

Three Realms 1911

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1911: A Merciless Crushing

Jiang Chen's eyes were incredibly sharp. Even without using his Ear of the Zephyr, he could perceive their unruly stubbornness. They clearly had no intentions of easy compromise. Despite his example and warning, they thirsted for a fight.

Tritalent hoped to squeak by. What could a dozen people do against an entire capital's worth of elites?

What face would they have left if they surrendered without struggle?

"Don't be discouraged, Your Majesty. We are willing to shoulder your burden."

"Your Majesty, please order us to fight! Maybe they're just trying to bully us by using another's name!"

"Your Majesty, even half of the spirit stones on those islands would be enough for us for centuries. We can't let such a tremendous amount of wealth pass us by."

The emperor was swayed by his subjects' words.

Yes, what if Rejuvenation was borrowing someone else's reputation? Tritalent wouldn't be scared off so easily. He began to have his own ideas about the situation.

"Imperial Prince Huo, Tritalent and Rejuvenation don't have irreconcilable differences or blood feuds. We would merely like to share in the bounty in front of us. Why not give us fifty percent of the spirit stones there? That's not too extreme, is it? If you'll agree to that, then let the matter be settled. I think that would be preferable to any loss of life." The emperor spoke these words to test the waters.

If Imperial Prince Huo readily agreed to this, that meant there was no bite behind his bark.

On the other hand, if he staunchly refused, they could take advantage of their home field advantage to battle it out. No one on Tritalent's side believed they would lose.

Imperial Prince Huo smirked coldly. "Rejuvenation has entirely delegated its authority in this matter to the young gentleman here."

The Tritalent emperor's expression darkened. "Rejuvenation intentionally chooses depravity then. If that's the case, our ensuing ruthlessness cannot be blamed! Listen up, men! We ready for war!"

Jiang Chen watched all of this happen with a cold eye. He knew that at the end of the day, these people wouldn't so easily let go of a tasty morsel that was already on their plate.

Harrumphing, he suddenly roared into the sky. Heaven and earth paled at the sound; every light around him dimmed and the ground rumbled.

The sound of a dragon's roar resonated with the din of a brood ten thousand strong. The weather began to change – already, roiling clouds were gathering in the firmament.

"A dragon's roar!" There was someone on the ground who was knowledgeable enough to recognize it.

Tritalent's cultivators uniformly paled.

“So what?” shouted the militant ones with murderous expressions. “We might as well use our defensive formation to kill our enemies. We’re already past the point of no return!”

“Turn on the great formation!”

Belligerence was an emotion that easily spread to others. Experts joined the militant faction in droves. Zhao Situ could only watch on in horrified silence. He had thought his advice would convince the emperor to avoid bloodshed.

Alas, the drive for profit had caused these people to lose sight of reason. The young man before them was so incredibly talented that he had to be from a big faction. Even if he wasn’t young lord Jiang Chen, he was surely some other top-quality genius from the Ten Sacred Lands.

How could the Tritalent Isles make an enemy out of someone like this?

Zhao Situ couldn’t affect the direction of things by himself, though.

Jiang Chen suddenly tossed a golden bell and a magnetic mountain into the air.

Mountain and bell hurtled viciously towards the defensive formation.

“Old brother Vermilion,” Jiang Chen called out simultaneously, “show them a little pain!”

The Vermilion Bird nodded. Its body suddenly expanded several hundred times over with a flourish, its huge wingspan blotting out the sun.

Its divine aura expanded outward to paralyze everyone caught within its influence. Its pinions slanted down on a corner of the defensive formation, reducing to dust everything beneath. Countless disintegrating runes were among the rubble, their designs reduced to nothingness. The well-built defensive formation around the capital had been damaged by a single blow from the Vermilion Blow.

The formation whined in alarm.

The emperor and his militant subjects were blindsided by this development. One slam had destroyed a corner of the formation? What incredible power did this bird possess?

Zhao Situ paled. “It really is him. Your Majesty, please call for peace. We may yet have a chance at life. That young man really is the young lord of the Eternal Sacred Land. The bird is the sacred fowl that was instrumental in his exploits, the Vermilion Bird!”

