

Three Realms 1791

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

Chapter 1791: Revisiting Hell King Island

Jiang Chen was just getting started. It wasn't near time to stop. Besides, he'd never intended to make peace with the Silversword Gang.

He'd continue his killing streak until he was satisfied, and until the gang wouldn't be able to hurt anyone anymore. The way their leader had lost his calm told Jiang Chen that the gang was out of ideas on how to fight back.

They weren't as strong as he'd thought.

Seeing no signs that Jiang Chen seemed inclined to stop, the gang continuously retreated, but still suffered great casualties in the face of his enormous speed.

The gang leader gnashed his teeth and called out, "You've been having a great time killing our members. As long as the Silversword Gang stands, you will be our worst enemy. Warmspring Island will not tolerate your deeds!"

Jiang Chen judged it was about time for the Warmspring authorities to arrive. They must know about the gang's actions. Perhaps the two were even in cahoots. Otherwise, the gang couldn't have been allowed to openly commit crimes like this.

All of this would greatly undermine the island's reputation.

As he cut down the gang members, Jiang Chen kept his eyes sharp and his ears keen. Forces were converging from all directions. It was time to retreat.

Suddenly, he whistled and shot through the air with Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, soaring up like a flash of lightning.

"Listen up, Silversword Gang members. This is payback for all the people you've victimized. I'll spare the rest of you, but in the future, if I hear that you've committed atrocities again, I won't hesitate to teach you another lesson. You'll learn how to be honest men after I do this a few more times."

The boss swallowed down the blood rushing up to his throat. The gang had suffered greatly. If Jiang Chen attacked even one or two more times, they were as good as disbanded. They'd already lost half of their senior executives.

"Not so fast, murderer!" The gang leader couldn't just take the abuse. He soared up the sky and pelted after Jiang Chen. "Stay and tell those from the authorities to follow me."

None of the gang members would be of much help. He had to take matters into his own hands. Perhaps only the official authorities could eliminate this murderer.

Jiang Chen didn't blindly rush away at full speed. He maintained a good grasp on direction as he flew at a more deliberate pace. Although he was retreating, he had to do so smartly. It'd be troublesome to be intercepted by experts from Warmspring Island.

He escaped the island's vicinity in no time.

Once he reached the vast ocean, there was no longer anything tying him down. He rushed forward at full throttle and soon shook off his tail.

Nevertheless, he remained cautious. After his killing spree, the gang boss wasn't going to remain idle. The island authorities were unlikely to stand by and do nothing, either. His pursuers would continue to chase after him.

But what was there to be afraid of?

He summoned Starfate and made his way to Bluesmoke Isles at full speed. His destination was Miracle City.

The last time he was there, he'd left a message at an inn. The Vermilion Bird and Long Xiaoxuan were to go there and find him once they ended their closed door cultivation.

So many years had passed. He wanted to find out about their situation as well.

He found the inn to inquire after his friends, but no one had come for him. That meant the two divine spirit creatures had yet to end their cultivation.

"Senior Vermilion must really like Hell King Island." Jiang Chen sighed. At least it wasn't far from where he was. Why not pay a visit? He'd missed the two dearly after their long absence.

Not long after Jiang Chen's departure, a group of Warmspring cultivators arrived at Miracle City, one of which was the boss of the Silversword Gang. The other six were all Warmspring's senior executives; their cultivation was a uniform advanced empyrean realm.

One could see from this that the island authorities had been truly angered this time. They'd deployed their highest ranking law-enforcing elders.

"Boss Luo, are you sure you can still track him down?"

"I'm sure," the boss responded with great determination. "I can't stop him from escaping, but I collected some of his aura during our fight, which lets me track him down. He hasn't realized what I'm doing yet. We still have a chance to catch up! He's just left the city after a short stay."

"If so, let us chase him down at once!" declared a white-browed old man. He was the leader of the elders, and his cultivation seemed to be the highest.

The other elders took his words as their command. Even the gang boss deferred to the old man.

They regrouped and followed the gang leader in going after Jiang Chen. They soon left the city and entered the boundless ocean.

Jiang Chen had deliberately slowed down after reaching the ocean. There weren't many threats here. Once he entered the three thousand miles radius of Hell King Island, it would become much more

dangerous. Of course, it was easier for him now to deal with anything that cropped up, given the significant progress he'd made in cultivation.

Last time, he'd needed the Vermilion Bird and Long Xiaoxuan to help him traverse the ocean. He'd been great emperor then, but was now fourth-level empyrean.

A sudden sense of apprehension crept into his heart. It was a familiar feeling.

"What's going on? Why is there a feeling of danger? Are the bastards from Warmspring still chasing me?" He had sharp instincts. Once he realized the problem, he focused on surveying the area. His findings made him break out in a cold sweat.

His pursuers had not only caught up, but were only a few dozens miles away from him. It'd take an empyrean expert only a few seconds to travel the distance.

Jiang Chen tensed up and cursed under his breath, "Those bastards sure are insistent."

He had no choice but to hurry. It was fortunate that Starfate was capable of amazing speed when needed.

Although the elders from Warmspring were also traveling in airboats, their speed couldn't surpass that of Starfate. The chase continued on over the vast ocean.

"You've picked the wrong direction to flee in, kid! Right ahead of you is the infamous Hell King Island. It's a barren land where no living beings can pass through. That's a dead end. You have no chance of escape!" The gang boss may have yet to catch up to Jiang Chen, but threats were issued in abundance.

The white-browed old man frowned slightly. "Boss Luo, why are you in such a rush? You must be patient in order to eliminate that kid. How are we going to ambush him now that he knows he's approaching Hell King Island? What if he pulls off another cunning escape? Are you sure you'll be able to track him down again?"

He didn't want any accidents now that they'd had Jiang Chen cornered.

The gang leader cackled. "Venerated Elder Lu, there's no need to worry. No living beings can cross Hell King Island. He won't have the opportunity to play any tricks even if he wants to. He's killed many of my men and disrupted our business. I must skin him alive and slice and dice him!"

The gang leader ground his teeth. His hatred for Jiang Chen ran bone-deep.

The old man frowned. "Have you figured out who he is? If he's a scion from one of the top factions in the Ten Divine Nations, it'll do more harm than good for you to make him an enemy. Moreover, you might bring Warmspring down in the process."

He wasn't exaggerating. In a second-tier isle like Bluesmoke, Warmspring Island could only be considered a third-tier faction. They were at most among the fourth or fifth tier factions in the grand scheme of Myriad Abyss.

If they offended a top genius from the Ten Divine Nations and in turn offended a top faction, Warmspring was as good as destroyed. It wouldn't be the first time that such a thing had occurred in the history of Myriad Abyss.

There were several examples of geniuses from top factions meeting a premature death by the hands of uninformed local factions as they traveled to gain worldly experience. The top factions would then retaliate and eliminate the local factions.

The top factions were protective of their own. They considered it normal for their geniuses to stir up trouble in other factions' territories. However, if their geniuses were killed, they'd hold the local factions accountable.

For example, when three aristocratic families from Polylore Divine Nation suffered casualties on Winterdraw Island, they blamed Rejuvenation Isles, despite it being their own fault. In the end, they made a mess of Rejuvenation.

Top geniuses from the major factions were to be avoided at all costs.

Chief Luo tightened his jaw. "He can't be from House Xiahou. None of their youths other than Xiahou Zong is that strong, and Xiahou Zong is dead."

"Can he be a top genius from other divine nations?" asked the white-browed old man.

"He doesn't look the part. Besides, if he's a top genius, why is he not followed by guards and servants? No one seemed to recognize him at all."

The Silversword Gang was smart with how they picked their targets. They could tell a genius from a big faction at first glance and would never make a move on them. They'd made sure the young man couldn't be from a powerful faction before targeting him. At the very least, he wasn't a known genius.

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Chapter 1792: Crushing the Vermilion Feather

Boss Luo couldn't be blamed for his misjudgement. Jiang Chen didn't dress as extravagantly as the geniuses from major factions. He also didn't act like he wanted the world to know of his superiority.

He looked just like any other wandering cultivator, and he frequented taverns that major faction geniuses considered beneath them.

That was why the Silversword Gang had picked him as their target, seeing him as a cash cow they could freely exploit.

This was their only ever critical mistake that would lead to their downfall.

"Alright, there's no use talking about that now. No matter who he is, we've made him our enemy. There's no turning back." The white-browed old man sighed and waved a hand as he commanded, "Let's keep going."

Boss Luo sighed with relief. His biggest worry was the old man would tell them to give up. The Silversword Gang had suffered a great loss. If the Warmspring authorities weren't going to do anything, he'd never be able to get back at the young man.

"Venerated Elder Lu, I can feel us getting close to him. We'll be able to catch up with him if we hurry."

“We’ve been increasing our speed, but haven’t caught up yet. Is he really capable of reaching such unusual speed?”

“He must have a unique skill set to be so bold as to stir up troubles on Warmspring Island. Perhaps he’s plotting against us now! Keep your guard up. He’s no easy pickings!”

Chasing someone through the turbulent ocean was dangerous. There were many threats in the water. Jiang Chen had been here before, but that didn’t make the trip any safer.

Natural phenomena such as tsunami and spatial storms were several of the many dangers. There were also powerful spirits lurking underwater. He was fortunate to have Starfate as his sanctuary, but the endless threats still slowed him down significantly.

Moreover, Jiang Chen was the one being pursued. Being in the lead, he took the brunt of the dangers. Thanks to him clearing away the obstacles, the path was much clearer for his pursuers.

Jiang Chen moved forward at maximum speed, but still couldn’t get rid of his tail. He fumed. Those bastards don’t know what’s good for them. They’re dead set on going against me. Does one of them have the means to track me down? Otherwise, I should’ve lost them already.

His wealth of experience quickly led him to this conclusion. There were many secret tracking methods in the martial dao world; Jiang Chen knew quite a few himself. What he didn’t know was how exactly his pursuers was tracking him.

