other pill dao giants as equals. There was no hint of any shyness or uncomfortability that a first-timer would exhibit. He was a veritable veteran.

Even Ziju Min found this rather surprising. Some geniuses were born for momentous occasions; Shao Yuan was undoubtedly one of them.

Over ninety percent of the pill dao giants of Myriad Abyss were in attendance today. He himself would have trouble holding a conversation with some of them, since they were on an entirely different level far above him.

And yet, Shao Yuan could answer them effortlessly. His knowledge in pill dao appeared almost commensurate with these learned masters.

Jiang Chen's exceptional performance spared Ziju Min a great deal of embarrassment. His own pill dao knowledge wasn't quite sufficient to hold his own among his more distinguished peers.

When the festival was almost at its conclusion, the Eternal Sacred Land 'accidentally' released another piece of inside news.

Eternal was researching a 'Crowning Empyrean Pill' behind the scenes. Reportedly, it was a pill that enabled empyrean experts to ascend a level unconditionally!

There was widespread uproar at this explosive announcement. Many attendees' waning interest was piqued once more with renewed vigor as they asked excitedly after the pill.

“Elder Ziju, is the Crowning Empyrean Pill in or past the theoretical stage?”

“Isn’t it too preposterous to give a free level to an empyrean cultivator? Elder Ziju, has the Eternal Sacred Land discovered some sort of primordial secret realm?”

Ziju Min smiled. “To tell you the truth, it’s entirely unrelated to any secret realm. The pill is definitely past the theoretical stage though, and it might very well come out into the open one day soon.”

The Crowning Empyrean Pill had already been realized, though only a few of the most important executives knew of this. The Eternal Sacred Land had no intention to release the actual pill at present.

The Taiyi Skymender Pill was in the limelight now, and the Crowning Empyrean Pill would only distract from its fellow. Only after the enthusiasm faded away from the first could the second be pushed out. Eternal wanted to strategically maximize its influence.

Ziju Min’s words caused several of the oldest pill dao masters to shift in their seats. They knew better than anyone that Myriad Abyss was a blank slate when it came to pills of that variety. The pill dao industry would be turned upside down by the appearance of this new pill.

Perhaps the Flora Sacred Land’s title of being foremost in pill dao would be overtaken in only a few years!

The pill dao giants from the divine nations had rather mixed feelings about all of this. They were filled with curiosity and doubt as they instinctively thought that the Eternal Sacred Land was bluffing in order to create further momentum for itself. However, Ziju Min’s down-to-earth manner made the bluff significantly more believable.

The confidently assured smile on Shao Yuan’s face when they turned to him though...

“Could the Crowning Empyrean Pill be real as well? Is it once again related to Shao Yuan?”

The prospect sent shockwaves through everyone’s hearts.

If it was real, the Crowning Empyrean Pill would be far more meaningful than the Taiyi Skymender Pill. Which pill was superior couldn’t be strictly said, but common sense said that the former was better and at a higher level.

Could such a pill exist?

Though the festival was about to end soon, the guests no longer wished to leave. Many were finding excuses to stay a few days longer in the Eternal Sacred Land. Their goal was clear: they wanted to find out more about the new pill.

The most direct way to do so was to visit Shao Yuan. Already, people plotted how to meet the young genius in private. Jiang Chen had become a hotcake in the public eye. Because of his youth, it was possible to use him as a point of attack.

Cup in hand, Ziju Min stood up. “Fellow daoists,” he boomed, “thank you for coming to the Skymender Festival. Please excuse any dissatisfaction caused by our hasty preparations. My speech signifies the conclusion of the festival, but before that, there is something else that I would like to ask the first prime to announce.”

Everyone was stunned once more. They'd become most sensitive to anything the Eternal Sacred Land said. The Crowning Empyrean Pill had been startling enough.

What other surprise was in store?

"The announcement has to do with Shao Yuan." Ziju Min smiled serenely as he looked at the young man.

Jiang Chen returned the smile, realizing what the senior was getting at.

Ziju Min glanced towards the first prime in turn.

The smile upon the first prime's face was very placid. She gazed upon Jiang Chen with great approval, unwilling to let go of the prized asset of a youth before her.

"This was supposed to have been a private matter, but we feel it is very important to seal the good news in stone." The woman glanced in House Yan's direction with good humor.