It was already too late for that, though.

Several brutish cultivators charged at the forefront. Their piratic careers and capable cultivation made them naturally aggressive. They ran especially fast out of a desire for glory and riches.

Within a breath or so, they were only several hundred meters away from Jiang Chen. Just as they were about to be within reach, the cultivators collided with a translucent wall of golden air. Ripples expanded in the air from the impact.

As soon as they came to a forcible stop, Jiang Chen guided his magnetic golden mountain and golden bell down onto their heads with a hand seal.

Long Xiaoxuan unceremoniously joined the fray as well. His Claw of Crushing Mountains and Rivers seized a cultivator's head and stuffed the man's soul into his maw.

While he did so, the golden bell had already captured a cultivator as well.

The magnetic golden mountain was not to be outdone. Its potent storms snatched up another.

The men in the vanguard were neutralized in the blink of an eye, before the Vermilion Bird even had a chance to act. They couldn't even reach Jiang Chen, much less threaten him.

The development stunned everyone watching. The ones who'd clamored for a tough stance wanted to find a hole in the ground and bury themselves. The militants were completely quiet now.

Any desire to keep on fighting was tantamount to suicide.

Though the exchange just now had lasted only a few short moments, Tritalent's people felt like they'd just suffered through a lifetime of hell. They were also thankful that they hadn't been at the very front. Those were now dead or captured.

The emperor felt the blood drain from his face. His heart trembled painfully. A minute ago, he had charted an ambitious course for Tritalent's future.

Now, that seemed an utter daydream!

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

Chapter 1912: Intention to Recruit

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Jiang Chen!

These words elicited endless terror from the people of Tritalent like a nefarious curse.

Horror and regret filled them, the emperor included as well. They were frankly unqualified to defy him at all. To put it more bluntly, they were too insignificant to be considered an enemy in the first place.

If Jiang Chen wanted to deal with Tritalent – destroy it, even – he could do so with comically minimal effort. What had ensued was living proof of that.

“Zhao Situ, why didn't you say anything earlier!” The emperor's tone was full of misery. His emotions were a complex mixture of fear, concern, and despair.

He wasn't thinking of how to resist, but rather how to preserve a sliver of Tritalent before Jiang Chen's wrath. He was worried that the young man would cause a massacre here thanks to his anger.

Such things weren't uncommon in Myriad Abyss. Several houses from Polylore had done just so with their old rival Rejuvenation.

There was no justice to be found after the fact for something like that.

The fault was attributed to the victim for aggravating a faction they were too strong to handle.

In Myriad Abyss Island, the Ten Divine Nations' factions were naturally higher than the rest. Jiang Chen's status as a true disciple of a sacred land aside, even a normal disciple from an average first rate faction would be able to rampage through here.

Moreover, the young man's very name was a very common topic these days. Who among the younger generation could rival his fame?

This wasn't someone Tritalent could think about opposing.

The ease with which Jiang Chen slew the more stubborn Tritalent cultivators gave Imperial Prince Huo and the others from Rejuvenation immense satisfaction. Tritalent had been contentious for all these years, a tremendously annoying nail in their side.

Unfortunately, Rejuvenation hadn't had the energy to teach their long-time rival a lesson for several years now. Seeing rival experts crushed again and again was therefore delightfully gleeful.

Jiang Chen radiated a frightening aura with his God's Eye, its rays scattering across the Tritalent cultivators beneath. They hung their heads wherever he looked.

It was obvious that their fighting spirit was no more. They didn't have the courage to meet his eyes, much less battle on. The difference between them was far too great. Jiang Chen could kill them as easily as stepping on a few ants.

"Listen up, you of Tritalent." Jiang Chen's voice was cool. "I didn't intend to spill too much blood today. But if you must continue to provoke me with your obstinacy and ignorance, I don't mind making the Tritalent Isles part of history. I trust you won't doubt my ability or resolution to do so."