The best way to render whatever method obsolete was to kill the tracker, completely eliminating the risks. The second best way was to put such a long distance between him and his pursuers that it’d difficult to get a lock on him.

Of course, the second option was no longer viable. There was only one solution: kill his pursuers!

Fury burned through Jiang Chen’s heart. A vicious thought took root in his mind.

I’ve already killed a couple groups from Warmspring. It won’t make a difference if I eliminate another! They must be the island’s elites. I won’t be able to fight them on my own. But I’m close to Hell King Island, heh...

Jiang Chen was glad he’d made the decision to visit the Vermilion Bird and Long Xiaoxuan.

Several years had passed since they last saw each other. Senior Vermilion had already completed its rebirth at the beginning. Perhaps it’d even ascended to the next level by now.

The bird had told him its cultivation had been that high in the ancient times. It was at most ninth-level empyrean, but it was able to rival a demigod.

Progressing half a level would place it at half-step divine realm, making it a demigod. If it ascended to the next level, the bird’s bloodline would enable it to take on a third-level divine cultivator.

Almost all beings in Myriad Abyss would tremble at its feet.

According to Jiang Chen's knowledge of the Divine Abyss Continent, even the most powerful cultivators from the ancient times had failed to reach peak divine realm. The strongest figureheads had at most reached advanced divine realm, and that was back in the ancient times.

That wasn't surprising. With the limited support from a regular material plane, cultivators wouldn't be able to reach even divine realm, let alone ascend to advanced divine realm.

When a cultivator's strength surpassed the capacity of the plane, the plane would collapse, which was what gave rise to the idea of ascension to heaven.

In some lower rank material plane, those who'd reached divine realm couldn't even stay and would be thrust into a passage to a higher-ranking plane.

It was extraordinary enough for a material plane like the Divine Abyss Continent to accommodate an advanced divine cultivator in the ancient times. Besides, it was pure speculation that cultivators at that level existed at the time. There was no concrete evidence.

But one thing was certain: In the ancient times or even the primordial times, there had been a good number of divine realm masters. Those were the eras in which gods were commonplace.

The war against the demons also became the fall of the gods, the divine realm becoming nothing more than a myth. Even reaching empyrean realm was an improbable task now.

The closer Jiang Chen drew to Hell King Island, the calmer he became. There were a powerful group chasing after him, and they were getting closer. A fatal blow could land on him at anytime.

Fortunately, he was only a few thousand miles out, a distance that would take him only about half an hour. However, his pursuers would be able to catch up by then.

Jiang Chen took out a Vermilion feather and crushed it. The feather became a ball of red light that slowly vanished.

"I hope you aren't so focused on your closed door cultivation that you didn't notice, Senior Vermilion."

The feather had been a parting gift from the divine creature itself. As soon as Jiang Chen crushed it, the bird would be able to locate him, no matter how far away it was, and would come to his aid as soon as possible.

Whether it made it in time would depend on the distance it had to travel, which wasn't that long in this particular case. The bird would be able to reach him in fifteen minutes at full speed.

Jiang Chen threw a glance behind him. A few rays of light flashed through the air at amazing speed, chasing after him.

Help would be here soon. Since these people were so eager to die, they might as well die as supplements for the Vermilion Bird and Brother Long!

The life essence of these advanced empyrean experts would greatly benefit the bird and the dragon. With his mind made up, Jiang Chen deliberately slowed down, which didn't escape his pursuers' notice.

"He's gotten slower," Boss Luo said excitedly. "He's probably run into some problems."

The white-browed old man huffed. "Don't let your guard down, in case this is part of his plan. There must be a reason for him to be so confident as to enter this area. Be careful."

He was very cautious, even though they were all advanced empyrean and could easily defeat the young man. Caution was the key to survival.

The others stayed on their guard, in deference to the old man.

"Listen, young man, you can't escape!" one of the senior executives hollered threateningly. "If you're smart, you'll stop running and have a civil conversation with us. If you insist on being stubborn, the ocean will be your coffin!"

Boss Luo scoffed. "Why waste our time talking to him? Let's take care of him together. There's no convincing this brat."

Jiang Chen's voice rang through the ocean. "You people from Warmspring don't know when to quit. You've chased me all the way here. However, you have to be quick to catch up with me. If you can't, there's nothing you can do to me."

His pursuers hid smiles.

"He doesn't know the ocean ahead of him is too dangerous for him to cross. He still naively thinks that he can get rid of us with his speed!" Boss Luo's smile was twisted. He was even more convinced they'd be able to kill the kid.

But the white-browed old man raised an eyebrow. "It doesn't make sense for him to boldly venture into an area without knowing anything. Can this be a trap?"

He hadn't become the leader of the elders without being better than others in some way. He was at least more cautious and patient than his companions.

Boss Luo piped up, "Venerated Elder Lu, he may be able to play a trick on us on land, but what can he possibly do over the ocean without any support? He can't do anything even if he wants to."

The others agreed with the gang boss. There was nothing for the young man to use against them unless he planned to make a suicide attack. However, they wouldn't be stupid enough to let that happen.

Even if there was danger ahead, he would be the one to die first.

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Chapter 1793: Mortal Silken Threads

A bird of fiery crimson roosted upon Hell King Island's hottest volcanic peaks. The figure it cut was as timeless as an ancient totem. Its wings were large enough to blot out the sky. Its plumage was a glistening vermilion that exhibited a dazzling, mirror-like sheen.

The bird was none other than the Vermilion Bird, of course!

After so many years upon Hell King Island, it had finally reached the doorstep of the divine realm. This crucial change had happened half a year ago.

A demigod required fuller intuition of the heavenly dao to attain the first level of godhood. Since its breakthrough, the bird had constantly pursued to make this step as perfectly as possible.

It was no easy task, of course.

Though it was an ancient sacred bird, it sometimes wondered whether it had reached the extent of its own capabilities. It wouldn't accept that prospect. Its blood inheritance should have entitled it to far more. The Vermilion Bird believed that it had plenty more potential to play with.

But how was it supposed to do that?

This was its current top priority. More than anything, it wanted to fully enter into the divine realm within its current lifecycle. Once it did so, its lifespan would stretch to nearly eternity. Aside from the disasters restricted exclusively for the gods, it wouldn't encounter any restrictions caused by mortality.

A cultivator in the divine realm lived as long as heaven and earth. Little could threaten him save for specific disasters related to his condition.

Suddenly, the bird felt a wave of movement in its consciousness. A needle had pricked it there, allowing a nameless energy to flow in.

"Hmm?" The Vermilion Bird was shaken by what it sensed. "Young master Chen?" it blurted out.

The bird had given its feather to only one man – Jiang Chen. The reaction it was having right now was due to that feather having burned up in flames of destruction.

"This isn't good. Is young master Chen in danger?"

It had always been on good terms with human cultivators, and its bond with Jiang Chen was especially strong. The young man could be counted as one of its saviors, after all.

It was an incredibly loyal fowl. It felt that its rebirth had almost entirely been thanks to Jiang Chen. Thus, it long considered him a member of its family. The feedback from the crumbling of the Vermilion Feather naturally shocked it.

It could no longer remain focused on its cultivation and comprehension of dao. Within several wingbeats, it soared out of the endless volcanoes in a curtain of flame that colored the sky a sea of red.

The presence of the Vermilion Bird had caused life from the seas hundreds of miles around to clear out. Therefore, the surrounding waters were reasonably calm despite its ruckus.

"Xiaoxuan, Xiaoxuan..." Its low wails were tinged with urgency.

Long Xiaoxuan was cultivating in the nearby seas. Self-improvement had allowed the dragon to expand his influence over water. Whereas before he could manage only a few dozen, he now affected the seas hundreds of miles around.

Hearing the Vermilion Bird's cries, Long Xiaoxuan crashed out of the water with a geyser of water. "Old brother Vermilion, what is it?"

Though the bird was from the ancient era and supposedly from an older generation, the sacred beasts weren't particularly interested in seniority when it came to their relationship. Thus, Long Xiaoxuan and the Vermilion Bird treated each other as equals.

"Come, Xiaoxuan."

"Where are we going?" Long Xiaoxuan had never seen the Vermilion Bird so anxious before. Something was wrong.

"Young master Chen is in trouble. He just crumbled the feather I gave him," the bird declared hoarsely.

"What? Why didn't he destroy my scale too?" the dragon responded with shock.

"He knows we're together. One is enough. Why waste the other?"

Long Xiaoxuan hesitated, then nodded in agreement. "Then we should get going right away. Do you know where young master Chen is right now, old brother? How far is he away from here?"

"I can't tell precisely the distance, but he should be around..." The Vermilion Bird used its consciousness to gauge the region of reaction, then blinked. "He's quite close. On these waters, in fact. Yes, yes, he must have pursuers on his tail! That's why he fled here!"

"How close is quite close? Will we make it in time?" Long Xiaoxuan was even more distressed than the bird. He had weathered many a troubling time with Jiang Chen and considered the young man his only family. His devotion to the human was absolutely whole-hearted.

"Within three or four thousand miles. Young master Chen must've drawn quite the trouble to himself this time." The Vermilion Bird was just as worried as the dragon. Neither beast nor fowl wanted their human companion to perish.

It was difficult for ancient sacred beasts to survive in the world nowadays. A human friend allowed them to have a much easier time of it. Moreover, Jiang Chen had been genuinely nice to them.

All sacred beasts were grateful for services rendered.

The Vermilion Bird pushed itself to maximum speed, while Long Xiaoxuan swam at equivalent pace in the sea below.

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Jiang Chen's Starfate was less than three thousand miles from Hell King Island. The currents rushed strongly here, and the wind and clouds were stirred into chaos. A group of people had cut him off.

They scattered, putting his airboat in the center of their encirclement.

"Keep running, kid! Why aren't you running anymore? You looked like you had real guts and speed escaping from us like that!"

Boss Luo was furious. He spat out taunt after taunt in an attempt to rile Jiang Chen up.

The white-haired old man was still somewhat concerned. "You have no way out, sir," he declared. "Either you tell us your identity now, or we kill you and investigate after."

