

Three Realms 1761

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

Chapter 1761: Exit From Closed Door Cultivation!

Ziju Min mused silently. He hadn't paid that much attention to Yan Qingsang and only remembered the young man as part of the package deal from when Jiang Chen joined the sacred land.

He didn't look down on the young man, but given Yan Qingsang's level of talent and fame, it'd be close to impossible for him to gain one of the remaining four spots.

But Yan Qingsang had surprised Ziju Min in ascending to empyrean realm. "Qingsang, your past self would have no chance of participating in the sword competition. Even if you managed to get in, you'd end up being everyone's punching bag."

"Yes," admitted Yan Qingsang. Before meeting Jiang Chen, he wouldn't even be able to secure a spot in House Yan, let alone in the sacred land. Now, however, he was a changed man.

He may not be experienced enough compared to his peers in the sacred land, but he was more than competent enough.

"It's remarkable that you've reached empyrean realm already. Your potential in martial dao is better than I expected. You have my support. I'll at least give you a fair chance to fight for a spot." By that, he meant a preliminary competition within the sacred land.

Ziju Min kept his promise and was a man of action. He made the arrangements immediately after giving Yan Qingsang his word.

Yan Qingsang was like a brother to Jiang Chen. Moreover, he'd ascended to empyrean realm, abruptly highlighting him amongst the younger generation. Therefore, it made sense that he'd be a strong contender for a spot, if not a sure winner.

More than a dozen geniuses were qualified to fight for the four spots. A preliminary competition was thus held.

Yan Qingsang was determined to prove himself. He fought with reckless abandon, which gave him an edge in the competition. Though it came down to the wire, he won two consecutive matches, securing one of the remaining spots.

The ten participants had been selected.

According to the rules, each faction was to submit their list of participants seven days before the sword competition. Four days later, every genius was required to go to the organizer and have their identity verified. Only after that could the organizer schedule the matches and made the necessary preparations according to the number of participants.

The sword competition was a rare event. Each divine nation put great emphasis on their respective ones. It was a precursor for the geniuses' competition a few years later, which was open to all geniuses from the Ten Divine Nations. The participants would naturally be those who outperformed their peers in each nation's competition.

Through the selection process, many geniuses would shoot to fame, and many others would fall into obscurity.

“Elder Ziju, has Shao Yuan been cultivating by the Eternal River?” The first prime asked with earnest concern.

Ziju Min nodded. “He has, and it’s been a long time. I believe he must have made great progress.”

The first prime sighed. “A few days ago, Patriarch Xiaoyao from House Xiahou came to boast about Xiahou Zong’s unparalleled talent. A fight between him and Shao Yuan is inevitable. This seat still worries about the outcome.”

Ziju Min was troubled as well. He’d always been confident in Jiang Chen, but this time was different.

Xiahou Zong stood out too much in Eternal Divine Nation. While Shao Yuan had proven himself in the trial of Nine Winding Caves, there was still a large gap between the two.

Shao Yuan had only ascended to empyrean realm a short while ago. He could at most reach second level empyrean during this short period of time. He wouldn’t fare well against an intermediate empyrean genius like Xiahou Zong.

“House Xiahou is filled with fame-seekers. Xiahou Zong is talented, but too arrogant for his own good. Perhaps that will be Shao Yuan’s only chance.”

The first prime nodded. “The list has been submitted. The participants have to be verified tomorrow. Shao Yuan won’t forget to show up, will he?”

“He knows the rules,” boomed Ziju Min. “It’ll be unacceptable for him to require our reminder.”

If Shao Yuan didn’t come out in time for the verification after they submitted the list, his spot would go to waste, and the sacred land would be subjected to mockery.

“Let’s wait. He’ll show up before our departure tomorrow.” Ziju Min didn’t sound that certain.

Early the next morning, the geniuses attending the competition showed up at the meeting spot. Ziju Min was getting anxious as Shao Yuan was still absent.

They would’ve gone to notify Jiang Chen if they could, but they knew he wouldn’t be late without a good reason. There was only one explanation: he was unable to leave because of cultivation.

The first prime was a little frustrated. “Elder Ziju, is Shao Yuan still not here?”

The young geniuses exchanged a look and realized that they were one man short. “Shao Yuan is missing, isn’t he?” one of them pointed out sarcastically. “Who does he think he is? Are we going to wait for him at time like this?”

“Agreed. He doesn’t consider the group at all.”

Yan Qingsang’s eyes twitched, but he remained silent. He didn’t want to waste his breath arguing with these people. He knew better than anyone what the competition meant to Jiang Chen. His brother would never back down now. He would come.

“We can’t wait any longer, First Prime. What if we’re late to the verification? We’re all going to be affected.”

It was rather Gan Ning who huffed. “Does the Eternal Sacred Land not have the privilege to be a little late? What are you lot yammering about?”

Upset, the genius scoffed and retorted, “If I remember right, Gan Ning, you have beef with Shao Yuan, didn’t you? Why are you defending him now? Have you been beaten into submission?”

“I’m just telling the truth,” Gan Ning responded indifferently.

As they were arguing, Ziju Min’s eyes flicked to the north. A ray of light streaked toward them like a shooting star, its speed so quick it couldn’t be caught by the human eye.

A figure landed before them in the blink of an eye. It was Jiang Chen.

“Three primes, Elder Ziju, I’ve been too focused on cultivating these days and lost track of time. I apologize for almost forgetting this important task.”

The first prime’s expression brightened. She smiled. “We were worried that you’d gotten into an accident and wouldn’t be able to go to the verification. This is your opportunity to make a name for yourself and win the girl. What would you say the odds of you winning are, Shao Yuan?”

“Ninety percent.” Jiang Chen wasn’t exaggerating. He was confident that he could defeat Xiahou Zong. He’d reached fourth level, entering intermediate empyrean realm.

Jiang Chen didn’t know exactly what level Xiahou Zong was at, but he was sure the man hadn’t reached advanced empyrean realm. As long as that was the case, Jiang Chen was confident that he’d be able to defeat Xiahou Zong.

His confidence bothered, rather than appealed to the young geniuses.

It was the first time the Five Great Gentlemen made an appearance together. Aside from Gan Ning, none of them had fought Jiang Chen themselves. They believed that the fight had only ended in a tie either because Gan Ning had pulled his punches, or he was just that much of a piece of trash.

The other four gentlemen didn’t think they were any lesser than Shao Yuan. In fact, they believed they far surpassed Shao Yuan in martial dao. They wouldn’t let Shao Yuan steal their thunder in the sword competition.

Jiang Chen noticed their hostility, but he didn’t react and put it out of his mind. His goal wasn’t to triumph over the other young geniuses, but to go after Xiahou Zong and take Huang’er back in an open manner. Otherwise he wouldn’t even be interested in attending the competition at all.

“Alright, we’re all here now. Let’s depart!” The first prime’s declaration prompted the group into traveling towards the capital.

Since the sword competition had been organized by the imperial family, it was naturally held in the capital, not too far from the sacred land. Jiang Chen chatted with Yan Qingsang along the way, his gait relaxed, ignoring the hostile looks cast his way.

He'd avenged the sacred land by defeating Shi Xuan at the Skymender Festival, but he knew that not everyone here would be thankful to him.

On the contrary, his rise obstructed other geniuses' path to success. There was no telling how many people had come to resent him in secret.

The group soon reached the location designated by the imperial family. The other factions were already there. Because of the delay caused by Jiang Chen, the Eternal Sacred Land was the last to arrive.

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Chapter 1762: Geniuses Gather

No one could fault the Eternal Sacred Land for being late or the last to arrive. It had always been the true ruler and foundation of the nation, enjoying a bevy of special benefits. In fact, some thought that the sacred land's tardiness was intentional in order to fully display its exclusivity.

Jiang Chen was different from the other geniuses in that he focused his consciousness inwards as to conceal his true strength. Meanwhile, his fellows showed off their power for all to see, wanting everyone to acknowledge their strength.

Since all the teams had arrived, everyone was led to a predesignated area. The emperor himself served as the host for this tournament. This was most luxurious treatment indeed. No tournament of geniuses had ever personally seen an emperor as its host before.

This emperor in particular seemed to treat the Eternal Sacred Land with great deference. "First Prime, shall we begin?" he asked with a smile.

The first prime frowned a little at the question.

In theory, the emperor had authority over the proceedings, given that the imperial family was hosting the event. The emperor's question accentuated the sacred land's dictatorial nature—a trait that was nonexistent.

She was mildly displeased at this veiled jab.

Still, no sign of her displeasure showed through in her expression. "Your Majesty," she replied coolly, "we are all guests to this tournament hosted by the imperial family. Please, go ahead and adjudicate. It's not my place to interfere."

Her words were far from biting, but her attitude was clear enough.

The emperor smiled placidly, as if he had meant no harm whatsoever moments earlier.

"Alright. We're only checking off the registry today. After that's done, all the geniuses gathered here will remain in the imperial capital until the end of the tournament."

Verifying identities was hardly a difficult task.

Yan Qingsang had become very serious immediately upon his arrival. He cast cold gazes at House Yan from time to time. There was no hatred in his eyes, but a bleak indifference instead.

The house members returned his gaze largely with hostility and disdain. They had evidently reached a consensus and concluded that Yan Wanjun had fled out because of a guilty conscience.

Understandably, they felt he should've stayed to clean up his own mess. As for the rumors about the patriarch's attempted assassination, those were universally ridiculed. Barely anyone within the house believed them anymore.