Everyone from Tritalent collectively trembled, but were somewhat cheered up afterwards. There was still room for negotiation then?

The emperor took a step forward, prostrating himself on the earth. "Young lord Jiang Chen," he cried out, "we were blind to your presence! If we knew you were here in the flesh, we wouldn't have dared disobey you. Pray charitably excuse our foolishness."

"If I wasn't inclined to do so, do you think you would still be talking to me?"

"Yes, absolutely. We thank you for your magnanimity. In our rudeness, we made only trouble for ourselves," the emperor wailed, taking a very low posture.

"I don't want to kill, but that doesn't mean I won't. I hold no enmity for the Tritalent Isles. Nevertheless, some of your men dared ambush me when I was a guest of Rejuvenation. If the Eternal Sacred Land caught wind of this atrocity, you would be annihilated within the month." Jiang Chen spoke true.

Tritalent hadn't known that he was on Imperial Prince Huo's airboat. If they had, they wouldn't have dared ambush him.

However, the Ten Sacred Lands didn't care for ignorance as an excuse. The very act was a challenge to their authority, and destruction was assured.

When the Tritalent emperor heard these words, his face only grew paler.

If young lord Jiang Chen decided to pursue this, the Tritalent Isles would have no peace for the rest of its days.

Imperial Prince Huo on the other hand, was secretly impressed. As expected of a sacred land's young lord, Jiang Chen had taken care of everything flawlessly. If he had said he was here solely to help Rejuvenation, he would be suspected of being uncharitably biased. An overly strong faction bullying the weak was never good for optics.

This excuse of being ambushed by Tritalent, on the other hand, made everything completely different. Any harsh treatment Jiang Chen doled out was completely reasonable then.

"Young lord Jiang Chen," the emperor begged, "we do have a few conflicts with Rejuvenation, it's true, but we would never dare disturb you with them. If we knew of your presence, we would only have given you the utmost respect. For what reason would we want to harm you?"

"Hmph!" Jiang Chen snorted. "I hear you're after those islands that Rejuvenation has? Haven't they told you that I own half of them? Do you covet my property?"

What?

The Tritalent emperor was bewildered. Young lord Jiang Chen owned half of the islands? Had they been opposing him all along?

He wanted to die on the spot.

However, he quickly realized what had actually taken place: Rejuvenation had sought out young lord Jiang Chen when it grasped the hopelessness of its own situation, giving him half the islands' ownership in exchange for his protection.

That had to be the reason!

For Tritalent, though, the reason didn't actually matter. At the end of the day, they could never think of coveting the islands. Otherwise, that really would be suicide.

The emperor knelt and kowtowed several times. "We were blind and foolhardy," he begged, "but we promise we won't do anything of the sort ever again. Please, allow us to live. The whole of Tritalent will thank you for your mercy."

Jiang Chen harrumphed. "You've raised a hand against both my property and myself. If I forgive you with only a few words, what awe would the Eternal Sacred Land inspire in the future?"

Though he didn't want to engage in a slaughter, he couldn't let Tritalent go easily, either. It had to be taught a lesson.

"As long as you're satisfied, we're willing to do whatever it takes," the emperor promised hurriedly. "We would be happy to comply with anything that is within our power."

Jiang Chen waved a hand. "Easy enough, then. Tritalent should submit to the Eternal Sacred Land henceforth. If you become my subjects, I see no reason why I shouldn't pardon you."

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1913: To Subdue

The emperor was dazed for a few moments. Confusion filled his mind. Submit to young lord Jiang Chen's protection? Would that mean becoming a puppet of the Eternal Sacred Land?

"The Tritalent Isles really doesn't know good from bad, eh?" Imperial Prince Huo interjected icily.

"Countless factions all over the world would jump at the chance for young lord Jiang Chen's protection. For you, this is practically a free lunch. Why do you hesitate? Do you want to die at the young lord's hand before realizing your mistakes?"

The imperial prince wanted Tritalent to become Jiang Chen's subordinate faction, of course. That way, they would listen to the young lord's orders in the future.