The patriarch felt rather uncomfortable at being the temporary center of attention. Why had House Yan become the focus?

"Patriarch Yan, the announcement relates to your house as well."

The patriarch blinked. "First Prime, I am too foolish to understand. Please enlighten me."

"Yes, we simply must have your support in this as well. Young Shao Yuan stayed with House Yan for a time, yes? He has some lingering affection for your house still, especially toward a certain daughter of yours. If you would be so kind to give her hand?"

House Yan's patriarch colored immediately. His heart started racing. Yan Wanjun's outstretched hand trembled as well, the liquid within his goblet sloshing about.

They had guessed at what was going to come next.

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

Chapter 1739: At Each Other's Throat

Jiang Chen remained impassive. He was unsurprised by Ziju Min and the first prime's decision. They hadn't told him before the announcement, but that didn't matter.

Today was the day that all his prior work came to fruition. Finally, the Eternal Sacred Land was showing him its public support. The faction's attitude was categorically clear-cut rather than fuzzy and uncertain.

The complexions of House Xiahou's attendees darkened. Xiahou Zong was the worst affected; his face clouded over with malevolence. Though the first prime hadn't named the girl, he knew instinctively who it would be.

After recovering from his bewilderment, House Yan's patriarch swallowed slightly.

"Who are you talking about from House Yan, First Prime?" he asked, though he already knew the answer.

The first prime smiled leisurely, then looked toward Huang'er. "Which girl from your younger generation can surpass Yan Qinghuang?"

"Her?" The patriarch didn't know what he was supposed to feel. Was he supposed to be happy? Uncomfortable? Or worried? There was a bit of all of that.

It would be spectacular if a genius like Shao Yuan could become House Yan's son-in-law. Could the house fend off House Xiahou's fury with its current strength though?

Everyone knew that Yan Qinghuang had been long promised to Xiahou Zong as a cultivation vessel. A shameful matter for House Yan, to be sure, but not a promise that could be easily broken.

But the Eternal Sacred Land far surpassed House Xiahou in prominence and power. No matter how dominant House Xiahou was, could it defy the sacred land of its own nation?

Though the patriarch knew the facts, he was nevertheless hesitant. A battle between great powers often meant suffering of the meek. If House Xiahou were forced to bend its knee, it would likely take out its anger upon House Yan instead.

There was certainly a long track record of that happening. Thus, the patriarch was very much troubled by the impasse.

Yan Wanjun brightened. "This is a wonderful," he proclaimed loudly. "Shao Yuan's talent is unrivaled, as peerless as Yan Qinghuang's beauty! They are a perfect match for each other. What other couple under heaven can claim the same?"

He was willing to take any alternative that would preserve his granddaughter from being ruined.

House Xiahou, however, had a different opinion.

One of the house elders interjected coldly, "Yan Wanjun, House Yan has indeed never known the worth of an oath. Your son had an arranged marriage with House Xiahou all those years ago, but scorned her for a girl from the outside world. Yan Qinghuang has been promised to our Xiahou Zong as a cultivation vessel, no? Are you planning on breaking your word again?"

Neither pact had been consensual and had been products of helpless compromise. Because of House Xiahou's dominance, House Yan had no outlet or recourse for the wrongs done to it.

Alas, their inability to take action was being used to their detriment.

Yan Wanjun was rendered speechless, but Yan Qingsang was undeterred. "My uncle's marriage was foisted upon him, was it not?" he protested loudly. "So too was the affair with Huang'er. You shoved it onto us with your domineering attitude. Yes, House Xiahou has been strong the past few years, but Eternal Divine Nation has its own laws. Putting my uncle aside, do you dare claim what I said wasn't true? Do you have any documentation or proof?"

As a disciple of the Eternal Sacred Land, Yan Qingsang had much more self-confidence. He could seriously contend even when faced with House Xiahou in person.

On the other hand, Xiahou Zong was quite upset. He sneered coldly at Yan Qingsang. "Who do you think you are? Don't believe yourself to be a genius just because you wear the Eternal Sacred Land's uniform."

Yan Qingsang roared with laughter. "Stop being so pretentious, Xiahou Zong. We are in the Eternal Sacred Land and I am one of its disciples. I have every right to speak out against you and your black house."

Xiahou Zong's eyes darted about like a viper, sweeping across Yan Qingsang to land on Jiang Chen instead.