Because the house had come to a conclusion about Yan Wanjun, they bore considerable animosity towards Yan Qingsang as well. The young man was the traitor's grandson, and the cousin of the source of the house's trouble.

Jiang Chen didn't care much about House Yan. He had only one enemy in mind—House Xiahou.

Today, Xiahou Zong had clearly taken pains with his appearance. His extravagant attire helped emphasize his tall and handsome figure. He stole the attention of the crowd, and seemed naturally superior to everyone around him.

Even the Five Great Gentlemen of the Eternal Sacred Land felt themselves inferior to a certain degree.

The pressure that Xiahou Zong exerted upon every other genius of his generation was very potent. No genius from any faction dared lock eyes with him.

Everyone knew that he had refined an ocular ability and trained a powerful consciousness. Someone who angered him via a surreptitious look would be subjected to a world of pain through the reciprocal look alone.

Therefore, the younger generation was respectful to Xiahou Zong as a matter of fact. They lacked the courage to even look straight at him, much less face him.

There was one exception though—Jiang Chen. That young man's eyes had been trained on House Xiahou as soon as he entered. He wanted to commit every member of the house to memory, so that he might send them all to hell if he had the chance to.

Xiahou Zong had likewise been watching Jiang Chen in secret. However, his enemy didn't spare him a single look from start to finish. Jiang Chen seemed to think of him as nothing but air.

Xiahou Zong gathered up his strength several times, prepared to make a preemptive strike against Jiang Chen with his ocular skill. Alas, he didn't receive the chance to.

That kid is gutless through and through. He's not even brave enough to look me in the eye. The genius's ego grew all the more when he saw his enemy's evasive eyes.

The registration and verification was quickly complete. There were almost two hundred competitors.

Some geniuses from second and third rate factions were present as well, having obtained spots for themselves. Unfortunately, they were fated to serve as the backdrop for their more talented peers; it was unlikely any of them would make it into the later rounds.

After registration was over, the emperor proclaimed aloud, "Eternal Divine Nation has always had excellent geniuses. This tournament in particular has drawn together our country's best. Each of you will

become future pillars of national support! We hope that you will all do your best, and bring your best! Show us the strength of your characters.

“From now on, you are free to do what you like. You may wish to chat with, or learn from, each other. Rivals in the ring may well become friends out of it. Why not encourage each other to improve?”

The registered geniuses were no longer permitted to leave. They would need to stay here for quite a while. Just as the emperor had mentioned, free time was when they could freely intermingle with each other.

Other young geniuses appeared near Jiang Chen rather quickly. But barely any of them were curious about his martial dao potential; they were here for the singular reason of asking after his pill dao talent. Some had been present at the Skymender Festival, and had borne witness to his spectacular skill.

They all wanted to make the acquaintance of this pill dao prodigy. Perhaps they would unexpectedly get something out of it, right?

Jiang Chen had always been steady when it came to dealing with people. He neither refused them with aloofness nor received them with enthusiasm.

The Five Great Gentlemen also gathered similar crowds. However, Xiahou Zong was the most popular by far.

He towered above the crowd like a giant among normal men. There were two dozen or more young geniuses by his side, attracted to him by some kind of inborn charisma.

Yan Qingsang was extremely annoyed by what he saw.

“Those sycophants only know how to suck up to Xiahou Zong. I daresay they think everything out of him smells like roses, regardless of which end it comes from.”

Yes, Xiahou Zong was arrogant, detached, even callous. However, he had no shortage of adoring lackeys at any time. Many were overjoyed at a single look or polite comment from him, an emotion that would linger for quite a while.

While Yan Qingsang seethed, Jiang Chen felt as calm as a moonlit pool. What he saw completely reasonable. Humans naturally flocked to the strong.

Xiahou Zong was at the pinnacle of his generation. It was quite likely he would become the ruler of a territory someday. Therefore, it was a good idea to make connections with a man so destined for power. Becoming his close friend wasn't necessary, as long as one did not become his enemy. Most were more than happy enough just to make the acquaintance.

Xiahou Zong chatted with the geniuses around him with complete apathy. He wasn't interested in socializing with those he considered so far beneath him. Shao Yuan was the only topic on his mind.

The day's finally come. No amount of outside pressure will persuade me from killing you, kid! Xiahou Zong's internal monologue was filled with determination.

Suddenly, a young man from House Yan sidled over to Yan Qingsang. He spat a ball of phlegm at the former Yan genius.

Having been prepared for the sudden assault, Yan Qingsang evaded it with a tilt of his head.

“Yan Qingsang, you traitorous scum. What face do you have to appear here?” The youth from House Yan glared at Yan Qingsang disdainfully.

The insult made the young man glower. “Shut up, Yan Seventh. Who the fuck are you calling a traitor? Clean yourself up!”

“Your grandfather Yan Wanjun was a traitor, and you’re his grandson. So you’re just as bad as him.” Yan Seventh was incredibly vicious.

“That’s a load of fucking bull. My grandfather was persecuted by the house. Is he not allowed to withdraw from the attacks aimed at him? Traitor? Who’s actually brought shame to House Yan again and again, hmm? Who was it that sent someone to Mount Cloud Camel to assassinate my grandfather? Some people have the gall to commit these filthy acts behind the scenes, then make up lies to frame my grandfather. Well, I say those people are becoming more foolish as they age. Maybe one day they’ll become real dogs and slaves of House Xiahou!” Yan Qingsang was criticizing House Yan’s patriarch, of course. He felt that the meek and indecisive patriarch was the root of all troubles.

“Yan Qingsang,” someone from House Xiahou suddenly interjected, “don’t drag House Xiahou into House Yan’s insignificant affairs. What is House Yan worth? We wouldn’t take you as a dog even if you offered!”

The speaker was none other than the smug Xiahou Zong.

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Chapter 1763: The Tournament Begins

Yan Qingsang cackled with glee. He hadn’t felt much of a sense of belonging to House Yan before, but his loyalties had rested there in the end. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have opposed Jiang Chen’s initial wooing of his cousin Yan Qinghuang so vehemently.

His disappointment with his house had developed gradually. The attempt on his grandfather’s life, in particular, had utterly crushed any remaining hopes. House Yan had betrayed him, not the other way around.

The conclusion freed Yan Qingsang from the chains of negativity.

He cared little for Xiahou Zong’s mockery. “Brother.” He turned to Jiang Chen. “It’s your turn to shine this time. That guy over there has run amok for many, many years. It’s high time he was taught a lesson.”

Jiang Chen sighed softly, becoming suddenly pensive. He didn’t know why, but he was reminded of his prior conversation with the sacred land’s venerated forefather—about the dangers lurking beneath the surface.

He hadn’t quite understood what it all meant, at the time. But now, it seemed that this danger was no laughing matter.

Though he lacked concrete proof, the passion with which the nation's geniuses flocked around Xiahou Zong was reason enough to suspect something was awry.

At least in the younger generation, Xiahou Zong was far more influential than the sacred land's own geniuses. The Eternal Sacred Land had the Five Great Gentlemen, but the total number of fans around them couldn't match Xiahou Zong's groupies.

This was in itself a taunting swipe at the Eternal Sacred Land.

"Enough with the spittle, Qingsang." There was no need to engage in verbal disputes when the actual fighting was about to begin. Jiang Chen concluded mingling with the geniuses who'd approached him and returned to the rest area arranged by the imperial family.

"Wait up, Brother Shao Yuan!" Many of the geniuses who wanted to form a stronger relationship followed.

"Please be considerate, gentlemen." Yan Qingsang grinned. "Brother Shao Yuan would like to focus his efforts on preparing for the tournament. If you'd like to talk to him, feel free to come after."

The geniuses moaned and groaned at their star's departure.

Meanwhile, Yan Qingsang chased after Jiang Chen into the rest area as well. Each competitor had his own personal resting area.

"Brother," Yan Qingsang laughed, "it looks like you're quite popular. Even the Five Great Gentlemen can't compare." Popularity was a point of frustration as well though. "What a shame that Xiahou Zong has such deep-seated foundations and an illustrious reputation! Sucks that he's the most popular of all."

"If you had the title of 'best genius' for as long as Xiahou Zong, you would be even more popular." Jiang Chen smiled coolly.

"I suppose that's true," Yan Qingsang chuckled. "Too bad I'm not the best, eh? Still, I'm annoyed whenever I see his ugly, self-satisfied mug."

"Let him strut." Jiang Chen waved a hand. "He might not have a chance to after the tournament."

There were three days until the actual fighting was scheduled to begin. Jiang Chen didn't want to waste any time; his tight handle on time wasn't just for the tournament of geniuses.

Yan Qingsang had never seen his friend so serious before. It was a sign for him not to intrude. He said his farewell before returning to his residence.

He had wanted to show off his empyrean breakthrough to the world and make House Yan regret their bad attitude. However, Jiang Chen's placidity was infectious—after seeing it, Yan Qingsang had no more motivation for showing off to the rest of the world. So what if House Yan knew? How could he have been so shallow in the first place?

Jiang Chen had inspired him to work on his own cultivation.

The two friends' behavior was rather exceptional in the views of the rest. The three days' time had been allotted for the geniuses to connect with each other socially. Though the geniuses would no doubt meet each other in the arena, the matches hardly had to be crippling or lethal.

Some geniuses preferred using an opportunity like this to network and build up their contacts.

The first prime had wanted Jiang Chen to do the same in order to build a following. His pill dao talent made gathering a group of adherents easy enough.

As such, she was a little saddened that the young man had passed the opportunity by. Considering the pressure on his shoulders at this tournament though, the first prime couldn't ask for more.

The results of that crucial match was key.