Since Rejuvenation was going to do the same from now on, Tritalent wouldn't dare bother them in the future. Whatever possible friendliness between the two was another matter.

Rejuvenation needed some time to rest and recuperate in the next few years.

Jiang Chen glared coldly at the Tritalent collective.

"Your hesitation means you have no desire for it. Fine enough. However, know that Rejuvenation is under my protection. If you aggravate them in the future, that is the same as provoking me. Don't expect the same kind of mercy next time!" His tone grew frosty as well.

Zhao Situ became extremely anxious. "Your Majesty, what are you waiting for?" he messaged the emperor. "Rejuvenation will only grow under young lord Jiang Chen's banner. Rather than be consumed later on, why don't we join the young lord now? Even if he doesn't treat us equally, our heritage will still be passed down."

He knew very well that Rejuvenation had never been the peaceful sort. If they were allowed to recover to its former state, they would surely attack every faction around them with Jiang Chen's protection.

Since Tritalent had been significantly wounded in this exchange, the reverse of recent events would occur. It would be optimistic simply to survive, much less hold their own.

The emperor snapped awake from his reverie. "Young lord Jiang Chen," he shouted, "Tritalent is willing to yield. Please grant us your protection as well!"

"Is that what you really think?" Jiang Chen asked with a faint smile.

"Absolutely! I hesitated not because I was unwilling, but rather worried that we would be assimilated by Rejuvenation later on. What would become of our heritage then?"

The emperor was smart enough to make plain the reason for his delay. Perhaps the young lord would give him a response.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Regardless of my dominance, why would I wipe out your heritage? If you fall under my protection, you'll grow stronger for it. Of course, since you two are both under my protection

from now on, you can only be allies. Absolutely no invading each other from this day forth, either of you."

"Of course, young lord. We shall defer to you." The emperor was delighted.

As long as their heritage was preserved, he was open to most other things. Tritalent was in bad shape right now and couldn't do much in the near future anyway.

Sharing patronage would mean that Rejuvenation would never be able to openly attack them again. Thus, surrendering to Jiang Chen actually seemed to be the best choice.

Jiang Chen waved a hand. "Alright. What's your name?"

"The surname of the imperial family of Tritalent is Yan. His Majesty's name is Yan Duo," Zhao Situ hurriedly replied.

Yan Duo?

Jiang Chen nodded. "Emperor Yan Duo, Imperial Prince Huo. Let me make this clear today. Now that you're both under my banner, I will treat you equally. From this day forth, let any grudges be washed away. There will be no more fighting between your two factions henceforth. Do you understand?"

"As long as Tritalent has enough tact, Rejuvenation will not strike the first blow," Imperial Prince Huo responded.

"Tritalent will listen to the young lord's every word. I guarantee it."

"I hope you can really do it," Jiang Chen sighed softly. "The future is difficult. If you're preoccupied with civil strife, one of you will attain victory in the short term... but long term, both of you will lose."

Yan Duo and the imperial prince both blinked.

"I can't speak too plainly right now. Perhaps another time. I want to say only one thing: put everything you have into making yourselves stronger. There's a wave of drastic change on the horizon, and its scope will be far greater than you can ever imagine."

Jiang Chen's mood was dampened by thoughts of demons and other offworld enemies.

The seriousness in his voice sobered up Yan Duo and Imperial Prince Huo. They couldn't guess the reason behind it, but they respected that reason's gravity.

"Alright, Imperial Prince Huo. I hope the affair has concluded satisfactorily. Both of you should be able to proceed in peace from now on. Rather than plotting against each other, I advise you to cooperate and build a stronger bond. I foresee that many smaller factions will be shattered by the oncoming tide."

These words further complicated the two men's thoughts. It wasn't their place to ask, but their concern for these future world-changing events only grew.

"Come, take me to those islands. I'd like to take a look." Jiang Chen changed the subject.

The imperial prince's eyes brightened. "Sure."

Though Yan Duo lusted after those islands as well, he knew that Tritalent could no longer participate.