The boss wasn't particularly fond of the former. He wanted more than anything to cut Jiang Chen down without anyone else knowing.

"You have no right to ask my identity," Jiang Chen smiled coolly. "Most of you don't look like you're from the Silversword Gang. Why are you lending your power to evil?"

His eyes scanned Warmspring's executives coldly. In that moment, they felt it difficult to meet his gaze.

"The Silversword Gang has done everything bad under the sun. Rather than stopping them, you aid and abet them. It seems that Warmspring Island is just as bad as the gang."

"Big words, kid!"

"Venerable elder, why waste time on the kid? He has a vicious tongue. We don't need to make ourselves upset by listening to him."

"Yes. He deserves a beating. Let's take him down first."

The white-haired old man sighed. "Someone who has too many edges dies an early death, young man. Listen to my advice and surrender. You can choose a relatively honorable death then. If you anger me, we will seek out and rout your family and friends as well!"

Jiang Chen glinted with cold scorn. "So Warmspring defies justice to the bitter end then!"

In the next moment, an eerie smile crept over his face. "I suppose that's fine. I was hesitating earlier whether to kill you lot, but it seems that all of you deserve it utterly!"

"Kill us?" One of the executives brayed with exaggerated laughter. "Are you daydreaming, kid? You're a stray dog on the brink of your own death, yet you're still talking as if we're the ones in trouble?"

Jiang Chen grinned from ear to ear. He licked his lips as bloodthirst rose. His eyes swept across the faces of those before him icily.

"Get him!" the white-haired old man bellowed a call to attack; several empyrean realm experts struck in unison.

The fighting of empyrean cultivators was different from their weaker peers. Rather than cause a lot of unnecessary commotion, they used only their deadliest methods.

Empyrean abilities sealed the sky. Each man took a corner, blocking Jiang Chen from every vector of escape. There was nowhere left to hide or flee.

Furthermore, the cultivators' expertise was evident in their coordination. Clearly, they were used to fighting alongside each other. Every motion was perfectly practiced and rehearsed, as if they'd had countless bouts.

Jiang Chen didn't dare take them lightly. He knew that he wasn't facing down just any old group of cultivators. Executives of Warmspring Island were both martially capable and well-trained. Without something he could rely on, he would find it nearly impossible to escape. Once trapped, he could only resist until he was fatigued or slain.

The Silversword Gang's Boss Luo seemed rather out of place here. "I thought you were good at killing, kid?" he sneered. "Why don't you do a repeat performance?"

"Resign yourself to your fate!" Seeing that his companions had set up their tactical formation, the white-haired old man beckoned to the gang boss. "Boss Luo, are you going to help us in the attack? Or ready yourself at the side?"

"Help you attack, of course." Depravity was written all over the boss's face. "He killed so many of my guys. How can I let him die so easily?"

"With us, then!" the old man stated before producing a fly-whisk. He swept an innumerable cascade of white threads toward Jiang Chen.

The young man realized what the attack was as soon as it was executed. "Mortal Silken Threads?!" he cried out involuntarily.

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Chapter 1794: Moment of Life and Death

Jiang Chen knew the Mortal Silken Threads very well. They were a rare but deadly material feared not for their physical properties, but for their ability to attack a cultivator's soul as well. Once the threads latched on, they changed color very quickly. A deep red meant that their victim had both his flesh and soul drained away.

More concerningly, they could attack others from afar. Even nine to fifteen meters of space weren't enough to mitigate their effects, though the distance did dampen their influence somewhat.

The closer they were to their prey, the more powerful they were. However, a slow and methodical assault from afar was also useful to lull the opponent into a false sense of security. By the time they realized, it was often too late.

Thankfully, Jiang Chen had seen them in the past and knew how dangerous they were. He summoned an absurd amount of magnetic force all around him without hesitation. The surging waves blocked the threads' brisk aggression.

He charged ahead as a streak of light.

"Where are you trying to go, kid?"

The barricade around him was airtight. Each corner and pathway was meticulously manned.

The one who stood in his way carried a lotus-flower hammer. Jiang Chen was blasted by countless streams of petal-shaped air currents, preventing him from proceeding.

Though this cultivator wasn't as strong as the white-haired old man, he wasn't too far off. Jiang Chen wasn't certain of winning one-on-one, much less breaking through the defenses in a crucial moment.

"Out of my way!" Jiang Chen roared angrily.

He aimed a fierce shot at the cultivator without warning. The other didn't expect an attack at such close range with minimal preparations; the arrow had appeared almost magically upon the string.

He hastily raised his hammer to block the missile, and Jiang Chen used the momentum to attempt to dash past.

"Where're you going now, kid?" A sinister voice echoed from the side.

It was none other than Boss Luo. He had said he would assist in the initial attack, but was actually waiting in the wings. He'd been waiting to land that crucial strike and now his opportunity had come!

His own flash of light heralded a two-handed sweeping cut that pointed horizontally at Jiang Chen's abdomen. It was so sudden and brutal that it could cut through space.

Jiang Chen was astonished. If he were hit by the attack, even his tempered body wouldn't save him from severe injury. In fact, it was quite possible he would be cut in half.

Without much thought as to the consequences, he summoned a Confounding Puppet to deter the slash. He himself leaped higher into the heavens.

Clang!

There was a harsh screech of metal on metal. The force behind the slash had been terrifying indeed.

Though the Confounding Puppet was quite sturdy, its arms were nevertheless sliced off by the blow. Thankfully, there was no blood – owing to the fact that the puppet was a mere construct.

Jiang Chen seethed when he saw the damage the puppet had suffered. The Confounding Puppets had been with him for a long time. He considered any damage to them as damage to his own siblings. How could he not be furious?

"I swear vengeance on Warmspring Island as long as I live!" The young man howled in anger.

Boss Luo was a little discouraged by the puppet's interception of the lethal attack, but his expression quickly turned into a malicious grin once more.

"You think you still have a chance, kid? Lay down and die!"

Everyone could see that though the kid was capable, he couldn't last much longer under their collective encirclement. It would only take a few more moments for them to get the kill.

The white-haired old man harrumphed softly. "Don't be too eager for the prize. Keep to your own responsibility. Be careful not to give the kid an opening!"

The old man was concerned that a hole would occur in their formation. That meant an opportunity for their quarry to escape – not exactly something he wanted to see.

Though he had been attacked only a handful of times, Jiang Chen was in a real bind. He had never been so on the back foot in his entire life. Any attack from his assailants could be lethal at any time.

All six cultivators here could threaten him. One or two wouldn't be enough to kill him, but it wouldn't be difficult for them to take him down in tandem.

“I have to hold on.” Despite his passiveness, he wasn’t panicked. He had trump cards he’d still yet to play. Even if the Vermilion Bird and his draconic friend couldn’t get here in time, he could depart with his spacetime seal at any time.

The cultivators before him were clearly committed to slaying him; obviously he wasn’t going to let them do as they wished.

“Myriad Abyss lives up to its reputation. Even a place as small as Warmspring Island has many elite experts.” At the same time, Jiang Chen could admit that he had underestimated his enemy.

He had thought a place as minor as Warmspring Island capable of housing two to three empyrean experts at most. It was frankly remarkable that the island had been able to mobilize as many as it had.

He wasn’t going to give up anytime soon though, and wouldn’t activate his spacetime seal until the very last.

“Stop struggling, kid. You don’t have another chance.”

“Forcing us to do all we’ve done... you can consider yourself skilled.”

“Now, you can die!”

The white-haired old man’s Mortal Silken Threads filled the sky once more, cast upon Jiang Chen like a great net. This attack was several times more threatening than his last. It seemed that the old man was giving it all he had.

However, Jiang Chen had a definite plan to counter it. Tendrils from his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice formed a dual attribute defense all around him. At the same time, he transformed into escaping light once more.

He wanted to use his Lotus’ illusory abilities to trick his opponents. Unfortunately, the white-haired old man had an exceptionally sharp eye.

“A decoy this time?” he harrumphed. His fly-whisk shook, throwing innumerable deadly threads in Jiang Chen’s direction.

Jiang Chen cursed the sly old fox. His heart grew heavy. Would he really need to use his spacetime seal?

It was at this time that a crisp bird call sounded at his ear. The sound was more beautiful to him than any music could possibly be in the world.

Chirp, chirp!

In the next instant, waves of fire burned across the skies. It descended to meet the Mortal Silken Threads that threatened Jiang Chen.

The white-haired old man smirked. He didn’t care much about counterattacks of this kind.

“Ridiculous. Normal fire won’t work against my threads.” Indeed, the Mortal Silken Threads were a remarkable material. Standard attacks of any kind failed to damage it in any capacity.

Alas, his smile barely had time to spread before his expression froze. Incredulity bulged from his eyes. His heart skipped a painful beat.

Not good!

His Mortal Silken Threads, his pride and joy, was being burned by the fiery curtain and disintegrating into ashes at an incredibly rapid pace. The fire touched the handle in almost the next instant.

How could this be?

The white-haired old man felt his blood run cold. Not content with just the threads, the fire was attempting to consume his body as well!

Terrified, he rolled backward in a mad dash to retreat. He was filled with a fear for the unknown.

Jiang Chen was overjoyed. He knew that the Vermilion Bird had finally come.

“Young master Chen, is that you?” The divine creature’s voice sounded in the air.

“Hahaha, you’re finally here. If you’d taken much longer, you’d no longer be able to see me,” Jiang Chen responded in ancient beast language.

The six cultivators from Warmspring Island looked listlessly among themselves, unsure of what the young man was saying. They didn’t know why, but a cloying aura seemed to hang upon their hearts, giving them an apocalyptic pressure that they couldn’t relieve.

The white-haired old man backed off several hundred yards before halting in a daze. His eyes glittered as he glanced into the sky, his dread unabated.

“What is it, venerated elder Lu?” Boss Luo sidled over, his eyes burning with rage. Clearly, he was agitated at not having killed Jiang Chen in the prior effort.