If the young man could bring about another miracle by defeating Xiahou Zong, he would be propelled to instant acclaim. If he lost, his pill dao talent alone wouldn't bring him much popularity.

This was a clash of fortunes. To the victor went the privilege of guiding Eternal Divine Nation's future.

The commotion in the outside world didn't disturb the meditative pool within Jiang Chen's heart. Right now, he wasn't interested in worldly glory or profit. On the other hand, adulation positively surrounded Xiahou Zong.

"Young master Zong, that Shao Yuan really is scared of you. See? He's hidden himself away already."

"Hmph, who would dare call himself a genius before young master Zong? Shao Yuan has some pill dao skills, sure, but we cultivators settle our scores in the ring."

"As long as the young master is here, no one else can possibly be the best genius of Eternal Divine Nation."

"Young master Zong, we look forward to your triumph at the tournament. Teach that fool a lesson!"

"Isn't that right? Drill it into him!"

Though Xiahou Zong maintained an impassive expression, he was quite pleased to hear the flattery. He had a lot of pent-up anger from the affair around Yan Qinghuang. His pride simply hadn't allowed him to show any of it.

"Gentlemen, since you know my goal is Shao Yuan, I hope you know what you have to do in the tournament when you meet me?" Xiahou Zong asked smoothly.

"Ah, definitely. How would we dare duel you? We will surrender on the spot."

"Quite so. Fighting with you means biting off more than we can chew!"

"Young master Zong, I'm going to symbolically use a couple of moves to save some face. Please go easy on me."

"Why would you need to do that? It's hardly shameful to surrender before young master Zong. Since we can't win, we should just save the young master some effort."

The sycophants vied to set the bar for their words and tones lower and lower.

Xiahou Ying found all of this very interesting to listen to. Remembering the proud Shao Yuan made her angry once more. She wouldn't be satisfied until he fell in the ring.

"What if you meet Shao Yuan?" she suddenly interrupted.

"We'll give it our all, obviously."

"Hmph, I'll beat him if I meet him. He needs to be exposed for what he is: a fame-seeking sham!"

"That's right. He's just an outsider. No matter how amazing he is, you really think he can beat us geniuses from the divine nation? I don't believe it for a minute!"

"You don't mind if I smash that kid, do you, young master Zong?"

"If he can't even reach me in the first place, he's not worthy to lose to me," Xiahou Zong stated coldly, indicating that he wasn't opposed to their suggestions.

Jiang Chen didn't know about the makeshift alliance among Xiahou Zong's devotees. Though it had hardly any permanence to speak of, the members of this alliance would doubtless stop at nothing just to lick Xiahou Zong's boots. There would be plenty of resistance against him in the tournament of geniuses.

Of course, he wouldn't have cared even if he did know.

He didn't expect that any opponent would sandbag a match in any arena. Only an opponent who committed himself in full was of interest to him.

Three days passed in the blink of an eye. Jiang Chen used the time to re-familiarize himself with his own combat methods, abilities, skills, and treasures. A practiced hand was crucial to winning in the heat of battle.

When the rays of the morning sun struck the earth of the fourth day, Jiang Chen looked up into the horizon. The fervor of the impending tournament's atmosphere filled his heart with anticipation.

All of the geniuses were gathered in the arena.

The nation's emperor was in attendance, garbed in a luxurious dragon robe. Imperial guardsmen with suits of polished armor stood all about him, looking very imposing indeed.

The various factions' leaders and notables sat in the guest area in a large circle.

"Friends, the tournament of geniuses is an important affair for the young people of this nation. Every young man and woman who stands here is a scintillating pearl deserving of praise. Only one question remains: who is the brightest among you? That is what this tournament seeks to answer. Please put on a fantastic show for us to enjoy. We, for one, would like you to win Us over from the bottom of Our heart." The emperor refrained from rambling in his speech.

A few introductory words were sufficient before a segue into the rules.

The rules themselves were simple enough. Single elimination was the name of the game.

Since there were nearly two hundred competitors, two small-scale elimination rounds were carried out to reduce the number to a hundred and twenty-eight.

After that, the real elimination tournament could begin. A hundred twenty-eight competitors meant seven rounds to decide the champion.

Jiang Chen was lucky enough to be passed over for the preliminary elimination rounds, but Yan Qingsang was chosen as a participant.

Of course, it was trivial for someone who'd distinguished himself in the sacred land's internal competition to pass the preliminary with flying colors. He faced two opponents in a row, neither of which gave him much trouble. Winning twice secured him a spot among the hundred twenty-eight.

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Chapter 1764: Dark Horses Upon Dark Horses

The two rounds of elimination matches were actually for the underdogs whom people had low expectations of. Yan Qingsang had been placed in that category.

After ascending to empyrean realm, he'd improved more than he expected with the training regime that Jiang Chen had designed. He crushed his foes and entered the next stage with no difficulty at all.

It was clear that Yan Qingsang had gone into the elimination matches angry, thinking himself dismissed by others. The selection process should be for young disciples from the second and third tier factions, not a member of the sacred land like him.

He didn't know why he'd been singled out, but his instincts told him that it was on purpose.

His actions made his objection clear, even if he didn't file a formal complaint.

By dealing with his two foes efficiently, he was declaring to the imperial family that he wasn't the Yan Qingsang of yesteryear and should be taken seriously. It was an affront to require him to be part of the preliminary matches.

His dominating results surprised many people, especially those from House Yan. They remembered Yan Qingsang as a young man who would never amount to much. He wouldn't have qualified to attend the competition even if he hadn't left House Yan, let alone take one of the sacred land's spots.

When he showed up, their first reaction was that he'd gained the spot through nepotism, but reality had proven them wrong!

The patriarch of House Yan stared at him with an impassive expression, masking the turbulence in his heart. Things seemed to be getting out of control. What had happened here? How did the hopeless Yan Qingsang suddenly achieve a breakthrough?

The list of a hundred and twenty-eight finalists were determined. The rest of the competition would simply be composed of one-on-one matches. There were rules in place favoring the top geniuses. Seed contestants wouldn't be pitted against one another until the top sixteen.

Jiang Chen wasn't one of them, so he might encounter anyone at anytime, including Xiahou Zong.

Matchmaking smiled upon him as he drew a genius from a second-tier faction on his first round, one at half-step empyrean. The youth was among one of the weakest in the competition.

"I am Qiu Ping from the Silvermoon Manor. I look forward to our exchange." He sounded honorable, but sure didn't act like it. He attacked before Jiang Chen even made a move, clearly hoping to catch his opponent off guard.

Not even those ten times stronger than Qiu Ping could sneak up on Jiang Chen or land a move. It was impossible for him to catch Jiang Chen off guard.

Jiang Chen's battle spirit and determination were as resolute as a monolith once he stepped onto the stage. Qiu Ping was easily blocked before he could even get close.

Dislike flared for his opponent's lack of integrity. If Qiu Ping had been honest with his aggression, Jiang Chen might've easy on the youth and spared his dignity. However, the young man had masked his malicious intent with pretty words and played dirty.

Jiang Chen wasn't going to show an opponent like him any mercy. With a simple push of his palm, Qiu Ping was propelled into the air by an unstoppable current.

"Off you go." Jiang Chen snorted and sent him flying like a kite.

Qiu Ping landed with so much force that he vomited all over the ground; the one-sided match shocking many in the audience. They were startled by this demonstration of power, and speculations ran rife.

"What's Shao Yuan's cultivation level? He made a half-step empyrean cultivator look like a three-year-old! A first level empyrean genius shouldn't be capable of dominating like this."

Jiang Chen had masked his cultivation level and reeled in his consciousness, making it impossible for others to grasp his full power, wreathing a mysterious air around him.

After the match, he went offstage with a calm expression, betraying none of his emotions.

Yan Qingsang wasn't as lucky and went head to head with someone from a first-tier faction. Their fight ran fast and furious, allowing his aggressive fighting style to finally shine.

His opponent had ascended to empyrean realm years before he had, but the two were on equal footing in the sortie. Yan Qingsang even managed to gain the upper hand a few times with particularly relentless attacks.

Their fight was one of the few exciting ones during the first round. Under Yan Qingsang's barrage of attacks, his opponent lost control over the tempo of the fight and eventually lost.

His victory was quite a surprise.

There were others from the sacred land who also obtained unexpected outcomes, but in a negative way. To immense shock, two of their geniuses were defeated in the first round, their opponents also top geniuses from first-tier factions.

Sixty-four competitors remained after the first round. The sacred land had eight disciples in the competition, which was still a decent amount.

"Good work, Brother Yan," Jiang Chen remarked with a faint smile. "I kept an eye on House Yan for you when you were fighting. They were flabbergasted by your performance."

Yan Qingsang's eyes lit up. "Is that so?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Maybe they're already regretting their decision."

"Ha, they'll be even more regretful later!" Yan Qingsang ground his teeth resentfully.

The first day of the competition was at an end.

That night, the imperial family held a private meeting, concluding that too many members of the sacred land had entered the next round.

They'd make sure that the sacred land went against one another in the next, so that their numbers would be halved. As the host, it wasn't that difficult for the imperial family to nudge things here or there.

When the lots were drawn the second day, Jiang Chen noticed something unusual. Four candidates from the sacred land were paired up, Jiang Chen being one of them. His opponent was a member of the Five Great Gentlemen.

Yan Qingsang was luckier in the second round and drew a genius from a second-tier faction.

Moreover, bad luck also visited Gan Ning as he was pitted against Xiahou Zong. He'd been full of fighting spirit, but now didn't know if he should laugh or cry. He knew this was the end for him in this competition.