“Young lord, would you like to come sit awhile in the imperial palace?” he bowed.

“Maybe next time,” Jiang Chen waved a hand.

Yan Duo didn’t insist. The pressure bearing down on him could finally be alleviated by the young man’s departure.

Jiang Chen left as quickly and decisively as he’d come.

The men from Tritalent finally let out sighs of relief. They wiped at their brows and backs, happy to simply still be alive. There was a great deal to be thankful for on this day. An heir with a worse temper would’ve massacred a great number of them.

Yan Duo didn’t find it shameful at all to kneel in surrender before Jiang Chen.

The first thing he did after returning to the islands proper was issue an important command. “Listen up, people of Tritalent! From this day onwards, the Tritalent Isles submits to the authority and protection of young lord Jiang Chen. Our past grudges with the Rejuvenation Isles are wiped clean. Anyone who picks a fight with them is bringing disaster down on us all, and shouldn’t expect any tolerance or sympathy!”

The emperor didn’t dare defy what young lord Jiang Chen had emphasized just now. Any further animosity toward Rejuvenation was equivalent to turning a deaf ear toward the youth’s advice.

Such a thing could not be permitted at this juncture. From what the young lord had said, there would be some cataclysmic event in Myriad Abyss Island’s near future. What this event entailed wasn’t clear yet, but a problem for someone as great as him must be very serious indeed. His tone wouldn’t have been so grave otherwise.

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

Chapter 1914: Further Changes, Again

The crystal-rich island chain was quite a distance away from the heart of Rejuvenation. Moreover, the imperial family’s influence didn’t extend to these faraway isles, making it difficult to manage the chain.

“No wonder Tritalent thirsted after this place. It’s not too far away from their core islands. Closer to theirs than yours, honestly. The ownership of this place couldn’t have been terribly clear before, could it?” Jiang Chen asked with a faint smile.

Imperial Prince Huo coughed in half-laughter. “Several thousand years ago, nobody owned these islands. When Rejuvenation first got our hands on them, we only wanted to turn some of them into a place like Winterdraw. Alas, our formation level was insufficient at the time to succeed.

“Afterwards, when we stationed some men here, they noticed that there were spirit stone veins in the rock beneath. We kept this secret for a few centuries, but the veins we found were hard to excavate, and we didn’t ever get a good chance to do so. I’m not sure why news got out within the last decade. Now the factions all around us are eyeing it with hunger. My brother is worried if it’ll attract even stronger factions here. What will we do then?”

“Rejuvenation doesn’t have a neighboring stronger faction, does it?”

“You could say that about us before,” Imperial Prince Huo sighed. “Rejuvenation was between a third and a second rate faction back then, and we almost made it to the latter. We had a way to go compared to the fellows at the top obviously, but... well, after what Polylore did to us, we lost a lot and downgraded as a result. Even the likes of Tritalent can bare their fangs at us now.”

Jiang Chen smiled slightly. The reason for that was tangentially related to him, but the majority of the blame lay with Rejuvenation. Or rather, their flattery had been misplaced.

“Whether you’re third or second rate, you’ve managed to survive so far. You’ll get the chance to thrive before long. Some factions bloom and wither in the blink of an eye. There’s not much point to their transient radiance,” Jiang Chen remarked with some emotion.

“You’re right, young lord. Maybe it’s just not time yet for Rejuvenation. We were a bit too hasty. If we had another few centuries, we would have stabilized among the other second rate factions. We could then progress from there... a vastly more conservative path.”

After experiencing what he had in the last few years, the imperial prince was a much more collected individual.

“Okay. Let’s go down and take a look. You own the islands still, yes?” Jiang Chen confirmed.

“For the time being,” nodded Imperial Prince Huo.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen’s expression shifted a little. A strange smile curled at the corner of his mouth. “You might’ve spoken too early. Not necessarily anymore.”

The imperial prince looked confusedly at the young man, who waved dismissively.

“Let’s go see what’s going on over there.” Jiang Chen’s senses were much sharper than Imperial Prince Huo’s. His God’s Eye could see several hundred miles out.