“Be careful, everyone. The kid has a helper!” Though the old man didn’t understand the ancient beast language, the strange voice that had sounded was real enough.

“Hmph, so the kid had a backup plan? Not bad. What are we six scared of though? We’ll just take all of his helpers down too.” Boss Luo’s sinister declaration lacked the old man’s wariness.

Jiang Chen became very relaxed after reuniting with his bestial friends. The Vermilion Bird had finished its rebirth several years ago. After baptism in flame over all these years, it must have recovered to its original peak!

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

Chapter 1795: The Situation Completely Turns Around

The Vermilion Bird’s speed was frightfully astonishing. It’d arrived at the scene of the battle in the blink of an eye.

The group looked up at the sky with brows furrowed. The clouds looked as if they had caught fire, the flames spreading until the entire sky was set ablaze.

“What is that?” exclaimed one of the elders.

The white-browed elder's expression turned severe. "Be careful. A formidable foe is coming."

Even someone as ferocious as Boss Luo was paralyzed by the terrifying phenomenon. The killing intent in his eyes gave way to horror.

An endless sea of fire roiled and invaded their space. Out came a divine spirit with expanded wings that obscured the sun. Its graceful form stood out from the flame like a blooming lotus.

The Vermilion Bird had come to the rescue!

Its shriek reached the dome of the sky and stirred both heaven and earth. Winds gathered from all directions and the ocean raged. The world trembled!

Jiang Chen was thrilled to witness its tremendous might. The bird had recovered to the level it'd been in the ancient times and even exceeded its peak, a stark contrast to its sickly self when they'd first met.

"Congratulations, Senior Vermilion! You've had tremendous progress during the years on Hell King Island. This is cause for celebration." Jiang Chen's delight was clear in his voice. He was genuinely happy for the Vermilion Bird.

The bird laughed. "I've only made a little breakthrough. You'll know what I mean when you see Xiaoxuan. Now that's what you call progress!"

Brother Long?

Among the raging ocean and rolling clouds came a staccato of six soaring columns of water threatening the sky. They combined into a waterspout that shot through the air and fired right at the group of seven, catching them off guard despite their extraordinary skills.

Fortunately, their cultivation enabled them to defend, albeit with some difficulty, instead of being caught by the vortex. Still, the shock alone was enough to debilitate them. What was going on?

A column of water suddenly rose through the air with tremendous force, on top of which was a coiled true dragon.

A true dragon!

The seven men could barely believe their eyes. Was it really a true dragon?!

Brother Long!

Jiang Chen was ecstatic to see the dragon's demonstration of power. He'd improved as much as the human had, if not more. The dragon must have reached fourth level or even fifth level empyrean.

Otherwise, not even the descendent of true dragons would be able to almost decapacitate seven advanced empyrean experts with an attack. The dragon now rivaled an advanced empyrean expert!

The elders and Boss Luo widened their eyes in disbelief. Who would've thought a true dragon resided in this ocean? The spirit hovering in the sky was even more terrifying. It seemed to be the mythical Vermilion Bird!

Oh heavens!

Who the hell was this young man and how had he acquired such helpers? The true dragon and Vermilion Bird were descendants of the Four Divine Beasts from the ancient times! The elders and Boss Luo weren't among the top cultivators in Myriad Abyss, but they were experienced enough to know of the divine beasts.

"Venerated Elder Lu, are they... the Four Divine Beasts of legend?"

"I can't say." The white-browed old man had completely lost his calm. Fear had crushed his heart in a tight grip since the destruction of his silk. He struggled to even make a sound.

"Watch out," he reminded in a low voice once he'd finally recovered from his fear. "We can't defeat them. We'll split up and run."

Boss Luo couldn't accept that. "Venerated Elder Lu, there's nothing for us to fear if we stick together! So they're of the divine beasts' bloodline. Big deal! As long as they aren't at their peak, we stand a chance of winning by fighting as a team!"

A chance?

The white-browed old man scoffed mockingly. "Boss Luo, your Silversword Gang is going to be the death of us. My silk was supposed to be indestructible against fire or water, yet it was easily consumed by the bird's fire. Even if the Vermilion Bird isn't at its peak, it's not a foe we can rival."

"What?"

"We can't win!" the old man rushed out. "Face reality and run!"

Jiang Chen had arrived at the Vermilion Bird's side. It nuzzled Jiang Chen with its head. They'd both missed each other after the long absence. "Who are these people, young master Chen?"

"A group of insistent bastards who used their number against me," Jiang Chen spat. "Senior Vermilion, I need your help this time. Show them what you've got." He deliberately switched to human language. "They're irredeemable villains that deserve to die. Send them all to hell."

The bird grinned. "That'd be a waste. They're all advanced empyrean cultivators. They'll make great supplements."

It was speaking in the language of the ancient beasts, so the elders and the gang leader didn't understand it. But its disturbing expression was enough to send a shudder down their spines.

"Please listen to me, my friend." The white-browed old man knew when to back down. "There must be a misunderstanding. Please... "

"Misunderstanding? You chased after me for hundreds of thousands of miles. You had plenty of time to realize your mistake. Why didn't you see there was a misunderstanding when you were chasing me, or when you were trying to kill me?"

The old man froze and smiled ruefully. "We were cheated by this man, my friend. There's no reason for Warmspring Island to take the fall for the Silversword Gang. Don't worry. We'll do what's right this time. You can decide what to do with the gang leader. We'll destroy the gang once we return to the island. There will be no Silversword Gang from then on!"

Boss Luo scowled. "Venerated Elder Lu, you..."

"Shut up. Your gang has committed a myriad of crimes. I've long warned you to behave and stop stirring up trouble. You bit off more than you can chew this time! As the law-enforcing elder of Warmspring, I won't let you run rampant on the island no more."

The old man changed his tune at the drop of a hat. More surprisingly, his subordinates had circled the gang leader without missing a beat, clearly intending to apprehend the gang leader.

"Just wait for a moment," the old man said respectfully. "Warmspring will play by the rules and arrest this man. The rest is up to you."

It took some time for Jiang Chen to recover from his surprise. He'd seen his fair share of shameless men and hadn't expected the respectful looking old man to take the cake. Still, he wasn't going to be deceived.

He scoffed. "If you'd done this back in Warmspring, I may have forgiven you. However, after pursuing me for such a great distance, don't you think you've changed your story too suddenly to be believable?"

The white-browed old man's heart sank. His move had obviously failed. He dropped down to his knees immediately and begged, "This old man is Lu Che. I'm deeply regretful for rousing your fury. Please give me another chance. I'm willing to surrender and serve as your slave."

"Oh?" Never had Jiang Chen foresee that the old man would surrender so readily after realizing the futility of resistance. His gaze swept through every one of his foes, his eyes glinting in deep thought. The show of submission swayed him somewhat. He turned to the bird. "What do you think, Senior Vermilion?"

"Whatever you say." The bird nodded.

"Brother Long?" Jiang Chen asked with a smile.

The dragon huffed. "Even Brother Vermilion said it'd listen to you. What else can I say?"

Long Xiaoxuan was still his prideful self after all these years.

Jiang Chen broke into laughter and said bemusedly, "You're smart to cut your losses, Lu Che. However, people like you will betray me just as easily. How do I know I can trust you?"

"I'm willing to do anything to gain your trust!"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "There is something. I can brand you with my consciousness and make you my slaves, which will allow me to control you utterly. What say you?"

Lu Che exchanged a glance with his companions. They were a little hesitant.

Boss Luo laughed maniacally. "You've disappointed me, Lu Che. I didn't know you were such a coward! I'm not going to play this game with you!"

He knew he wouldn't be spared after surrendering even if Lu Chen and the other elders were. The Silversword Gang was the one that'd started everything. Someone had to take the fall. The young man might take the elders in as slaves, but he was bound to kill the boss.

The gang leader flew away in a flash of light. He was smart enough to recognize that he couldn't turn things around, and so the best option was to flee.

Jiang Chen looked at him calmly, unfazed by his attempt to flee.

The Vermilion Bird smiled derisively and flapped its wings. Feathers turned into sharp blades and inflicted powerful slashes at the gang leader. The destructive hit caught up with him and blocked his escape route, forcing him to come back.

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

Chapter 1796: Willing to be a Slave

Boss Luo widened his eyes at the blades of Vermilion feathers blocking all of his escape routes. The slashes were too powerful for him to defend head-on. Even brief contact would likely kill him several times over.

Lu Che and the other elders had considered taking advantage of the chaos and running away, but they gave up on that when they saw the gang leader trapped by the blades. It suddenly dawned on them that the Vermilion Bird was far more powerful than they were, and could vanquish them as easily as swatting a fly.

Lu Che realized that the bird must've been the one that'd destroyed his Mortal Silken Thread.

Those from Warmspring had gone as pale as a sheet. Boss Luo cried out in witless horror, "Lu Che, you're acting like this is none of your business, but it's your turn after I die! If we fight together, some of us may be able to escape!"

He was still holding on the hope of dragging others down with him. However, the Warmspring authorities had lost their will to fight. They weren't going to let the gang leader coax them into changing their mind.

They were no fools. Boss Luo was as good as dead. They'd get themselves killed for nothing if they tried to help. Besides, the gang leader had been the one to offend the young man. Perhaps they would stand a better chance of being spared after his death.

"Leave him to me, Xiaoxuan!" The Vermilion Bird whipped through the air with its mouth wide open, leaving a trace of red glow in its wake. Boss Luo lost control of his body and was caught by a vortex of air.

The bird took in a deep breath and devoured the human alive.

The macabre scene instilled fear into the elders. Petrified, they watched in horror.

Thump, thump, thump, thump, thump!

The five of them reflexively dropped to their knees. They knew better than anyone how futile it'd be to resist such overwhelming power. Begging for mercy was the only way to survive.

Jiang Chen's gaze swept over the remaining five until it settled on Lu Che. "Warmspring Island is decently well-known in the area, but not particularly powerful. Tell me, why are there so many advanced empyrean cultivators there?"

He'd been wondering about that for a while.