The matchmaking was peculiar, but there was no telling what outcome lot drawing would produce. Jiang Chen couldn't say for sure that the organizer had manipulated the result. At the end of the day, he didn't care who his opponent was unless it was Xiahou Zong.

"You're a rising star within the sacred land lately, Shao Yuan. It's unfortunate that we have to go against each other. I'm not going to pull my punches. If you can defeat me, do try your best. There will be no regret no matter who ends up winning!" His opponent, Wu You, ranked second among the Five Great Gentlemen. His mentality was commendable.

Jiang Chen raised a cupped fist salute. "Brother Wu, I agree that we should do all we can and accept whatever outcome we get."

They exchanged an understanding smile.

As the second strongest of the five gentlemen, Wu You was not to be underestimated. He was most adept at his self-determined 'shadow strategy'. To put it simply, he moved quickly and his fighting style was unpredictable, enabling him to catch his opponents off guard.

However, Jiang Chen had no fear for a quick opponent. He was confident in his own speed and movement techniques. His fight with Wu You became a visual feast of speed.

This was one of the most powerful geniuses in the sacred land, his cultivation at third level empyrean.

The first prime was very conflicted. She wanted both of the disciples to succeed. Wu You was a distant relative of hers, while she had high hopes for Jiang Chen.

If only the match allowed both to win! She didn't want either Shao Yuan or Wu You to stop here.

Jiang Chen appraised the way Wu You moved with appreciation. The man's speed was remarkable. Even by using the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, Jiang Chen could just barely keep up with him.

The deadlock was his own doing, of course. He had many ways to slow his opponent down, but Wu You was a member of the sacred land, and an honest man on top of that. Jiang Chen didn't want to make him look bad. Therefore, he used only his speed in the fight.

He let slip many opportunities to defeat Wu You in favor of delaying the match, creating the illusion of them being neck and neck. On one hand, it would relax the other's guard. On the other, Wu You would lose with dignity intact.

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

Chapter 1765: A Brutal Xiahou Zong

Those eager to plumb the depths of Jiang Chen's strength couldn't help being disappointed. If the young man could only go neck and neck with Wu You, he was far from good enough. Although Wu You was one of the Five Great Gentlemen, even the best of the five was nowhere close to Xiahou Zong's level. On top of that, Wu You wasn't even the strongest at all.

While appearances could be deceiving, there seemed a long way to go before Shao Yuan could go head to head with the greatest genius, even if he seemed competent enough.

Shao Yuan's fight with Wu You attracted a lot of attention, even more so than Xiahou Zong's match. The Xiahou genius was going to win no matter who his opponent was, while Shao Yuan's fight would test his true abilities. Everyone wanted to see for themselves how good Xiahou Zong's challenger was.

Venerated Elder Xiahou Zhen scoffed to his peers. "It's undeniable that the Eternal Sacred Land has put in a lot of effort in scouting geniuses. Given eight to ten years, Shao Yuan may grow into someone who can pose some threat to Xiahou Zong. But right now? In his dreams!"

Xiahou Ying huffed. "His confidence is completely unfounded. And here I thought there was a thing or two to him. He's nothing in front of big brother."

"Right, he's far from good enough to go against Xiahou Zong," Xiahou Zhen responded, bemused.

"However, I hear that he was only a great emperor when he joined House Yan. It's surprising that he's made such significant progress in only two years."

"So what? He's going to lose to big brother anyways. All of his potential combined won't save him unless he doesn't get into a fight with my brother."

Xiahou Zhen smiled coolly without a word.

The emperor of the Eternal Divine Nation and his expert bodyguards watched Shao Yuan's match with rapt attention.

"Haha, there seems to be a shortage of geniuses in the sacred land these years. Wu You ranks second or third among the Five Great Gentlemen, doesn't he? He's quick. I'll give him that. But a thousand years ago, someone like him could only be considered a second-tier genius."

“Your Majesty has keen eyes,” a man dressed like a supervisor of palace affairs agreed. “If even Wu You is considered one of the Five Great Gentlemen, that signifies a lack of talent in the sacred land. They don’t have enough new blood.”

“That’s right. They clearly suffer from a lack of new blood. Shao Yuan, however, has risen rapidly to fame,” the emperor mused.

“True. Shao Yuan is the sacred land’s biggest surprise in recent years. However, he’s too young and brash. If he’d given himself a few more years, he might’ve been able to threaten Xiahou Zong. It’s a shame that the young man forgot himself after meager achievement and put himself out in the open. Xiahou Zong won’t allow him to live now.”

The emperor smiled slightly. “Perhaps the sacred land was too eager to raise a genius who could challenge Xiahou Zong and ended up exposing him too soon to the public’s eye.”

“Your Majesty is indeed insightful.”

Jiang Chen fought with ease, ignoring the inquisitive looks cast his way from the audience. For him, the battle couldn’t be less challenging.

Meanwhile, Wu You was in a completely different state. It might seem like the fight wasn’t taxing, but only he knew how difficult it was to persevere. He was giving this fight his all, calling upon his full potential. It felt that he’d be able to win if he tapped into a little more of his strength, but every time he did so, it still wasn’t enough.

The feeling motivated him again and again, but in the end, it also doused his battle intent. It was like hitting a ball of wool. The lack of impact was driving him crazy.

Finally, he realized that his opponent was going easy on him, waiting for him to notice and surrender. There were many openings that Shao Yuan could’ve taken, but hadn’t.

There’s no way Shao Yuan lacks that little bit of power to defeat me.

Wu You attacked with maximum speed and full force several times, but Shao Yuan always matched him and remained unbeatable.

The fruitless fight broke Wu You’s will. After about half an hour, exhaustion caught up to him. Shao Yuan, on the other hand, was far from depleting his stamina.

I think... he’s trying to save me face.

Wu You had his pride. If he insisted on fighting under these circumstances, it’d be looking at a gift-horse in the mouth. He halted his movements and sighed with cupped hands.

“Daoist Shao Yuan, I admit defeat. I can’t win this fight. It’s better that I yield now.”

Most of the audience members had gotten the impression that the two of them were at equal level. In fact, Wu You seemed to have the upper hand. Why had he forfeited?

The top geniuses were observant enough to see what had been going on, while those at a lower level were still befuddled. Some even questioned if Wu You had purposefully thrown the fight. Perhaps it was the sacred land's attempt at glorifying Shao Yuan!

Jiang Chen cupped his hands in return and responded calmly, "Daoist Wu You has remarkable speed. I greatly admire you for that."

He was kindly disposed towards Wu You. The latter had admitted defeat of his own accord and knew when to back down. Jiang Chen wasn't going to make things embarrassing for his peer.

Wu You laughed heartily. "I lost. I won't hold a grudge against you, Shao Yuan. I only hope that you can continue winning on behalf of the sacred land and defeat everyone else for me."

"I'll do my best," Jiang Chen promised seriously.

"Good lad. I have high hopes for you." Wu You guffawed as he dashingly jumped off the stage and rejoined the sacred land. He didn't find it humiliating to admit defeat, given the circumstances.

Though Jiang Chen had entered the next stage, he wasn't much congratulated when he left the stage. On the contrary, many whispered behind his back, considering Wu You's submission part of the sacred land's strategy to make Shao Yuan look good. They didn't think of his victory as a real win.

Yan Qingsang had won his match much faster than Jiang Chen had and walked forward to greet his brother.

"Brother Yan, you look in good spirits." Jiang Chen chuckled. "You won the second round with ease, haven't you?"

"Your fight seemed intense, but you haven't gone all out yet." Yan Qingsang knew Jiang Chen's true strength quite well. He knew his friend had been holding back in this fight.

The second round fulfilled the organizer's goal. Half of the eight competitors from the sacred land were eliminated, including Gan Ning, who had faced Xiahou Zong.

Jiang Chen looked around and noticed Gan Ning about to be carried away on a stretcher.

Xiahou Zong had made quick work of him and showed no mercy, his moves brutal to the point of wanting to destroy Gan Ning. Gan Ning wasn't completely crippled, but it had been a close thing.

Seeing his pale face and sickly form, all the young geniuses felt a pang of sympathy. They were normally rivals that didn't respect each other, but when they represented the sacred land, they were a united front.

Fury raged in their hearts when they saw what Xiahou Zong had done to Gan Ning. An indescribable fear descended at the same time. Xiahou Zong clearly wanted to destroy all of them.

Jiang Chen pushed past the crowd and went up to Gan Ning, who twisted his lips without a word.

Jiang Chen felt guilty for the other's plight. He was very likely part of the reason why Xiahou Zong had inflicted such serious harm to Gan Ning. The latter had just been unfortunately caught in the crossfire.

"Brother Gan Ning..." Jiang Chen called out.

Gan Ning shook his head softly. "You don't need to pity me."

Jiang Chen fell silent. He did pity Gan Ning, but that wasn't something he should voice at the moment.

"What a cretin that Xiahou Zong is! He showed no mercy. It's obvious he wanted to destroy Gan Ning!" one of the geniuses from the sacred land exclaimed. "This is supposed to be a friendly duel, but Xiahou Zong treats it like a fight to the death. He... he's absolutely crossed a line!"

Jiang Chen quietly took out a pill. "This is a healing pill, Brother Gan Ning. Take it if you trust me. It'll help with your recovery."

Gan Ning shook his head in agony. "It's no use. He's destroyed me. I'm crippled. I might as well give up on treating my injury. What awaits me is nothing but torture."