There were many airboats parked outside the islands, in numbers much greater than was possible for Rejuvenation. The vessels certainly weren’t friendly, in that case.

When they got closer and the imperial prince could see for himself what was happening, his expression became increasingly grimmer.

How could this be??

“Are there any other powerful factions around Rejuvenation?” Jiang Chen asked coolly. “A capable second rate faction, for example?”

Imperial Prince Huo searched his mind for answers.

“Young lord Jiang Chen, there are none stronger than Rejuvenation within thirty thousand miles. There is one in fifty thousand, there is one. In seventy thousand, another. The rest are over a hundred thousand miles out.”

“What faction do these airboats belong to then?”

Imperial Prince Huo broke out into a cold sweat. He was utterly perplexed. How could something so shocking have happened over only a few days?

Foreign airboats parked in their waters! And Rejuvenation didn't know a thing about it!

Sneaky and underhanded tactics indeed!

The prince tried to make out any distinctive markings, then shook his head. "These airboats have been painted black in disguise. I can't tell where they're from."

"They're flat-out robbing you in broad daylight then." Jiang Chen laughed softly.

Imperial Prince Huo was greatly ashamed. They had promised they would give half of the spirit stone veins here to young lord Jiang Chen. Clearly, their guarantee had been an untimely one.

If the spirit stone veins weren't theirs anymore, what would they have left to give?

The prince was furious, horrified, and terrified. Furious and horrified at how these brazen invaders didn't seem to care for Rejuvenation in any capacity, and terrified about how angry the young lord would be if they couldn't fulfill their end of the bargain.

Rejuvenation's problem had just been resolved, and Tritalent had suffered considerable losses before surrendering. What if the young lord decided to cut them all down for not upholding their oath? There was nothing anyone could fault him for, if he did that.

Imperial Prince Huo's lips trembled. The blood drained out of his face.

"Young lord Jiang Chen, I really didn't know about what's happening here. I'm sure my brother is the same way. Please give us a little time. I will go back and call for reinforcements right away. We absolutely must take these islands back!" he declared with some exasperation. This was a slight against his entire family!

Jiang Chen frowned, then waved a hand in dismissal. "Call for reinforcements now? You'll waste a ton of time going and returning. Let's take a look ourselves. These marauders are certainly audacious. I own half of this place. Their very presence disrespects me, does it not?"

Imperial Prince Huo felt his heart calm just a little. Young lord Jiang Chen's attitude gave him hope. Though he was angry, he was only angry at the invaders. If that was the case, these people were in for a beating.

No matter where they were from, were they worthy of standing up to the young lord? So what if they were one of the top second-rate factions from a hundred thousand miles out?

Even the first rate House Xiahou of Eternal Divine Nation had suffered a devastating loss. All of its forces and holdings had been wiped out.

The imperial prince almost felt that no one in Myriad Abyss could oppose the young lord.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1915: Enemies With An Unknown Origin

Jiang Chen was truly feeling a bit of actual anger. He didn't expect someone to so boldly steal from his doorstep.

"Brother Vermilion, it seems we've been too polite," Jiang Chen remarked in the ancient beast language. "They won't see us as a threat without us teaching them a lesson, will they?"

The Vermilion Bird cackled. "How do you want to do this?"

Jiang Chen and the bird had weathered many hardships together. The bird had a genuine respect for Jiang Chen and thus listened to the human's every idea.

"Wait for my order," Jiang Chen growled, his expression dark.

The bird nodded. It could feel Jiang Chen's ire. It grinned and leered at the airboats below with pitying eyes.

"Imperial Prince Huo, find out who those people are. Don't tell them who I am just yet."

If they were told about Jiang Chen, they might not reveal their true intentions.

With Jiang Chen's support, Imperial Prince Huo had a newfound confidence. Although the airboats below were likely to belong to some second tier faction, he wasn't afraid. Rejuvenation was under the young lord's wing.

The imperial prince dove down with his confidantes and Chief Warden Ding.