"Kid, your name is Shao Yuan, correct?" His tone embodied the height of arrogance.

Jiang Chen returned total impassivity. There was no emotion in his gaze back at Xiahou Zong.

"Yan Qinghuang belongs to me. That was decided from the start. If you want her, you'll be accepting used goods. Now? I advise you to give up right this moment." Xiahou Zong wasn't the kind of man that hid his true colors, even in the Eternal Sacred Land.

Upon hearing the phrase 'used goods', Jiang Chen frowned a little. He radiated cold murder in Xiahou Zong's direction.

"Xiahou Zong, did you know that I haven't particularly hated anyone since coming here to Eternal Divine Nation?" Jiang Chen declared coolly. "However, I abhor you with every fiber of my being."

"So what?" Xiahou Zong had only disdain for his enemy. "There are plenty of people that hate or envy me. They're either dead or don't even dare speak in my presence. You'll just be one more on the list."

"Really? I can tell you that everyone I've hated in the past is dead." Jiang Chen uttered a pointed retort.

"So you've hated only trash? Got it." Xiahou Zong became icier.

"Perhaps they were trash. You aren't the first Xiahou to get the tag, you know." A strange smile hung on Jiang Chen's face.

Xiahou Zong stirred when he heard this revelation. The others from House Xiahou also stilled. They instinctively felt that Shao Yuan was getting at something. A forgotten incident was recalled.

Xiahou Ying shrieked. "Brother, is he saying he killed Xiahou Xi?!"

She was the quickest to react. She knew Shao Yuan had come from the Bluesmoke Isles and had participated in the ancient jade festival there.

Xiahou Xi had died in Bluesmoke around the same time, his murderer still at large. The conundrum relating to his death had perplexed House Xiahou for quite some time now. So this kid was responsible for that, eh?

Xiahou Zong raised an eyebrow, glaring daggers at Jiang Chen. "Is that true?"

"If that's what you'd like to take it as, sure." Jiang Chen shrugged. Xiahou Xi wasn't the first scion of his house that he had killed. He'd slain Xiahou Jing back in the human domain as well.

"I see, I see, I see!" Xiahou Zong smirked in fury. "You've got balls, I'll give you that. There hasn't been someone like you for a long time in Eternal Divine Nation. I'll remember you."

"Please do. Until the day you die, I will be your biggest nightmare."

Many respected Jiang Chen's courage and character. It had been many years since someone in the younger generation dared speak this way to Xiahou Zong. This Shao Yuan seemed positively fearless. Most importantly, Xiahou Zong was at a disadvantage in the war of words.

Jiang Chen smiled with indifference, ignoring Xiahou Zong entirely in favor of a cupped fist toward House Yan's patriarch. "Patriarch Yan, I've been lucky to make your house's acquaintance in the past. In fact, one might say we're reasonably familiar. I'd like to make our relationship even closer by marrying Yan Qinghuang. Will you accommodate my wishes?"

House Yan's patriarch was faced with a dilemma.

Yan Wanjun's lips trembled as he held back what he wanted to say.

It wasn't the right place for any neutral factions to express their opinions. None wanted to anger House Xiahou for no reason.

Though Shao Yuan was quite brilliant, his displayed talent was as of yet limited to pill dao. There wasn't anyone who could come close to Xiahou Zong in the entire nation, much less challenge his position.

Did Shao Yuan really have that potential?

The Eternal Sacred Ground was definitely stronger than House Xiahou, but would it back Shao Yuan at any cost?

Everyone had witnessed House Xiahou's meteoric rise in recent years. Though it was unlikely the house could challenge the sacred land, it was better to steer clear of a faction that was gathering in strength.

The divine nation's neutral factions couldn't take sides at this juncture. External factions had an even harder time injecting themselves into a nation's internal affairs. It wasn't their place to speak.

The Yan patriarch sighed. "Shao Yuan, I appreciate your talent and skill. I think you're a great match for Huang'er. Alas, House Yan is in a very difficult spot regarding this. I'd like you to sort out your differences with House Xiahou before I agree."

Jiang Chen was somewhat disappointed in the patriarch's hesitation. This would've been a perfect opportunity for House Yan to take shelter under the sacred land's wing, if not for its leader's indecisiveness in times of conflict.

The patriarch wanted to avoid angering both sides by waiting for the conflict to be resolved. However, doing so would also appease neither side. Jiang Chen finally understood why House Yan was in decline. Its patriarch was insufficiently audacious to get anywhere productive.