Jiang Chen checked his pulse for a moment and whispered, "If you trust me, Gan Ning, take the pill. I promise that you will recover. I can restore you to your full health."

A hopeful glint split through the lifeless glaze in Gan Ning's eyes. "Really?"

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

Chapter 1766: Suspected Collusion

No cultivator would willingly give up pursuit of martial dao when there was even a sliver of hope. Gan Ning was no exception. Xiahou Zong had completely destroyed his dantian, completely sucking him dry of all future and driving him to despair.

Jiang Chen's words were made believable by his unparalleled talent in pill dao. Gan Ning's eyes lit up, clinging to the chance of recovery.

Jiang Chen nodded earnestly. "I never lie. Take the pill and rest well. After the sword competition, I'll find ways to restore you to peak condition. Everything Xiahou Zong has done to you, I'll pay him back in spades!"

Gan Ning cut in urgently, "You mustn't! Don't lose your calm and go toe-to-toe with him! He hates you much more than he does us. He was merely taking out his anger on me, but you? You'll be subjected to all his fury. He wants nothing more than to mince you into meat paste. A fight to the death is exactly what he wants!"

He was very concerned for Jiang Chen. Their last fight had ended in a tie, so he believed that he had a good grasp on Jiang Chen's strength. Even if the other genius had improved significantly over the past few months, he couldn't have bridged the gap between him and Xiahou Zong.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly in lieu of an answer and placed the pill onto Gan Ning's palm, patting the back of his hand. "Don't worry. I know what I'm doing."

Gan Ning closed his eyes and sighed deeply. "You wouldn't be Shao Yuan if you listened to me and just yielded. Fine, then one word of advice. Protect yourself and don't give him an opportunity to destroy you."

Xiahou Zong was now one of Gan Ning's worst nightmares. He'd always fancied himself one of the top geniuses of the Eternal Divine Nation, but the fight with Xiahou Zong showed him what a real genius truly was.

It might be a stretch to describe it as a fight between an adult and a child, but he had indeed felt as if shackled when facing the man.

Xiahou Zong's moves hadn't seemed particularly powerful, but the way he'd chained them together had turned Gan Ning into a puppet that danced to his tune. Xiahou Zong had maintained full control over the flow of the battle. Gan Ning had only been able to deploy a fraction of his usual level.

Only someone overwhelmingly stronger could control his opponent's pace of attacks.

Gan Ning resented Xiahou Zong's brutal cruelty, but there had been nothing he could do. There was simply too big a gap between them.

The first prime approached the group with a dark expression. Her rage was evident.

Gan Ning was one of the Five Great Gentlemen and among the best that the sacred land had to offer. Someone as protective of her own as the first prime naturally wasn't going to be happy about Xiahou Zong's lack of restraint.

She'd warned Duke Xiaoyao earlier, telling him to keep a leash on Xiahou Zong.

Duke Xiaoyao had chuckled. "First Prime, I told you the last time I visited that not even I can predict what Xiahou Zong will do when he's truly enraged. What can I do if he injures his opponent too seriously? I can't tell him to hold back, can I? This is a competition. He isn't going to throw his matches." With that, he brayed with exaggerated laughter.

His laughter was grating on the first prime's ears.

Duke Xiaoyao's remark had been insolent, but there had been some truth to it. The sword competition didn't forbid competitors from hurting their opponents. Even death was commonplace. Everyone participated knowing there was a chance they would perish. Those scared should drop out beforehand.

A fuming first prime now returned to the sacred land's area. She knew what House Xiahou was trying to do. It pained her to see how disheartened her youths were.

"Xiahou Zong is a monster who knows no restraint. If you encounter him and are going to lose, surrender rather than push yourself. This seat won't blame you for that."

"Hmph, that animal's gone overboard!" The geniuses shared in her anger.

The first prime waved a hand and cast a despondent glance at Jiang Chen, issuing a serious reminder, "Xiahou Zong hates you even more, Shao Yuan. If you encounter him, remember..."

Jiang Chen nodded noncommittally. "Worry not, First Prime, I know what I'm doing."

No one would believe him now if he declared his assurance. It'd only make the others dislike him. He reminded Yan Qingsang, "Any of us could run into Xiahou Zong in future rounds, Qingsang. If you do, yield and leave him to me."

Yan Qingsang was confident in himself, but he knew he was far from Xiahou Zong's level. He sighed. "Alright. I can't defeat that bastard anyway."

The Eternal Sacred Land was very dispirited that night. Only four of their members had entered the round of thirty-two, which was too little for a faction of their rank.

Jiang Chen was sure that the hosts were undermining the sacred land on purpose. As he expected, the four remaining competitors from the faction were struck again by bad luck the next day.

Jiang Chen's opponent was the top genius of the Cloudwave Sect, one of Xiahou Zong's most devoted supporters. He'd showed his devotion with great enthusiasm and sworn to Xiahou Zong that he'd aim to kill if he encountered Jiang Chen.

The other members of the sacred land were pitted against powerful opponents as well. The top of the Five Great Gentlemen, for instance, was going to fight Xiahou Zong, while Yan Qingsang and the others were facing strong contenders for the top five spots of the competition.

The sacred land was in danger of full elimination. Jiang Chen shook his head. The hosts had really gone overboard. Was the imperial family trying to free themselves from the sacred land and establish their own reign? Even a fool would realize that the matchmaking had been manipulated.

The first prime maintained a calm face. It wasn't the right time for her to make a scene, but the imperial family had thoroughly roused her ire with their little tricks.

There was a great chance that only one or two out of the sacred land would be able to enter the top sixteen, and none at all after the next round. If Jiang Chen won his match, he predicted that he was very likely to encounter Xiahou Zong next.

Whoever pulling the strings must think the Five Great Gentlemen were more worthy foes for Xiahou Zong to deal with. There was no doubt that every one of Xiahou Zong's opponents would be from the sacred land.

This wasn't so much a competition, but a conspiracy against the Eternal Sacred Land.

"Do your best and don't push yourself," the first prime offered in comfort when she saw the match-ups.

Yan Qingsang's opponent was too strong for him to defeat.

The one pitted against Xiahou Zong was Gentleman Sui Chen, first of the Five. His level of cultivation was higher than that of Wu You. If his opponent hadn't been Xiahou Zong, it was almost a guarantee that he'd enter the finals. As it was, his journey in the competition had come to an end.

Jiang Chen didn't know Sui Chen well, so he couldn't offer the young genius any comfort. Sui Chen's scowl made his dark mood clear. It seemed that he was resentful of Jiang Chen for bringing him bad luck. In his eyes, it was Shao Yuan and his provocation of Xiahou Zong that had started the series of misfortunes for geniuses from the sacred land.

Jiang Chen could read the hostility in Sui Chen's eyes. He shook his head. In truth, he wished his opponent was Xiahou Zong rather than someone from the Cloudwave Sect. Unfortunately, Xiahou Zong seemed to deem Jiang Chen unworthy at the moment, or perhaps he wanted to toy with his prey a little longer.

“The situation is more complicated than it appeared to be, Qingsang,” Jiang Chen reminded Yan Qingsang again. “Someone is plotting against the sacred land behind the scenes. Do your best, but remember to put your own safety first.”

“Don’t worry.” Yan Qingsang grinned. “I won’t give anyone a chance to hurt me. If I can’t win, I’ll surrender. Given my lack of reputation, I’ve achieved more than enough in the competition. I have nothing to lose and can freely admit defeat!”

As he said, it was remarkable enough for him to partake in the competition. He’d already defeated several; it was more than enough to prove himself.

“Alright, geniuses, go to your designated stage,” announced someone from the host area. “Let the third round of matches commence!”

“Let’s go!” said Jiang Chen as he rushed to his stage.

The genius from the Cloudwave Sect had been waiting for some time. He looked like a cat toying with a mouse, his gait relaxed and his smile frigid.

Jiang Chen glanced at him and didn’t cup his hands in greeting.

“It’s Shao Yuan, isn’t it? You’re talented in pill dao, but you’re far from good enough in martial dao. Let me, Shen Fan from the Cloudwave Sect, teach you a lesson today.”

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

Chapter 1767: Raging Serpent’s Whip

Teach me a lesson?

Jiang Chen burst into laughter at the absurdity of the statement.

His bout with Wu You earlier might not have been a spectacular display of technique, so ordinary folks wouldn’t have gleaned much from it. However, this guy wasn’t much stronger than Wu You... so where did his confidence come from? Did he not like to use his brain?

“I am Shen Fan, the top genius of the Cloudwave Sect.” The young man in question tossed Jiang Chen a contemptuous look. “In Eternal Divine Nation, I admire only one person – big brother Xiahou Zong. Since you’ve offended him, you’re automatically my enemy. I will deign to teach you how big the world really is!”

“You?” Jiang Chen’s eyes narrowed. “Teach me about the size of the world? What would you know about it?”

“Tsk tsk, I know why big brother Xiahou hates you so much. You’re such an annoying brat.”

“I’ve no problem with your preference for being Xiahou Zong’s dog. However, I tend to beat up any dogs that yap in front of me.” Jiang Chen didn’t like wasting words on people like these. It was a waste of time and intellect.

Shen Fan’s expression frozen over. How dare that kid call him a dog?!

“You’ve really made me angry now!” His voice had a sharp edge like a knife’s.

“Just angry, hmm?” Jiang Chen smiled coolly. “More exciting things are about to come.”

Shen Fan cackled. “Enough talk. Go to hell!”

Spirit energy whipped up from all around him as he said this, forming wave after wave of an inexorable tide. This was a water attribute ability.