"You there, listen up!" boomed Imperial Prince Huo. "This is Rejuvenation territory. No matter where you come from, you better wise up and get out of here!"

In no time at all, a large drove swarmed out of the islands. Troops of cultivators armed to the teeth came out of hiding. There were also a good number of craftsmen who looked to be experts in excavating mines.

Imperial Prince Huo could hardly contain his anger. Did these bastards really consider the islands their home?

They even had craftsman with them! Were they planning on taking all the spirit stones for themselves?

Imperial Prince Huo's keen eyes zeroed in on a few noble-looking figures among the group. The leader was a bearded, middle-aged man. He was opulently dressed and his features handsome, but the scowl on his face made him haughty and aloof. It seemed that his very identity and status made him prideful, and he considered himself far superior to everyone else.

Next to the man was a woman dressed to seduce, her body very curvy and alluring. She clung to the bearded man's arm in an intimate gesture.

The bearded man also had a few bodyguards with him. They held themselves with great composure and pride—far from nobodies.

Imperial Prince Huo sucked in a breath. Rejuvenation was no match for even the bodyguards. The four of them might be able to kill all his companions on their own, let alone when they had a large group of armored cultivators with them.

The middle-aged man looked at Imperial Prince, his gaze derisive and crass.

“What did you say?” It was an exceedingly rude question. He made it sound as if this was his home, and Imperial Prince Huo an intruder.

His strong bearing made the imperial prince question himself, but only briefly. Young lord Jiang Chen was watching him. If he showed any signs of cowardice, the young lord might look down on him, and he’d lose the young lord’s trust.

He tamped down his nervousness.

“This prince said this is Rejuvenation territory. No matter where you come from, get the hell out of here!”

The middle-aged man twisted his lips into a mocking smile. Instead of sparing a look at Imperial Prince Huo, he turned to the alluring woman. “Did you hear him, Xiaofei? What did he say?”

The woman giggled. “I think he told us to get out of here.”

The middle-aged man cackled. His eyes turned cold as they focused on the imperial prince. “If you piss off now, I, Han, may consider sparing your life.”

“Han? And who the hell are you? This is our territory. What gives you the right to say that?” Imperial Prince Huo raged. He’d seen many bullies before, but even Polylore Divine Nation wouldn’t have been so overbearing if they hadn’t lost their descendents in the trial.

Who were these people, and why were they being so brutish?

“It might have been your territory, but not now.”

“Bullshit!” one of Imperial Prince Huo’s guards couldn’t help but snap. “You thieves should know your place! This is our territory!”

“Oh?” The middle-aged man picked leisurely at his ear. “Are you trying to tell me that I can’t risk making Rejuvenation my enemy?”

Imperial Prince Huo waved a hand to stop him before the guard could retort.

He took in a deep breath. “Forgive this prince for not knowing who you are, my friend. However, everyone in the world must play by the rules. The islands have always been ours. Since when have they had anything to do with you? Do you have a written agreement of ownership transfer? A deed?”

“No,” the man responded coolly.

“Then how are the islands yours?”

The seductive woman giggled. “I say, how are you so blind? When my Master Han wants something, people scramble to give it to him with both hands. You should know your place. It’s an honor for him to

ask something of you. Others can't even beg for the privilege. No wonder Rejuvenation is still a third tier faction. You don't know what's good for you."

Her words couldn't have been more humiliating. Imperial Prince Huo might have lost his calm if he hadn't been as experienced as he was.

He took another deep breath and scoffed. "This prince has met my fair share of powerful cultivators, but I've never even heard of a Master Han. You don't look like people from the Ten Divine Nations, and even they play by the rules. Do you fancy yourself better than the divine nations?"

The prince had quite a sharp tongue.

Seemingly irritated with the imperial prince's persistence, the middle-aged man arched an eyebrow.

"I've changed my mind. You refused to leave when I told you to. Now I'm not going to let you go. Azure Ox, Azure Tiger, take care of this 'prince' who claims to own the place. Knock out his teeth and break all his limbs. Oh, and refine his soul afterwards. Let him know the consequences of challenging my authority!"