"I'll tell you, I'll tell you everything! Warmspring is different from the other islands. It's a prosperous port that's a trading hub for the surrounding regions. Most trades, especially those of the clandestine nature, are conducted on the island. We were outsiders recruited into the Hall of Law Enforcement by the island lord, rather than locals born and raised on the island." Lu Che didn't leave any details out.

"Hmph, it doesn't make sense for Warmspring to be this bold with illicit deeds even if you have the strength to back yourselves up. Aren't you afraid of offending geniuses from the Ten Divine Nation and having the island meet its demise?"

Lu Che smiled wryly. "You may be surprised to find out that Warmspring is also supported by the Ten Divine Nations. As mere subordinates, we don't know for sure which divine nation the island lord comes from, but we suspect he has the support of more than one nation."

Jiang Chen found that difficult to believe. "What? Who would go to such lengths for an island like Warmspring?"

"That's the way it is according to my observations," Lu Che spilled everything he knew. "The Silversword Gang is a money-making tool for the lord, which is why Boss Luo was bold enough to openly defy us. He has the lord of Warmspring backing him up."

The interconnected web of the island's politics was finally made clear.

Jiang Chen scoffed. "As I expected, the gang has a backer for them to be so bold. What a surprise for it to be the lord of Warmspring."

However, he didn't intend to intervene. He'd killed a good number of Silversword's members and mollified his anger. As long as Warmspring didn't bother him again, he didn't have the time to deal with the island.

He stared at the elders, his lips twisted into an odd smile. "So should I kill you all, or give you a chance to live?"

"Please give us a chance," Lu Che rushed out. "We can tell that you're not an ordinary character. We're willing to follow you and serve you. We won't resist even if you brand us with your consciousness!"

Lu Che and his companions had all started out as wandering cultivators. They joined Warmspring simply in pursuit of wealth and power. Wandering cultivators of humble backgrounds like them knew when to make compromises and prioritized their survival. Thus, they would always choose to live, even if it would be a humiliating life.

It was difficult for them to reach their level as wandering cultivators. None of them were willing to die just like this. Dying for Warmspring, especially, would be a worthless death.

Jiang Chen nodded. "If so, I'll give you a chance to live."

Lu Che and his companions were delighted and quickly bowed down to Jiang Chen. "This subordinate meets our master. Thank you, master, for letting us live."

They painted a pitiful picture. It was unbecoming for a group of advanced empyrean experts to discard their dignity in such manner. However, the martial dao world was just this cruel. One had to fawn over others to survive.

Besides, Lu Che and the other elders didn't find their submission humiliating. They didn't know who Jiang Chen was, but he had to be somebody, as he could easily command a true dragon and Vermilion Bird.

Someone like him had better prospects than the lord of Warmspring.

The Vermilion Bird alone would be able to kill the island lord. There was no way the lord could win.

On the other hand, while the true dragon hadn't seemed to have reached its full potential yet, everyone knew how powerful a true dragon bloodline was. It would be terrifyingly strong once it matured. Not even a Vermilion Bird at its peak would necessarily be able to defeat it.

The thought sent a shudder down their spines. The bird and the dragon were terrifying enough. Who exactly was this human cultivator? What powerful factions were behind him? They didn't dare even think about the possibilities.

They shuddered to think what could have happened. It was fortunate that they'd smartly decided to submit. If they'd fought back, they'd have been devoured like Boss Luo.

Jiang Chen was familiar with consciousness branding.

"Relax your minds and don't try to resist," he warned coldly. "If I find any resistance in the process, I'll assume you don't mean to surrender. Then you only have yourself to blame when you get devoured like Luo."

The brand wouldn't disappear unless the master voluntarily revoked it. When the master died, the brand would act up and destroy the servants' consciousness as well.

Essentially, the brand tied the servants' fate with their master. The only way to be free of it was for the master to deem the servants trustworthy and erase the brands. Otherwise, their survival was completely dependent on their master's mercy.

The brands were a great risk, but they didn't have a choice. Their minds relaxed completely like low-hanging fruit waiting to be picked.

Jiang Chen's consciousness wasn't any worse than theirs, if not better. After all, with the chain seal still in his mind, the constant supply of power greatly fueled his consciousness. He could rival a ninth-level empyrean expert.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft pfft!

One after another, brands descended on their consciousness, leaving a deep imprint. The five of them were shocked by the tremendous power radiating from the marks, which dominated over their consciousness. In other words, their master's consciousness was even more powerful than theirs.

They couldn't believe it!

In the earlier fight, they'd concluded that while the young man's cultivation was decent, he hadn't yet reached advanced empyrean. He was strong, but couldn't take a concerted attack from them.

However, it turned out that his consciousness was much greater than theirs. How could someone so young reach such heights?

They were both fearful and impressed.

They'd been reluctant to be branded, but there was no resisting such a mighty master. The young man was a formidable foe. He may not be stronger than they were at the moment, but someone his age would surpass them in no time at all.

Given the trajectory of his progress, it was possible that he'd one day break through his limits and ascend to godhood. As his servants, they would greatly benefit from his ascension.

There were only a handful of cultivators in Myriad Abyss who'd been said or proven to be divine realm masters. Many empyrean experts would kill for a chance to serve a god as slaves and receive a divine's guidance.

Being a servant of a god was the greatest ambition and honor for many empyrean cultivators. A god's guidance was the only way for them to overcome the bottleneck in their pursuit of martial dao and reach greater heights.

Who would've thought they'd be given the opportunity? Their despair soon gave way to pleasant surprise.

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Chapter 1797: Settling Down and Decisions

The Vermilion Bird and Long Xiaoxuan were pleased for Jiang Chen that the Warmspring empyrean cultivators had submitted to him. However, the young man had no intention of bringing them along just yet.

"Lu Che," he said, "since you've joined me, I'll make things simple. If you aid me wholeheartedly, you will be blessed beyond comprehension in the future. If you betray me though... I'm sure I don't need to go there."

Lu Che hastily pointed toward the sky to swear, "Don't worry, master. Now that we've surrendered to you, we have no intention of treachery. Moreover, it may have been our fortune to fall into your hands. It would've been easy for you to kill us all."

These men were most skilled at judging their situation. As they said before, they knew when to cut their losses.

Jiang Chen had taken them in as slaves due to other considerations. He had little foundations in Myriad Abyss, save for some reputation thanks to his affiliation with the Eternal Sacred Land, and certainly almost nothing in terms of manpower.

The sacred land made for a superb patron. It had the venerated forefather, the three primes, and countless experts. Unfortunately, its current position meant that there was little Jiang Chen could rely on.

In fact, the sacred land may very well need to rely on him in the future.

Therefore, forming his own faction to strengthen the forces at his command was worthy of consideration.

Originally, he'd wanted them to go to Winterdraw, but abandoned that prospect after a moment of thought. These people added together were roughly equivalent to Yan Wanjun, and the old man wouldn't necessarily be able to keep them in line. He didn't imagine they would listen in the first place. They followed his orders, but no one else's.

It was better to let them move about freely for now.

"You lot, go to Miracle City for now. Make yourselves comfortable there and be ready to answer my summons. Remember, you may do what you like in that city, but make sure to keep yourselves in good shape. You are my servants – if I do not allow you to die, then you should not die!"

"Understood!" The cultivators heaved an internal sigh of relief after hearing Jiang Chen wouldn't bring them along. They had their freedom... for now.

They definitely couldn't return to Warmspring Island. Miracle City wasn't a bad place to stay for awhile. It was certainly a much more bustling city.

"Alright, all of you can leave." Jiang Chen dismissed his crew with a final declaration. His consciousness seal ensured that they had nowhere to escape to. As long as they lived, he could call them to him with a single thought.

The Vermilion Bird suddenly laughed after Lu Che and his friends departed. "It's been awhile, young master Chen. Both your cultivation and your style have improved in that time. You toy with even empyrean experts easily, with minimal resistance."

"Hahaha, you played a big part in helping me intimidate them, Senior Vermilion." Jiang Chen had indeed used the bird's strength to his advantage.

"No need to call me 'senior' anymore. Otherwise, Xiaoxuan will be upset. 'Old brother Vermilion' is fine. I'm much older than both of you, but my heart is still young." The sacred fowl was quite pleased after its rebirth.

Jiang Chen tossed a pill casually toward his draconic friend. "Brother Dragon, this is a Crowning Empyrean Pill. It will give you a free level in the empyrean realm."

Long Xiaoxuan's eyes brightened as he caught the pill.

The Vermilion Bird sighed. "Humanity's most remarkable aspect is your wisdom. The human bloodline is weak by itself, but you have several advantages. An affinity to fuse other races' bloodlines into their own and an all-encompassing wisdom difficult for other races to comprehend are just two of them. That intellect shines through especially in the area of pill dao."

Jiang Chen wasn't proud. To his knowledge, there were races more adept at pill dao than humanity. Their only detriment was that their reproductive ability was far inferior in return.

Man and beasts chatted about what had transpired in the time they were apart. Jiang Chen was sincerely pleased to hear that the Vermilion Bird was now a demigod, a half-step divine.

Long Xiaoxuan, on the other hand, was fourth level empyrean – just like Jiang Chen. The young man was secretly gratified by this; he'd thought the dragon was already fifth or sixth level at first. It seemed he'd been mistaken. Still, the dragon carried astonishing power for fourth level empyrean.

"I worked very hard and had a Crowning Empyrean Pill to get me to fourth level empyrean, Brother Dragon. I'm a bit envious that you got there so easily."

Long Xiaoxuan wasn't particularly proud of its own achievement. He admired that Jiang Chen had gotten to fourth level empyrean as well. After all, the young man had only been a great emperor when they'd separated.

It had been only a few years since then. The speed at which Jiang Chen had cultivated was nothing short of miraculous for a human.

"Don't be dissatisfied, young master Chen," the Vermilion Bird intoned. "I've never seen anyone cultivate as quickly as you, even in the ancient times. I have the odd feeling that you have no limit when it comes to cultivation. You can break through whenever you want! I've seen plenty of human geniuses and greats, but you're one-of-a-kind. You defy my understanding of your race."