It wasn't the first time Jiang Chen traded blows with a water attribute cultivator. He had fought more than three times with such enemies. Shen Fan was much superior to his past foes, but neither was he unchanged from back then.

Jiang Chen fearlessly cut into the powerful surge by wading in. He seemed almost relaxed amid the tempestuous waves. No matter how the waters swirled in space around him, he remained unfettered by their restrictive influence.

Shen Fan was a little surprised by Jiang Chen's agility. His water attribute ability didn't look very destructive, but it was very nearly perfect. Once an enemy was trapped by the waves, they would continually apply increasing pressure and constraining power until the enemy's inevitable demise.

The vortex formed by the waves gained in ferocity once more, but they seemed insufficient to ensnare their target. Shen Fan was even more taken aback; he had considered himself capable of holding his own against the sacred land's Sui Chen.

He'd thought the suddenness of his best attack enough to overwhelm a wandering cultivator with panic. Though it seemed that he had been sorely mistaken, he had never been one to admit defeat to anyone in his generation – aside from Xiahou Zong, of course.

Someone comfortable as the foremost genius of the Cloudwave Sect was sure to be exceptional in more ways than one. He produced a sparkling, golden whip in his hand with a flourish. A powerful murderous aura emanated from the whip, along with a palpable bloodthirst.

“Do you think you can dodge my attacks with speed alone? How naïve!” Shen Fan chuckled. “This is the Raging Serpent's Whip, formed from the bone and tendon of a Raging Serpent from the infinite oceans of Myriad Abyss! It contains the spirit of that beast. I will use it to consume your soul in turn!”

Raging Serpent?

Jiang Chen knew the bloodline was draconic in nature, though a mutated offshoot. Raging Serpents were fierce and bloodthirsty, capable of consuming all in their paths. They were some of the most combat-capable dragons out there, and every part of their bodies was suitable to be refined into treasure. Their tendons especially, were superb for weaponry.

It was rare to see such a complete tendon in the wild. Jiang Chen was surprised that Shen Fan had something like this – and so well-refined, to boot. The quality of that empyrean weapon was nothing short of splendid.

Shen Fan actually isn't an enemy to take lightly.

“Shen Fan, a treasure like the Raging Serpent's Whip is supposed to be a blessing to its bearer. Alas, you'd rather wag your tail like a dog. Don't you know that dogs aren't fit to own valuable things? You

bring shame to all Raging Serpents everywhere, and their draconic ancestors as well!” Jiang Chen intentionally poked at his opponent.

Shen Fan flew into a rage. “Death is staring at you in the face, kid! Shut up!”

He brandished his whip to create a myriad of swings and waves. The weapon created a series of afterimages that glittered enticingly in the air. The air whooshed ominously, like a reaper doing his work.

The power of the Raging Serpent’s Whip didn’t lie solely in its destructive ability. It could also strike at a cultivator’s consciousness, tearing away bits of essence and blood with each blow.

Truth be told, Shen Fan could probably rely on his Raging Serpent’s Whip to even fend off someone as strong as Xiahou Zong for a long time. The whip rent the air with terrifying force.

“I’d like to see how long you can dodge from me, kid!” Shen Fan had clearly trained extensively with his whip. He wielded it like an extension of his body.

Jiang Chen’s speed advantage was more pronounced because of it. Thousands of his images danced through the air, making it impossible to see where he specifically was with the naked eye.

Shen Fan was hardly concerned. “You’re very fast, kid, but that doesn’t matter. In my zone of control, you won’t escape my whip’s judgment no matter how fast you are!”

As soon as his voice fell, the Raging Serpent’s Whip seemed to elongate as it spun in circles in midair. Golden rings rippled outward from the weapon, creating a number of strange, black glyphs. Their oddness warranted special attention.

“Restrict, cut!”

The Raging Serpent’s Whip suddenly collapsed inward.

Fwoosh!

Space seemed to be cut apart by ring after ring of the whip.

Shen Fan stared at the air, half-expecting an explosion of blood and guts. Unfortunately, the lack thereof of anything significant disappointed him.

“How can this be?”

The zone of control provided by the Raging Serpent’s Whip was already absurd enough. There was almost nowhere in the ring the whip couldn’t reach.

The whip first sliced up space horizontally, then vertically. No mortal man could escape the whip’s fine dicing. Even flies were powerless before such a dense attack vector. But where had Shao Yuan gone??

“Looks like this whip really is a waste in your hands.” A voice echoed forth from the air.

“Where are you?” Shen Fan roared, pushing his consciousness to the maximum. He raised his whip to deliver a lethal attack anytime.

“I’m here.”

“And here.”

“And here...” Countless voices rang through the air. Suddenly, images of Shao Yuan began to crop up all around Shen Fan.

Each afterimage was more real than the last. A faintly mocking expression decorated every face with biting disdain. Clearly, Jiang Chen didn’t think much of him. This hurt Shen Fan deeply.

“All you know are little tricks, kid!” Shen Fan was positively infuriated. “Ghosts and spirits, begone!”

He flourished the Raging Serpent’s Whip as much as he could. It swept into the indistinguishable afterimages like a bolt of lightning. By Shen Fan’s logic, both true and false options were targeted by the whip.

The afterimages were snuffed out like candles being extinguished. When they disappeared, they turned into blue smoke that vanished before his eyes. There was no anticipated detonation of biological matter.

Shen Fan felt his heart race. He recognized all too late that this opponent wasn’t as easy as he’d thought. The Raging Serpent’s Whip was his strongest tool. His prominence in the Cloudwave Sect – and among other youths of his generation as well – was owed to the weapon.

The whip was more than just a strong weapon. It transformed his aura and granted him hidden advantages. Many of his opponents crumbled thanks to the whip’s passive intimidation alone.

Thus, Shen Fan almost felt that he could face Xiahou Zong without too much of a handicap. So why would he care about Shao Yuan? His battle against the youth merely a minor responsibility to Xiahou Zong.

But things hadn’t gone nearly as easily as he had thought. Though he had the Raging Serpent’s Whip, his opponent was significantly more recalcitrant. Jiang Chen’s unfathomable way of moving and suite of various methods went beyond his scope of knowledge.

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

Chapter 1768: Tremble, Raging Serpent!

Shen Fan’s speed of attack increased even further. He didn’t believe that Shao Yuan could overcome the limitations of the arena. He firmly believed that if he waved his whip more quickly, he would eventually catch up.

Furthermore, he had created powerful turbulence in the entire area. How could his opponent move around freely under these tempestuous circumstances?

He made all attempts to push his own limits. As long as he could cover the field with attacks, where would his enemy hide?

“What good will hiding do you, kid? Come out and fight!” Shen Fan grumbled loudly, his voice agitated. Clearly, the minimal effectiveness of his attempts upset him somewhat. Rather than genuine anger though, his pride was wounded.

He’d already brought out his Raging Serpent’s Whip – shouldn’t he have won easily after that? Why couldn’t he just kill his opponent already?

Fighting in the other arenas had largely concluded. Gentleman Sui Chen had surrendered to Xiahou Zong without actually fighting.

Yan Qingsang was wise to back out after a quick probe and sensing his opponent's intense killing intent. Just as Jiang Chen had instructed, he didn't give his opponent a chance to kill him.

He was also discovering an insidious hidden force that was targeting the Eternal Sacred Ground. It seemed that every competitor from the sacred ground faced a deathmatch in the ring.

Another genius from the sacred ground managed to win against his opponent after a vicious bout, but it was a pyrrhic victory: it was unlikely he would be able to do much in the next round.

Jiang Chen was the Eternal Sacred Ground's lone hope and even he was in a dangerous position.

No one had expected something like this to happen before the competition. This was only the third round! The top sixteen were still being decided, yet the sacred ground was almost completely eliminated.

Over in House Xiahou's area, Xiahou Ying clenched her fists and yelled. "Shen Fan, you bastard, you boast everyday about how skilled you are! If you can't handle an outsider kid, don't bother visiting House Xiahou ever again!"

Xiahou Zhen smiled slightly. "Ying'er, don't be so anxious. Shao Yuan is at his wit's end. The Raging Serpent's Whip increases in power with the fury of its master. Since Shao Yuan has riled Shen Fan up, he will fall as soon as whip and wielder reach an accord to summon the Raging Serpent spirit within."

"Really?" Xiahou Ying brightened. "So Shen Fan isn't worthless after all!"

"Yes. Shen Fan is one of the few in the nation that can cause a bit of trouble for your brother. 'A bit of trouble' is all he can do, of course."

Xiahou Ying puffed out her chest, proud on her brother's behalf. "Of course. The genius who can challenge my brother in Eternal Divine Nation hasn't been born yet!"

Xiahou Zhen chuckled. He very much agreed with that analysis.

In the area designated for the imperial family and its retainers, the emperor watched the fighting with great enjoyment. "I didn't think much of Shao Yuan during his fight with Wu You," he remarked, "but it looks like he's much more capable than he seemed earlier. Does he match his strength to his opponent?"

"A reasonable statement, Your Majesty. Still, I don't think it's wise for him to anger Shen Fan like this. Sticking to evasion will prove futile in the end. If I were him, I would defeat Shen Fan before he has a chance to gather his rage. If he doesn't take this opportunity now, he might not get another."

The emperor quite agreed with his servant. "Indeed. With the Raging Serpent's Whip in hand, Shen Fan is sure to stand at the forefront of the divine nation's future."

"Astutely said, Your Majesty."

"Haha, let's keep watching the battle. Maybe Shao Yuan has a plan after all?"