The smile gradually disappeared from his face. He inclined his head. "Patriarch Yan, many guests are gathered here today. I would like to take this opportunity to ask for the hand of House Yan's Yan Qinghuang in marriage."

He would force the patriarch to take a side, whether the latter wished to or not.

Jiang Chen wanted more than anything to make a commotion here. By doing so, he could take advantage of the chaos. If his temporary popularity was allowed to die down and Xiahou Zong took away Huang'er by force, wouldn't all his planning have been for naught?

He couldn't allow that to happen.

Ziju Min smiled faintly. "Patriarch Yan, Shao Yuan is sure to include many extravagant gifts in his betrothal gifts. The Taiyi Skymender Pill, the Crowning Empyrean Pill in the future, and many other pill-related resources are just what House Yan needs. If I were you, I wouldn't pause a second."

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1740: Marry Only Him

Ziju Min had made some hyperbolic statements, but he hadn't strayed away from the truth. It'd be a great shame for House Yan to lose a pill dao genius like Shao Yuan.

Returning Huang'er to House Xiahou would only temporarily appease the latter. There was no guarantee that House Xiahou wouldn't trouble them again. On the other hand, marrying Huang'er off to Shao Yuan would bring them many benefits. Even a fool would choose that instead.

However, House Yan was bound to draw House Xiahou's ire for letting Shao Yuan take Huang'er, and the retribution wasn't something House Yan could survive.

The patriarch fell silent, at a loss of what to say.

Yan Wanjun was disappointed by the patriarch's inability to take a stand when it mattered. He looked at his granddaughter apologetically. Overwhelmed by shame and regret, he could barely meet her sorrowful eyes.

"Huang'er, the genius Shao Yuan has expressed his deep feelings for you. What do you think?"

Yan Wanjun was shamefaced as soon as he posed the question. It was the first time he'd ever asked for his granddaughter's own opinion.

Huang'er smiled wryly. "You finally ask about what I want, grandfather. Do you know that this is the first time the senior executives of the family have treated me like a person? You've never cared about what I thought. You never considered my feelings. You never asked if I was willing!"

Yan Wanjun flushed a deep red, his hands fidgeting. He couldn't face his granddaughter.

The patriarch had no comeback either. He knew that Huang'er was unwilling. House Xiahou had imprisoned her parents and now they wanted her to be a cultivation vessel. How could she possibly be accepting of that?

And yet, no one in the family had ever asked about her opinion. They knew what her answer would be. Why waste their breath? It was easier to just ignore things.

Yan Wanjun's eyes were ringed with red as he croaked, "Then tell us what you want without worry. Grandfather has been a coward my entire life, but I'll take a stand for you today! Fate has treated you unfairly. I'm going to fight for your fair treatment today even at the cost of my life!"

Yan Wanjun had always felt guilty about not fighting for Yan Qinghuang. He'd given her up in order to protect Yan Qingsang, his only hope for passing down his legacy. He'd chosen to devote his remaining years to paving a path for his grandson.

He'd chosen grandson over granddaughter.

Yan Qingsang was now a genius of the Eternal Sacred Land and was on his way to a bright future. Even if Yan Wanjun died at this moment, he'd be just fine with Shao Yuan by his side. There was nothing holding the elder back now.

The regret and anger he'd suppressed over the years were slowly rekindled. He couldn't stand seeing the patriarch being too cowardly to even make a decision.

"Elder Wanjun, you—" started a shocked patriarch.

"Don't try to sway me otherwise," Yan Wanjun boomed. "I've never wronged House Yan. Over the years, I've listened to you and held steadfast to the bigger picture, but how has the clan treated me? My son and daughter-in-law are in the Boundless Prison. My granddaughter is promised off as a cultivation vessel. My only grandson didn't even receive targeted attention from the family. How do I focus on the big picture under these circumstances?"

He spoke from the bottom of his heart, quickly and passionately. "I'm not an unfeeling monster. I'm of flesh and blood. I want to protect my children as well. Now that I'm old and have contributed everything to the family, let me be willful for once. I've wronged Huang'er and her parents, but no more! I'm going to win her a chance for a new life even if all I can give her is the freedom to make a decision!"