This was high praise indeed from the sacred beast. Long Xiaoxuan followed up with some applause of his own. "Young master Chen's talent is very rare among humans. I'm not familiar with Myriad Abyss Island, but he's on a different level from anyone in the human domain."

"Alright, you two have given me more than enough compliments. I may need your help this time."

"Just say the word, young master Chen." The Vermilion Bird was in a good mood. Jiang Chen had saved its life, so it had a duty to help with anything he asked.

"Do you need help getting your girl? The one named Huang'er, yes? Let's go to Eternal Divine Nation right now and grab her." The Vermilion Bird spoke with great bravado.

"No, no, please don't misunderstand. I have Huang'er already, and have sent her back to the human domain. Right now, we have a different issue..." Jiang Chen elaborated upon his experiences in the Eternal Sacred Land as well as their current plight.

"Without the Eternal Sacred Land," he emphasized, "I wouldn't have been able to save Huang'er nearly as easily. I owe them one for that. Plus, I have a promise with the sacred land's venerated forefather. I can't just abandon them."

The Vermilion Bird nodded. "You're as responsible and principled as always, young master. That's what I appreciate the most about you. So not everyone here in Myriad Abyss is terrible then! The ten sacred lands have managed an admirable effort so far. They must've made countless sacrifices to defend Divine Abyss' gates from then 'til now. There are many bad humans, but also some whose selfless exploits deserve to be immortalized."

The sacred fowl had a very particular sense of duty. Its relationship since ancient times with humanity entitled it to a degree of authority. "What do you think, Xiaoxuan?"

“Sure, I’ll come. I have to do it for young master Chen’s sake.” There was a passionate heart beneath Long Xiaoxuan’s flippant exterior. In truth, he possessed greater affection for Jiang Chen than perhaps even the Vermilion Bird.

He had weathered many storms in life with the young man. Jiang Chen had taken perfect care of him all the while, which made it difficult to be anything other than grateful.

“Alright, we’ll go together.” The Vermilion Bird was overjoyed.

“Right, where’s Little White? How’s it doing?” Long Xiaoxuan suddenly remembered the Astral White Tiger which’d always been his rival.

Both beasts wanted to surpass the other, which had sparked a fierce rivalry that was still ongoing. That didn’t mean they were on bad terms though. Quite the opposite: they admired each other in a way.

Thus, Long Xiaoxuan’s missing the tiger it hadn’t seen was understandable.

“Little White has found a fortuitous opportunity somewhere recently,” Jiang Chen smiled. “It speeds up the tiger’s cultivation an incredible amount. I feel that the opportunity is immensely valuable – likely more meaningful than even Hell King Island was for you, old brother Vermilion.”

“Oh? You would go that far to describe it?” The Vermilion Bird’s eyes lit up.

“Mhm,” Jiang Chen inclined his head. “You’ll know when you get there. That tiger found an ore vein that has great affinity for his attribute. He took to the place like fish to water. I wager that in a few years, he’ll become a completely different beast.”

The Vermilion Bird roared with laughter. “Looks like you have to start working hard yourself, Xiaoxuan! Little White’s fortune far excels anything we have here.”

Long Xiaoxuan nodded, his expression becoming somber. Clearly, the dragon’s inborn pride didn’t want it to lose in him competition against Little White. Moreover, he had begun cultivating earlier than the tiger.

Though Little White was still a bit behind, that was no longer a guarantee with the ore vein in play. After all, he was an Astral White Tiger. He could fast-track its cultivation to a concerning speed as well.

“When it comes to cultivation, everyone has his own path,” Jiang Chen laughed. “Maybe you’ll find a similar blessing one day that propels you into divinity?”

In the world of martial dao, opportunities were the hardest thing to pin down. There were surprises everywhere. Something that might seem to be initially insignificant might lead to a motherlode in the end.

“Look at me now,” the Vermilion Bird consoled. “I lived in Divine Abyss Continent in the ancient times, but I’m still only a demigod. Why? Because it wasn’t time for my fortunes to turn yet. My life was up without an opportunity for rebirth. Thankfully, I came to know young master Chen. Without him, perhaps the ruins of the Primosanct Sect would’ve been my gravesite as well.”

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Chapter 1798: Returning to Eternal Divine Nation

The Vermilion Bird and Long Xiaoxuan's companionship immensely bolstered Jiang Chen's mentality. He found the same feeling of camaraderie he'd had in his days on the run all those years ago.

"Old brother Vermilion, Brother Dragon. Let's make the most of our time here and really go all out. Old brother's cultivation is at a bottleneck right now, and needs a new opportunity to break through to divine realm. Hell King Island isn't enough anymore. I think you need to fight and absorb as much spirit energy as possible. Only then will you understand divinity and become a divine yourself!" Jiang Chen was in high spirits.

"You're right. Battle will nurture me and feed me the power I need to break through. Many geniuses did this in the ancient times on their path of continuous self-improvement." The Vermilion Bird sighed. "In terms of bloodline purity, perhaps mine isn't as wholesome as Xiaoxuan's true dragon blood.

"Our good dragon here might be able to reach divinity through natural cultivation, but I need to experience all kinds of trial and difficulties. I've weathered countless ordeals since ancient times for this one opportunity. I suppose my greatest fortune was having met you in my life, young master Chen."

The young man was rather embarrassed. "How can I accept that kind of praise, old brother Vermilion?"

"Hahaha, no need for that kind of humility. From the first day I met you, I knew you were destined for great things. I think our time adventuring with you will be very exciting! Don't you think so, Xiaoxuan?"

The dragon nodded, but was evidently still deep in thought. The newest information about the Astral White Tiger had put a bit of pressure on Long Xiaoxuan. He was trying to figure out how to maintain its current advantage.

After leaving that patch of ocean, Long Xiaoxuan and the Vermilion Bird both transformed into human forms. The dragon took on his customary appearance of a lanky youth, while the Vermilion Bird took on the shape of a burly young man in a red robe. His hair was rather unorthodox: bald on both sides with a red snake-like flattened mohawk in the middle.

This, coupled with his remarkably unique crimson robes, made him stand out quite a bit.

The Vermilion Bird touched his nearly smooth head, chuckling. "I just finished my rite of rebirth, so I feel quite young again. You don't mind this, do you?"

Jiang Chen laughed as well. "Quite the opposite of what I imagined. Your human form is adorable in its own way, old brother, haha!"

The bird-man scratched his head again, a bit embarrassed. He was rather pleased with this look, even though he didn't consider it entirely fitting for his age.

"Don't call me Vermilion Bird from now on. My name is Zhu Que, don't get it wrong now!"

The two names were almost homophones in Chinese.

Taking human form allowed the Vermilion Bird and Long Xiaoxuan to hide their identities. Outsiders wouldn't be able to perceive a single thing.

After they returned to Miracle City, Jiang Chen secretly monitored Lu Che and the others. They had remained trustworthy enough by staying rather than fleeing.

If they'd tried to escape, he wouldn't have minded killing them with his consciousness.

Because they'd been reasonably honest, he saw no reason to disturb them. The young man and his two spirit creatures stayed a night in Miracle City. Jiang Chen tried to gather some regular information while he was here, but none of it was related to a rebellion in Eternal Divine Nation.

He still found this rather incredible. Wasn't the uprising supposed to occur soon after he'd left the sacred land? The Cloudwave Sect adherents he'd killed had given him that information.

It had been more than two months since then. Shouldn't the rebellion have begun already? Why was there was no gossip about it?

The young man couldn't understand it, but that wasn't cause for letting down his guard. In his opinion, there was surely hidden information he wasn't privy to.

He spurred Starfate on, though not as quickly as he had come. A bit of time now wouldn't make much of a difference, since the conflict would've begun long ago if it was going to.

The deaths of the cultivators from the Cloudwave Sect meant that the rebel alliance would suspect something was up. They would've also noticed the absence of Jiang Chen, Yan Qingsang, and Huang'er from the Eternal Sacred Land's ranks after the fight had begun.

A little guesswork was enough to come to the conclusion that Jiang Chen was the one who'd killed the elders from the Cloudwave Sect. If that were the case, he might already be a target without knowing it.

Jiang Chen needed to be wary of such a possibility.

After reaching an area only a few thousand miles out from Eternal Divine Nation, Jiang Chen decided to dispense with airboat travel.

He was attract far too much attention if he steered his airboat in. That wasn't conducive to success under the present circumstances.

The young man and the two sacred creatures passed themselves as ordinary wandering cultivators when they entered the nation's borders. The atmosphere within was clearly drastically different.

On the surface, nothing looked exactly awry,

but closer scrutiny revealed that things here were on the brink of great change. The amount of hidden tension was hard to describe. Anywhere they went, it felt like many eyes watched them from the darkness.

In fact, all of the wandering cultivators were being closely watched.

"Is this Eternal Divine Nation, young master Chen? Looks like something is indeed going on here." The Vermilion Bird's storied past provided it with incredible intuition.

Jiang Chen had perceived the oddities as well. "Yes," he nodded, "something is definitely afoot. Something must've happened here. Has the rebellion occurred already?"

"I think so," the Vermilion Bird nodded.

"It's more interesting this way," Long Xiaoxuan declared. "If nothing had happened, what would've we come all this way for?"

As they approached the capital, Jiang Chen could feel the additional security added in the city. The imperial guard uniform patrolled everywhere in the streets, meticulously examining all cultivators who crossed their path.

"No wonder no news has gotten out. The borders are so tight that they couldn't possibly have." Jiang Chen sighed internally when he saw the drastically increased surveillance. It wasn't going to be easy to make their way into the capital undetected.

Right now, they were three thousand miles from the capital. It was a usually bustling place that featured more activity in recent months.

The amount of traffic through here was absurd. Evidently, many cultivators who wanted to go to the capital were stuck in this city too. It was called Grandeagle City, and overloaded with two or three times the mobile population it was accustomed to. The city's hospitality abilities were being tested to its limits.