“I’m sure he does. It’s obvious that he doesn’t understand the weapon well enough though. The summoning of the spirit inside will spell his doom.”

.....

The flames of Shen Fan’s anger were being stoked ever higher. His endless failures to hit his opponent caused his temper to burn with an unsustainable heat.

“Come out, come out Shao Yuan! Do you think you can run away from my judgment forever? You’re too young, too simple!” Shen Fan cackled. An incantation lengthened the whip once more. The weapon was sheathed in a golden light even as black runes multiplied on its surface. Bestial roaring filled the air, as if the monster trapped within would break free at any second.

“Come out, spirit of the Raging Serpent, all-powerful and all-consuming!” Shen Fan’s eyes burned with furious fire.

The manic light interweaved with the Raging Serpent’s Whip, making a golden shadow erupt from the weapon. Roughly serpentine in shape, it bellowed as it twisted to and fro in the air.

The Raging Serpent!

Its spirit had finally been summoned. There was mass silence in the stands. The first prime lowered her head, not willing to bear seeing what would come next.

She regretted not having given Shao Yuan some defensive treasures. Perhaps she’d been too miserly. A cultivator without powerful treasures was at a disadvantage in arena fights.

The ferocious serpent spirit became more and more substantial as it rose higher into the air. Similarly, the increasing volume of its thrum made the weather change and the sky color.

Shen Fan was strangely calm now and no longer brandished his Raging Serpent’s Whip about. “All-powerful Raging Serpent, pursue that evil soul to world’s end! Go, go, go!” he muttered.

As he did so, Jiang Chen alighted on the arena ground opposite to him. He sat cross-legged on its edge, his expression entirely relaxed.

“That was enough time for me to take several naps. Is that all you can do? I suppose some light exercise helps me sleep.” Derision suffused his tone.

Shen Fan bristled with irritation. He knew his opponent was trying to get a rise out of him, but he couldn’t help wanting to cough up blood at the insult nevertheless.

“Don’t you know yet that you’re going to die, kid?!”

His tone grew sinister. The serpent spirit had gathered enough energy to peak in form and strength. It was dozens of yards long as it spiraled the skies, exuding grandeur and lust for carnage. It was a perfect embodiment of its race’s inherent bloodthirst.

Jiang Chen raised his head back up to the sky, still perfectly calm. “An insignificant spirit of a mere Raging Serpent. Is this your ultimate attack, Shen Fan?”

There was undisguised contempt in his voice.

“I’ve had enough of your empty words, kid!” Shen Fan retorted angrily. “The spirit of the Raging Spirit will eat you alive! Your body, blood, and spirit will be food for its evolution!”

“Really?” Jiang Chen sneered.

Suddenly, golden air currents whipped up around him. Overwhelming energy manifested itself as an aureate ocean, suppressing the encroaching waters that were pressing in.

The young man’s lips moved, muttering something. Trails of runes, ancient and mysterious, surged around his entire body.

In the next moment, Jiang Chen roared into the sky, emitting a long and piercing croon. The weather changed once more; dust and debris kicked up everywhere, and the firmament swelled with clouds.

A, a dragon’s roar!

The spirit of the Raging Spirit was antagonized by the sound. It roared to match, then surged down with its claw outstretched.

“Know your place, beast!” Jiang Chen cackled.

His draconic bloodline was pushed to its zenith. At the same time, a draconic image flickered into existence behind him, rippling upward like a waterfall reversing its flow.

Countless rays of golden light gathered into a draconic geyser. The dragon image rushed toward the serpent spirit with devastating might and savagery.

A strange phenomenon occurred. The seething Raging Serpent spirit was brought to a sudden halt, as if something was at its throat. Like it had seen the scariest thing in the world, the golden image trembled with fear, its predatory aura all but lost.

Every member of the audience was astounded by the sight. Even the most optimistic among them hadn’t expected such a dramatic turnaround.

The first prime brightened once more. She was experienced enough to understand what had occurred. A true dragon’s image and roar was sufficiently intimidating to every Raging Serpent that had ever existed.

The nobility and purity of its origin ancestor naturally subdued a serpent, who was powerless before a being of a higher order. It wasn’t surprising that the Raging Serpent spirit would have such a drastic reaction in light of this.

But those far more ignorant than the first prime were left in the dark still. Exactly what was going on here?

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

Chapter 1769: The Destined Battle

The spirit of a Raging Serpent was Shen Fan’s most powerful move. Its failure was the last straw that made his dao heart waver.

The audience marveled at what they saw.

“Are you seeing this? What is that?”

“I think that’s the projection of a true dragon.”

“Is Shao Yuan a descendent of a true dragon? He wouldn’t be able to use its bloodline otherwise.”

“The dragon bloodline is one of the most powerful bloodlines there is! There hasn’t been anyone of a pure dragon bloodline in Myriad Abyss, has there?”

“No, there hasn’t been any... There’ve been a few instances, but their bloodlines were diluted or impure.”

“Who would’ve thought that Shao Yuan is from a line of true dragons? This is crazy!”

“The sacred land is the sacred land after all. Their ability to excavate geniuses is admirable.”

“There are reasons why it’s been able to rule over Eternal Divine Nation for so many years.”

“Even the Raging Serpent failed. Shen Fan is done.”

Xiahou Zong had ended his match some time ago. He was calmly watching Jiang Chen fight with an impassive expression.

“Brother, it seems that Shao Yuan has been holding back,” Xiahou Ying muttered in a conflicted tone.

“Hmph, I hope he’s hiding more from us, or I’ll be disappointed.” Xiahou Zong still spoke like he reigned over all.

“My brother is the best of all geniuses. Shao Yuan has a few tricks up his sleeve, but that’s it. You need to teach him a harsh lesson and cripple him to the point where he’ll have to be carried off stage, brother!”

“Just you wait for a good show,” Xiahou Zong responded calmly.

The emperor wore a slight frown. He hadn’t expected things to pan out this way.

“Your Majesty, Shao Yuan comes from a true dragon bloodline? The Raging Serpent’s power is greatly diminished in face of that.”

The emperor sighed. “Looks like we’ve underestimated him.”

“Let’s match him with Xiahou Zong next,” the imperial supervisor said in a low voice.

The emperor smiled slightly. The imperial family had been targeting the sacred land without masking their intentions. According to their original plans, the sacred land should be eliminated completely during this round. However, Shao Yuan had turned out to be an unexpected cockroach.

All strength drained out of Shen Fan’s body after the serpent spirit was defeated. He backed away before Jiang Chen could even use any techniques. It was clear that he had lost.

As everyone expected, Jiang Chen won easily and kicked his opponent off the stage. It was an utterly humiliating way to lose.

Jiang Chen didn't strut about like a cocky winner. Instead, he looked as if it was only natural for him to win.

Cheers erupted from the audience. The Eternal Sacred Land was especially enthusiastic in showing its support.

Their fight had been the most exciting one during this round. The twists and turns had been absolutely exhilarating.

The sacred land could maintain a shred of their dignity thanks to Jiang Chen's victory. He was their only remaining candidate.

Even the densest fool could tell there was something wrong with matchmaking. Factions that supported the sacred land were especially sensitive to what was happening and couldn't be more shocked.

The sacred land was the true ruler behind the scenes. The imperial family was brazenly challenging and displaying open defiance. Would the sacred land stand for this? Or would it strike back after the competition?

Those more observant realized that a serious conflict was on the horizon for the nation, and the current order would be disrupted. No matter what, the sacred land's image had been greatly damaged in the competition, and their authority fundamentally challenged.

There had been a shortage of talent within the sacred land in recent years, but the Five Great Gentlemen were among the best compared to geniuses from the other big factions. And it was undeniable that the top geniuses from the sacred land outnumbered those of the other factions.

However, the sacred land barely had a single spot in the final sixteen! This was the utmost of humiliation in all of its history, and completely unacceptable.

Besides, Shao Yuan's victory meant very little. Given what had happened, he was going to encounter a powerful opponent, or even Xiahou Zong in the next round.

Jiang Chen exited the stage and returned to the resting area. Those from the sacred land came up to offer words of encouragement. This fight had finally earned him the respect and approval of his peers.

Jiang Chen had thought the first prime would urge caution, but instead, she only told him to do his best and not think too much. It was puzzling. Even he, a new recruit to the sacred land, could tell that they were being targeted. The first prime must know as well.

What is she thinking? Has she not realized that the imperial family is doing this on purpose? No way. The only explanation is that she's refraining from doing anything out of consideration for the greater good. Perhaps she has a bigger plan as well.

Jiang Chen didn't want to be involved in politics between senior executives, but he couldn't just ignore it. Power might change hands because of the struggle. Things were going to get bloody no matter who won.

If the sacred land lost their control over the nation as the forefather predicted, they'd be destroyed. On the other hand, heads would also roll if the sacred land was to eliminate the threats.

It was a zero sum game.

Jiang Chen's keen intuition shrieked that the sacred land was in danger. Many top Eternal factions seemed to have reached an understanding and were acting together. He couldn't be sure if all factions had turned on the sacred land, but a good number had.

Tempestuous times were about to descend on Eternal Divine Nation.

He tried his best to regain calm. He was already on the sacred land's side. There was no changing that. They were bound together through thick and thin, or elopement with Huang'er was his only other choice.

The latter was obviously not viable. Even if Huang'er was willing to run away ignobly with him, he couldn't be a deserter and flee like a coward.

No matter if there was a grand conspiracy against the sacred land, or how perfectly it was designed, what he had to do was to disrupt it.

Perhaps even Xiahou Zong was part of it.

If he's involved, I'll start by eliminating him.