The patriarch gaped. He didn't expect Elder Wanjun, of all people, to make such a statement. The elder had always had the family's interest at heart.

A Xiahou elder scoffed. "You clearly have troubles keeping your family under control, Patriarch Yan. Both the youths and the elders in your clan go against your will. How pathetic for a patriarch to end up like this..."

Yan Wanjun glared at him and snapped, "Shut up! Stop trying to start drama! I've never thought about troubling the patriarch, and you're not in any place to criticize House Yan. Let me tell you one thing: there's no written contract stating that Huang'er is to be gifted to House Xiahou! Even if there is, I deny its existence! If you want to take my granddaughter away, you'll have to do it over my dead body!"

He cupped his hands at the patriarch. "I mean no disrespect. Please grant my wish this once. I won't complain even if you banish both me and Huang'er from the family."

Huang'er's chest tightened. If she hadn't learned to stay strong in front of other people, her face would've been covered in tears.

For years, she'd been ignored and overlooked. She'd almost never received any support from the family. She'd never felt such strong love. Her grandfather's unyielding support and protectiveness melted the ice encasing her heart.

She'd always been a soft-hearted and considerate person. Despite her cursed fate, she never hated her family. She simply felt distant from them and never deeply attached to them. Now, she realized that her grandfather still loved her and was willing to protect her at the cost of his life.

She didn't know if he'd follow through with his words, but she was content, the grievances in her heart dissolving.

“Tell us what you want in front of all the guests, Huang’er. Be brave. I’ll stand by you!” Yan Wanjun had thrown all reservation out of the window.

Not even Jiang Chen had anticipated the dramatic change to the elder’s attitude. He said gently, “Please tell the world what your decision is, Miss Huang’er.”

She gazed at him with loving eyes. Her silence spoke volumes, but there were things she wanted to express that she couldn’t convey with her gaze.

“I, Yan Qinghuang, have come to know and love Sir Shao Yuan through an exchange of music. I wish to stay by Sir Shao Yuan for the rest of my days. Not even death do us part!” she announced firmly.

Huang’er had never been a timid person. She wasn’t going to act like a typical bashful girl. She was bold in love and had never shied away from expressing her love. She simply hadn’t met someone who inspired that bravery.

But a hero came to her when she was at her most vulnerable, and saved her life and soul. She’d fallen for that extraordinary man with all her heart at that moment. There was no reason for her to hold back now.

Silence descended after her explicit declaration. Everyone looked at her with tremendous shock. They’d thought that Shao Yuan’s love was one-sided, that he’d fallen for Yan Qinghuang because of her unparalleled grace, but patently that wasn’t the case.

They must have developed feelings for each other when Shao Yuan was still in House Yan.

The crowd peered at Xiahou Zong with a hint of mockery. She wasn’t yet his, but everyone knew she was to be his cultivation vessel.

And yet, Yan Qinghuang had declared that she wanted to spend her life with Shao Yuan until the end of time. There was nothing more insulting to Xiahou Zong. He hadn’t technically been jilted, but it was pretty much the same.

Xiahou Zong’s face contorted into a scowl.

Meanwhile, Xiahou Ying had predicted this outcome. She muttered angrily beneath her breath, cursing at Huang’er.

Those from the Eternal Sacred Land had been worried that Yan Qinghuang didn’t return Jiang Chen’s feelings. Ziju Min was especially glad to hear her response.

He put his hands together and laughed heartily. “They make a perfect match, and they’re already in love! What a wonderful love story. It would be shameful if someone forced them to part.”

He made a good point. Many of the guests nodded in agreement. Those from other nations would rather take Jiang Chen’s side than House Xiahou’s.

In their eyes, the young man was more valuable than Xiahou Zong. Besides, the young woman from House Yan had made herself clear. She wouldn’t marry anyone but Shao Yuan. Theirs was a match made in heaven. It was human nature to want a happy ending.

People preferred seeing a couple living happily ever after rather than forced to part by outsiders. They also sympathized with Jiang Chen and Huang'er and disapproved of Xiahou Zong's forceful attitude.

Xiahou Zong finally managed to suppress his anger in the end. He threw Huang'er a brief glance before shifting his frigid gaze to Jiang Chen.

"I don't know how you seduced the wench, but my possession is mine unless I discard her myself. I don't care who you are and how talented you are in pill dao. The only fate befitting a man who dares take what is rightfully mine... is death!"