Jiang Chen and his two companions stayed in Grandeagle City too. It was nearly impossible to pass the stringent checkpoints required for entrance into the capital.

"What are you planning to do, young master? We'll support you unconditionally," the Vermilion Bird smiled.

"We could always just charge in," Long Xiaoxuan interjected. "Can those checkpoints really stop us?"

"You want to pit the three of us against the entire Eternal Divine Nation?" Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "They would welcome our reckless action with open arms."

Such a thoughtless gesture was the realm of simpletons. He wasn't about to take the advice anytime soon.

Even if the Vermilion Bird was extremely powerful, there were divine cultivators that lived in Eternal Divine Nation. This wasn't a place where raw strength alone would suffice. A nation without gods would be an entirely different matter, but that was unfortunately not the case here.

The sacred spirit creature shrugged. It felt no particular inclination to resort to brute force either. As a veteran of the ancient demon-sealing war, it was much more experienced. It knew the human penchant for trickery. There were enough traps to avoid even without taking the most direct route.

To force their way in was to toss caution to the wind. If the Vermilion Bird had ascended to divinity, it would have the courage to mount a frontal assault. Even if the assault failed, they were guaranteed of being able to extricate themselves at any time.

As they conversed, a group of people quickly walked through the street. Jiang Chen's mind noted them when he saw their dress.

They wore outfits he was all too familiar with – the cultivators were from the Starlight Sect. Jiang Chen was no stranger to this sect either.

The first time he'd come to Eternal Divine Nation with House Yan's entourage, the Starlight Sect had cut them off and forced them to pay a toll.

They'd left a poor impression on him back then.

Among the cultivators Jiang Chen had killed in his last trip, their leader had mentioned all three great sects were participating in the anti-sacred-land alliance. The three sects were the Cloudwave Sect, the Starlight Sect, and the Jade Lake Sect. Several houses had pledged themselves to the cause as well. All these factions were first-rate in the divine nation.

These Starlight Sect disciples seemed to be on a hurry, almost like they had a mission of sorts.

"Old brother Vermilion, let's keep a close tab on these guys. Maybe we'll get a chance to sneak into the capital." Jiang Chen believed the destination very likely for the men he saw, which gave him a rather daring idea.

The trio here was far stronger than the four Starlight Sect disciples. The man leading the latter group was mid empyrean realm, while the other three were only initial. They were probably of reasonable importance within their own sect: elders seemed likely.

Jiang Chen knew the power structures of the nation's great factions to a certain extent. Anyone who entered empyrean realm was entitled to become an elder. An exception to that rule was unique to the Eternal Sacred Land. As the sovereign faction, it was far more powerful than the first-rate factions.

In the sacred land, even becoming a lesser elder had steep requirements. Becoming a greater elder was far more difficult.

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

Chapter 1799: The Quartet from the Starlight Sec

The four from the Starlight Sect headed straight into a classier tavern, their expressions clouded. Jiang Chen and his two companions didn't follow too closely, staying outside for a brief moment before entering.

Once inside, they swept the place with their consciousness and located the four from the Starlight Sect. They were in a booth near the window opening to the inner courtyard, a quiet corner away from the crowd.

Jiang Chen requested a booth near the four men. It was close enough that his party's powerful consciousness could overhear the conversation in the other booth. After ordering some wine, they pretended to be regular patrons while eavesdropping without hesitation.

The disciples didn't realize that they'd been targeted. They chugged down wine without a word.

After a moment of silence, the younger of the group slammed his cup down on the table and cursed, "Fucking hell, we're so damned unlucky! Only four out of ten of us survived the mission, and those bastards from the Cloudwave Sect stole the credit. Screw them!"

"Enough, Ah Hong, stop complaining," a deep voice chastised. "Someone might hear you."

"Brother Ninth, why discipline us even now? We played the obedient sheep and made compromise after compromise. What have we gotten for it? The credit we're due always gets stolen from us. The Starlight Sect has become nothing but their tool without receiving any of the benefits. Why did we get involved in the first place? We could've stayed out of this whole thing."

Before Brother Ninth could respond, a hoarse voice spoke up. "Don't blame Ah Hong for complaining, Brother Ninth. Those people have gone overboard. They played noble when we first formed an alliance, saying that the gains would be equally split between factions, and that we should work together and not be selfish. But in the end, it's every man for himself. Our Starlight Sect has been played for fools."

Brother Ninth sighed. "Alright, I get how you feel, brothers, but we can't back out now. There's no use complaining. If the imperial family and House Xiahou hear, they'll misunderstand and think that we're rebelling. Then we won't be able to prove our innocence no matter what.

"We have to fight in this war even if it kills us. The imperial family has taken over the reigns, and they're in a honeymoon phase with House Xiahou right now, issuing orders as a united front. The Cloudwave Sect is close to House Xiahou and knows how to suck up to them. Naturally it'll receive a little more benefit."

"A little more? If it were only a little more, we'd suck it up, but they're getting a lot more than we are. Their greed knows no bounds." Ah Hong didn't even try to lower his voice. He was furious.

"Alright, let's drink. We need to report back to the capital tomorrow morning." Brother Ninth knew it'd be difficult to pacify their anger, so he changed the subject and told his companions to drink and talk about other things.

"Stop trying to make the problem go away, Brother Ninth. We're all brothers at this table. Why can't we speak our mind? The imperial family and House Xiahou aren't interested in eavesdropping on us. They're surfing their high and too busy splitting their gains to spare a glance at us nobodies."

"True. I have to admit I'm regretful. If only I was in charge of the Starlight Sect. I want the sect to be what it was before. I have a feeling that things will only get worse after House Xiahou and the imperial family conquers the nation, both for the nation and for the Starlight Sect. I know you may not believe me, but I'm sure time will prove me right." The fellow gulped down his wine.

"Brother Ninth, do you think Ole Zhao makes sense?" Ah Hong piped up. "When the Eternal Sacred Land held power, they at least maintained fairness on the surface. House Xiahou doesn't even try. They favor whichever faction is closer or more obedient to them. In my opinion, House Xiahou makes a poor boss. There's a reason why the sacred land was in charge."

The man who'd been quiet spoke up, "Brother Ninth, is the sacred land doomed for real?"

Brother Ninth was silent for a long time before he responded softly, "I can't say for sure. Elites from all factions have surrounded the sacred land. Most of the experts who fled have been killed. Those who stand their ground are barely hanging on with the help of their great formation."

"But I hear that the most powerful cultivators in the sacred land aren't the three primes; it's their venerated forefather, a divine cultivator. He can easily rebuild the sacred land and make it rise again. How are we supposed to fight a god?"

"It's said that House Xiahou's forefather is a full-fledged god as well."

"Really? Ours is only a demigod. Are you telling the truth about House Xiahou's?"

"Yes. And I hear the imperial family has a divine cultivator as well. The two of them are working together to keep the sacred land's forefather sealed. It'll be next to impossible for him to escape within the next three thousand years. During this time, the alliance can freely attack the sacred land without worrying about retribution."

"Three thousand years... tsk, the sacred land is in big trouble."

"It is."

"That's why you should keep your grumbling to yourselves, lest the words reach the imperial family and House Xiahou. If they hear and make our lives difficult, we'll only have ourselves to blame."

"Huh, what a strange world this is. Our life before the uprising was better than our life now. I can't help but wonder if House Xiahou and the imperial family are deliberately weakening the top factions in order to rule over us all. Do you think that's a possibility?"

"It's not just a possibility, it's a fact. We've suffered great casualties as we fought the sacred land head-on. We're going to be significantly crippled in the end. We've done all the dirty work, but they're the ones who are going to reap the benefits without so much as a scratch on them."

After a few rounds of drinks, the four men stopped masking their discontent. Even Brother Ninth didn't stop his companions from speaking up. He only urged them to drink every now and then.

Jiang Chen sighed inwardly as he listened in. An uprising had happened, but the news hadn't even gotten out.

Actually, why hadn't the usurpers allowed the news to spread?

The four men soon talked about that.

"Brother Ninth, isn't it weird that the imperial family and House Xiahou are still suppressing the news after all this time?" asked Ah Hong. "The outside world has no idea what's going on. Why are they still trying to hide it?"

"You've overlooked something." Brother Ninth smiled slightly. "First, the sacred land has many supporters within the nation. If word spread, those factions will come to the capital to aid the sacred land. They may not be strong enough to resist the alliance, but they will hinder our efforts significantly. If our power is spread thin, our control over the sacred land will waver. The alliance already suffers from a shortage of manpower. We can't afford to attract the attention of the sacred land's supporters."

“That’s just one of the reasons. Most importantly, the imperial family wants to keep the uprising a secret while it waits for the other divine nations to rebel as well. This is a joint mutiny against all the sacred lands initiated by various factions within the Ten Divine Nations. The Eternal Sacred Land isn’t the only one under attack. The others are in danger of being toppled as well. Afterwards, it’s possible that the entire order of the Myriad Abyss Island will be disrupted. We all have to be prepared.”

“Ah, so that’s how it is,” Hong said in a conflicted tone. “Is the rule of the ten sacred lands over Myriad Abyss going to be nothing but a mark in history from now on?”

“Well, we are entering a new era, but there’s no telling how many divine nations will be able to topple their sacred lands.”

Ah Hong grimaced. “Sigh, we’re part of the rebellion, but why don’t I want it to succeed?”

“Alright, Hong, enough of that,” Brother Ninth warned in a harsh tone. “Keep your thoughts to yourself, or you’re going to get yourself in trouble.”

“I understand, Brother Ninth,” Hong responded weakly.

“Come on, let’s drink. Although credit for our accomplishment was stolen, we killed a mighty foe from the sacred land and acquired his token. The imperial family can’t deny that. We have evidence backing us up when the reward is given out. My only regret is that we’ll never recover the comrades we’ve lost.”

“That’s why I call them evil. So many of us have died, but House Xiahou hasn’t even deployed any of their members. Most of them are stationed around the sacred land instead of fighting on the frontlines. They’re a cunning bunch! They send us to our deaths while they preserve their strength. We won’t be able to maintain an equal status with their house then, let alone fight them for anything.”