Xiahou Zong's defeat was bound to hinder their plan no matter how many steps were involved. His defeat would be the loss of a strategic pawn for the ambitious House Xiahou. What would happen if one of their key players was killed in this competition?

Jiang Chen was thrilled by the prospect. Ever since he'd learned of Xiahou Zong, he could tell that the man would be his rival, an obstacle he had to overcome.

And now, the time had come.

No matter how well-known and respected you are, Xiahou Zong, it will all be in the past after this fight! This I swear!

If Jiang Chen's speculations were right, there was a ninety percent chance that he'd encounter Xiahou Zong tomorrow. He didn't know how the hosts had been manipulating matchmaking, but they were certainly doing something.

Hopefully they'll keep doing what they've been doing. I want to fight Xiahou Zong next. The wait is getting tedious.

Jiang Chen wasn't interested in being champion. His only goal was to kill Xiahou Zong. The rest of the matches didn't matter much.

And his guess was proven right. The hosts weren't even trying to hide their trickery now. They shamelessly paired Jiang Chen with Xiahou Zong in the fourth round.

Xiahou Zong seemed to have seen it coming. He had a knowing smile on his face when he saw who his opponent was.

A good number of people had foreseen the result as well. There were no shortage of sharp folks here. They'd connected the dots and pieced together what the imperial family was doing.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1770: Perpetuation of Grudges and Resentmen

The first prime seemed to have sunk a meditative state that allowed her to ignore the host's provocative dishonesty.

Many were curious as to what was happening.

Wasn't the Eternal Sacred Land supposed to be the prevailing authority? Why was the autocratic first prime suddenly silent when obviously targeted and suppressed? This didn't seem typical sacred ground style at all.

The other matches were no longer interesting. The audience focused on the fight between Xiahou Zong and Jiang Chen.

Meanwhile, everyone on the sacred land's side was furious. The cheating was far too obvious! Was the imperial family trumpeting their own clout to the sacred land?

Yan Qingsang had mixed feelings at the moment. On one hand, he wanted Jiang Chen to pull off a miracle and smother Xiahou Zong's arrogance. On the other, he was far too wary of Xiahou Zong to think that Jiang Chen could do that with any ease.

"Brother, Xiahou Zong is different from all the others. Don't bring an unrealistic attitude into the ring. He's no Shen Fan, no Gan Ning – or anyone else, for that matter. Let's put it this way: all of the opponents you've had up to now combined wouldn't win against him. You have to keep your guard up and think of yourself as an underdog. Constant vigilance and a bit of luck may just help you turn it all around..." He tried to give Jiang Chen some advice.

Jiang Chen was completely relaxed. "Brother Yan." He patted Yan Qingsang's shoulder. "I'm totally calm right now. Unfortunately, I can't take your advice. For this one, I'm following only my heart and true self. If you trust me, then be at ease and admire how the fight plays out. If you're angry at Xiahou Zong, watching what's about to happen will definitely be an outlet for that."

"You..." Yan Qingsang was stunned.

Jiang Chen looked away, to the other geniuses from the sacred land. Most of them were of one mind by now. Though none said anything specifically, their eyes communicated all.

Gentleman Sui Chen was the only one to don a caring smile that seemed slightly hollow. "Brother Shao Yuan, we don't know each other that well, but do take care. It's not a big deal to surrender. There's nothing shameful about abstaining from fighting a monster."

The other geniuses were somewhat taken aback at this declaration.

Wu You, who'd lost to Jiang Chen earlier, frowned. "What do you mean by that, Sui Chen? Are we supposed to give up out of fear before we even engage in a fight?"

Sui Chen sighed softly. "I only mean the best for Brother Shao Yuan. He is a pill dao genius of the sacred land. What's the point of risking his life in a tournament like this? Plus, who else among us can match Xiahou Zong in a deathmatch, anyways? Self-preservation seems better to me."

“I think it’s because you chose to surrender earlier yourself, Sui Chen,” Wu You declared coolly. “You want everyone to react just like you, is that it?”

“What do you mean by that, Wu You?” Sir Sui Chen responded with displeasure. “Are you mocking me? Do you have the courage to fight Xiahou Zong yourself?”

Wu You’s tone took on an edge of hostility as well. “Even if I were a coward myself, I wouldn’t recommend others to be the same. Everyone is free to make their own choice.”

Jiang Chen smiled serenely. “That’s enough of this bickering. We are all peers of the same faction, so there’s no need for us to argue. Xiahou Zong has enjoyed his undeserved fame for many years. Someone has to rip off his mask in the end.”

Without further ado, he strode towards the arena.

This fight was perhaps one of the most key events to take place since Jiang Chen had come to Eternal Divine Nation—or Myriad Abyss, for that matter. He didn’t know what would happen if he won. But the worst would happen if he lost. Of course, he didn’t think he was going to lose.

He walked slowly and simply into the arena, each step studied and deliberate, as if he was counting the number of steps.

At first glance, he seemed to be walking to his own execution ground.

Even those who’d hoped Jiang Chen would win shook their heads. The weakness in the way he was entering the ring was prediction enough for what was to come. Was he trying to delay the fight because of dread?

Jiang Chen, however, had fully entered a meditative state in which he had no sense of self. He was entering and melding into a whole new world.

Finally, he was done with all the steps.

Both hands behind his back, Xiahou Zong towered above all upon the stage with his handsome figure. For the onlookers, he gave off an impression of being too lofty to reach. There was a contemptuous curve flitting on his lips. All other life was as ants to him.

“Maybe you think just walking into the arena is a kind of victory, Shao Yuan.” His voice was very soft, but resonated upon the eardrums of every audience member. The resonance was almost overwhelming. “Looks like you’ve realized it as well, from the way you walked here. This will be the day of your death. This arena will be your tomb.”

The hint of contempt crept all over his face. To him, Jiang Chen was just a cockroach or flea in its last throes. A bug he would momentarily crush beneath a single finger.

A slight smile broke through Jiang Chen’s somber expression. His glacial demeanor was suddenly filled with sunlight.

The genius who everyone thought had consigned himself to death was radiant all of a sudden. Like a small blade of hardy grass weathering a storm, he may be humble, but he was resilient. Had Shao Yuan actually been brainstorming a strategy?

“You still have a chance.” Xiahou Zong’s ear-piercing voice echoed at Jiang Chen’s ear once more. “I grant you an opportunity to kneel to me and become my servant. I can forgive your past indiscretions. For though I mete out decisive judgment, I am also occasionally merciful.”

Jiang Chen laughed.

“I’ve had enough of you blowing hot air, Xiahou Zong. It’s time for me to put in a few words of my own.” His grin widened as he spoke. “I counted eighty-one steps into the ring, each corresponding to a way for you to die. Which do you prefer, if I may ask?”

The grin transformed the young man into utter light-hearted and relaxed composure. To him, Xiahou Zong was the ant.

What?

Jiang Chen hadn’t exactly kept his voice down, which allowed everyone else to hear what he’d said as well. The crowd collectively doubted their ears.

How could Shao Yuan say something like this to Xiahou Zong? Did he no longer want to live? Or was he cutting off any hope of retreating?

Was this the resolution he’d adopted in the face of certain death?

Some were shocked, others amused, still others scornful or sympathetic. Above all, there was a general mood of confusion.

Xiahou Zong raised an eyebrow. Rather than being incited to anger, he smiled. “Maybe you’re trying to provoke me with your foolish words, kid, or push yourself to new heights by cutting off your way out. What a shame that it’s all pointless. Do you know why I’m even talking to you right now? I only need a single breath to kill you. You don’t have much longer to live, so I’m taking this time to admire your ugliness as much as I can. You’re going to spend a very, very long time dying!”

“You’re great at spinning stories.” Jiang Chen suddenly started clapping. “I appreciate the marvelous fiction, Xiahou Zong. But the audience will admire someone’s ugliness today: yours!”

Without waiting for a response, he smiled faintly. “You’re not the first of House Xiahou to die at my hands. Aside from Xiahou Xi, there was Xiahou Jing as well. You, Xiahou Zong, will be the third.”

“What did you say? Xiahou Jing?” Xiahou Zong suddenly paused.

“Xiahou Jing.” Jiang Chen nodded smoothly.

Though Xiahou Zong was mildly bewildered, he quickly shrugged it off with a smile. “They were trash anyway. So they’re dead? What of it? But even the trash you killed belongs to House Xiahou. You have no right to kill them. This is just another strike on your list of crimes.”

“I don’t see you as any different from them, Xiahou Zong,” Jiang Chen sneered. “All of your pride and accolades are a joke to me. Alright, enough small talk; if you’re the cause of House Xiahou’s unrealistic ambitions, then let me annihilate them – starting with you!”

He grew stern as he finished, then made a single motion. Innumerable pillars of golden light flared up, enshrouding his entire body within.

It was Jiang Chen's tempered body from the Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods, a method worthy of being ranked in the heavenly planes. He hadn't managed to perfect it prior to empyrean realm, but fourth level empyrean meant a world of difference. All sorts of abilities and methods he had trouble with before were perfected without much effort.

The magnificently splendid golden light stunned the crowd into awed silence. Some who'd lost their faith in Jiang Chen regained a little of it.

Xiahou Zong smirked with disdainful arrogance. "Maybe you have a few skills, kid, or a bloodline you inherited. But do you think that you can even shake the great Xiahou Zong? Open your eyes! We're in Eternal Divine Nation! I am like a great tree that touches the sky, and you, a slightly bigger ant. The idea that you have any chance at all is absolutely ludicrous!"