“Alright, this isn’t helping. I believe the sect head has a better grasp of the situation than we do. As followers, we shouldn’t care about who we’re serving. I hear that the Cloudwave Sect has issued a mission with great reward.”

“Is it the bounty on Shao Yuan?”

“You know about that as well? I hear Shao Yuan was the first to leave. He left early on with the genius and girl from House Yan. At that time, no one knew it was them. The Cloudwave Sect sent a team to track them down, but the team never reported back. According to news from within the sacred land, Shao Yuan has long since gone missing. The imperial family and House Xiahou are sure he was part of the small group that left the sacred land that night.”

“House Xiahou must want nothing more than to capture Shao Yuan. Haha, they’ve got to be furious with him for killing Xiahou Zong. He’s completed a remarkable feat! No one can deny that the sacred land is second to none in raising and finding geniuses.”

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

Chapter 1800: Making a Move

The conversation between the group had gradually touched upon Jiang Chen himself.

The Vermilion Bird smiled ponderously in the young man's direction. The youth himself had a heavy heart. From what they'd overheard, rebellion had broken out quite a while ago. It just hadn't managed to fully take down the Eternal Sacred Land yet.

Though the sacred land had lost a few battles and partially fallen – some of its people fled, captured, and slain in the process – there was a group that used the sacred land's great formation to resist the rebel alliance still.

That was mixed news at best.

It seemed from the tone of the conversation that the imperial family and House Xiahou didn't want word to get out. They still feared repercussions, despite how far they'd come.

Jiang Chen had his work cut out for him: he would do the opposite by spreading the news as far and wide as he could. It was easy enough to understand the wisdom of bringing an enemy's greatest nightmare to fruition.

"Brother Dragon, I have a task for you. Find a place with as many people as possible and broadcast the news of the rebellion. Try to sound as authentic and believable as you can. There are countless wandering cultivators in Grandeagle City. Word will spread very quickly.

"Oh, and add this bit to it: there are similar rebellions brewing in secret in all of the other divine nations. They plan on overturning the ten sacred lands' authority to rule."

The Vermilion Bird gave a big thumbs-up. "Very good. That will put the other sacred lands on high alert. Even if their respective rebellions have already begun, those sympathetic to the sacred lands will congregate towards their capitals. It will expend additional energy, if not outright turn the tide."

Long Xiaoxuan thought about it for a moment, then nodded. "Okay, I'll go right now."

"Wait, one more thing. Tell your audience that since the cat's out of the bag, there are rumors that the imperial family and House Xiahou are going to kill all those who know by slaughtering all the wandering cultivators in the nearby cities. If they don't get out now, it'll be too late..."

"Sowing chaos, not bad!" the Vermilion Bird remarked. "When people are panicky, many will attempt to escape. News will get out even faster then."

Long Xiaoxuan stood to carry out the command right away.

"Wait, there's no need to hurry," Jiang Chen said. "Let's listen to anything else these guys have to say. We can spread the news when we figure out a way to leave. Doing that now would unnecessarily alert our enemy."

The young man was staying rational. Without a way further into the capital, he wasn't about to ruin the current place they were at.

The disciples of the Starlight Sect were both envious and begrudging when it came to the Cloudwave Sect, but most of all, hateful.

Clearly, it rankled that a faction, once their equal, was now lording its delegated superiority over them. Moreover, their own accomplishments were being stolen rather than recognized.

“Those Cloudwave guys are pretty useless. House Xiahou and the imperial family coddle them, but they still end up losing people. They’ve barely managed to catch anyone from the sacred land, either. The team that pursued Shao Yuan that night was a reasonably elite one, but it was wiped out entirely at who knows where. Useless idiots, the lot of them.”

“Yep they’re useless. Still, Shao Yuan’s strength can’t be understated. Even House Xiahou couldn’t do anything to him, much less the Cloudwave Sect.”

“House Xiahou hasn’t made a serious effort yet, right? If it sends out its elites, I’m sure Shao Yuan will be caught sooner or later. How can they possibly bear the shame of Xiahou Zong’s death? It’ll last as long as Shao Yuan lives. I’m guessing that when things calm down here, House Xiahou might issue a joint bounty in the entirety of Myriad Abyss on Shao Yuan’s head.”

“Hard to say. The imperial family leans towards soliciting Shao Yuan’s services. It believes that Shao Yuan is an invaluable talent that can blossom into something amazing. His pill dao and martial dao talent are both splendid. If the imperial family can get him on its side, he would no doubt become a future pillar of the nation.”

“House Xiahou would never agree to something like that. Shao Yuan, a pillar of the nation? That would be a perpetual insult to every member of the house.”

“Shao Yuan has other places to go. What divine nation among the ten wouldn’t welcome a man with his talents? What about House Xiahou? There are factions even stronger than that in the Ten Divine Nations. As long as one of them accepts Shao Yuan, what can House Xiahou do?”

“I suppose you’re right. Shao Yuan is really good at jumping ship, though. He hopped from House Yan to the sacred land, then left as soon as the latter seemed risky. There’s no loyalty there at all. The sacred land probably regrets it, does it not?”

“People naturally head for greater things in life. That’s nothing to fault him for. How long has it been since he joined the sacred land? He repaid his debt in full by defeating Xiahou Zong. Even if he did leave, that’s understandable. You can’t expect a newcomer to be willing to lay down his life, can you? We wouldn’t be able to do so either.”

“True, true. He hasn’t been there long, so he doesn’t feel much of a sense of belonging. Also, why do I feel that Shao Yuan didn’t actually get much from the sacred land in the first place? His talent and strength are entirely his own, aren’t they? The shortness of his stay and all...”

“Not necessarily. Rumor has it that Shao Yuan entered the sacred land as a great emperor.”

“Impossible! That must be crazy rumors or a smokescreen to conceal the truth. If he was a great emperor only a few years ago and mid empyrean realm now... have you heard of anyone cultivating that quickly?”

“Ah, Shao Yuan is pretty much a walking mystery. Legendary, for sure. I believe that the slayer of Xiahou Zong will shock the entirety of Myriad Abyss one day. It may not be wise for House Xiahou to make such an enemy!”

“There’s another circulating rumor that the sacred land raised Shao Yuan up to be the counter to Xiahou Zong in the first place. If that’s the case, then the sacred land’s resourcefulness is terrifying. Even if the

sacred land suffers a total defeat here, such geniuses scattered abroad may one day band together to stage a new rise.”

The others nodded at this suggestion. The explanation was much more plausible, and seemed almost close to the truth.

“Alright, that’s enough. It’s not our place to worry about these things. I just hope that the Starlight Sect doesn’t become cannon fodder. Even if we don’t end up getting much benefit from this rebellion, we shouldn’t have to make too many painful sacrifices.”

“Hmph. We’ve sacrificed quite a bit already. I reckon we’re going to keep on losing out in the future.” The cultivator named Ah Hong still couldn’t get over things.

The talkative cultivators didn’t have much to say after that. Though Jiang Chen and company wanted to hear more, there was no longer anything useful to listen to.

The four people opposite them drank and chatted about inconsequential things. Evidently, they were largely done complaining.

Jiang Chen finished off his own cup. “We move tonight,” he transmitted. “Kill three and leave the brash Ah Hong. We will use their identities to sneak into the capital.”

“Can we really do that?” the Vermilion Bird couldn’t resist asking. As a sacred beast, it was easily revealed when it fought.

“I think so. Didn’t they say they didn’t have much left to do? They’re already preparing to return to the capital to report in. Plus, we have a lot of things we can do once we actually enter the capital. If we need to change our identities again, that’s fine. Getting into the capital is the most important part. After that, the city’s completely open to us.”

The Vermilion Bird had no problem with it. It had heard that not many divine cultivators lived in Eternal Divine Nation. A handful perhaps, but hardly numerous.

House Xiahou’s and the imperial family’s were both busy facing off against the sacred land’s venerated forefather. They had no time or energy to devote elsewhere.

This made the capital exponentially safer. In fact, Jiang Chen may very well have the perfect opportunity to break the sacred land’s besiegement.

The quartet from the Starlight Sect hadn’t expected to be observed and followed. After drinking, they found an inn and lodged there to prepare returning to the capital the next day.

That night, Jiang Chen and his two divine creature friends performed an operation without notice.

It was trivial for someone as strong as the Vermilion Bird to kill a few initial empyrean experts. No one was alerted by their silent deaths, and the kills were clean and untraceable. Afterwards, they unceremoniously pushed open the door to Ah Hong’s room.

The room’s resident was lying down in a daze, lost between sleep and wakefulness. The disturbance he heard woke him instantly. “Who?”

“Haha.” A sinister laugh was his only reply.

The malice in the laugh caused his hairs to stand on end. Ah Hong began to shout. “Brother Ninth, Ole Zhao, Brother Kai, enemy attack!”

However, his voice couldn’t penetrate the chamber’s walls no matter how loudly he shouted.

“Don’t waste your energy. The room is sealed off. No amount of shouting will make you audible outside.” The cool, relaxed voice came from none other than Jiang Chen.

He waved a hand to fill the room with candlelight.

Ah Hong leaned on his bed, weapon drawn and expression alert. His eyes darted about wildly, as if scheming how best to leave.

“You’re Ah Hong, yes? An executive of the Starlight Sect.” Jiang Chen’s smile was kindly on the surface, but Ah Hong’s hairs stood on end.

The sweeter the smile was under these circumstances, the stranger things were.

“Who... who are you? Get out, or I’ll call for others.”

“Don’t bother. I already helped your three companions succumb to the gentle embrace of death. You should be grateful that you’re the one I let live.”

“What did you say? You killed them? I don’t believe it!” Ah Hong’s pupils dilated as he shrieked hoarsely, as if attempting to rouse his comrades. Alas, his plans were doomed to fail. The room they were in had been completely sealed off to sound.

“If you want to struggle more, we don’t mind you sending to the next world. So, would you like to accompany the others or cooperate?”