Two of his bodyguards took a step forward as soon as his words sounded.

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

Chapter 1916: Heavenlight Isles

The two guards were both eighth level empyrean realm, and the kind very capable at fighting to boot. They were just a small step away from ninth level.

Though Imperial Prince Huo had several seventh level empyrean cultivators with him, there was a huge difference between the seventh and eighth levels.

Three seventh level empyrean experts could perhaps just barely maneuver against an eighth level one, and it would be a struggle to do so.

Moreover, these two guards were obvious veterans of battle. One guard could possibly take on four of them.

If there was a fight, Imperial Prince Huo's men wouldn't necessarily have the advantage – even though they numbered more than a dozen. If two more guards were added to the other side, Rejuvenation's forces would be trivially crushed.

These two guardsmen were broad-shouldered and well-built. They radiated killing intent. It was obvious that countless experts had died at their hand.

The one in a striped outfit was Azure Tiger.

"Mouthing off in front of Master Han, eh?" he grinned toothily. "You're the only one dumb enough to have done that in recent years. Remember, grow a better pair of eyes in your next life. Don't be so stupid..."

He pounced like a real tiger as he said this, hands ferociously outstretched like claws. His right made a swipe at the imperial prince, the image of a phantom claw flickering in midair.

Suddenly, a rushing wind swept in.

Azure Tiger was halfway there when he felt an obstacle in his way. In the next moment, he unconsciously reached for his neck.

A different claw had materialized around it. A huge, scaly one shimmering with strength and nobility. A true dragon came into view, enshrouded in mist and cloud.

Snap!

The draconic claw closed on its prey. Azure Tiger's neck snapped at a right angle and his eyes burst out of their sockets.

The corpse disappeared a second later, clearly having been eaten by the dragon.

Azure Ox wasn't faring much better. Though he had been a bit slower in his charge, he discovered countless dimensional barriers around him. No matter what direction he slammed himself in, he couldn't break free.

As he struggled vainly, a giant golden bell appeared in midair. The runic carvings upon it glistened with incredible radiance, as if recalling some ancient totemic entity.

The bell locked onto Azure Ox, who was stuck running in circles on the spot.

This was Jiang Chen's handiwork, of course.

Though he was only sixth level empyrean realm, his treasures and abilities allowed him to fight ninth level empyrean experts evenly. Azure Ox would have been a worthy opponent for him to face.

However, Jiang Chen had surprise on his side. His opponent hadn't been able to react before he was soundly trapped.

Under Jiang Chen's control, the golden bell was too powerful to resist. It crashed down, sealing Azure Ox within.

The middle-aged man and the seductive woman beside him were completely astonished. They couldn't believe the strange things they were seeing.

There was a tinge of change in the man's proud expression. He had four personal guards. Yes, Azure Ox and Azure Tiger were weaker than their two fellows, but not by much.

And yet, they'd been so trivially dealt with! One had died instantly, and another was now seized by a golden bell. Whether he was dead or alive was yet to be determined.

He had never dreamed that such a situation would come about!

They'd carefully calculated and considered every possibility before invading Rejuvenation. They were secure in the knowledge that it could not resist them, which was why they'd bit back when Imperial Prince Huo had arrived.

What was the reason for their confidence? They thought they had enough strength, of course.

But the bloody spectacle just now had smashed his confidence. His superiority had shattered into a million pieces, much like a mirror.

Imperial Prince Huo was overjoyed. The young lord had joined the fray!

Now that he had joined the field, what were these vermin worth? He had just now managed to roughly guess where this 'Master Han' had come from.

There was a very powerful second rate faction in the waters twelve hundred thousand miles away from Rejuvenation. In fact, it approached many first rate factions in strength.

The imperial family of those islands bore the surname Han.

The Heavenlight Isles was a well-known powerhouse in its region, but it rarely cared for weak factions like Rejuvenation so far away from its shores. Before this, there'd been almost no contact between them.

In Heavenlight's eyes, Rejuvenation should have been a worthlessly remote place. Had news of the spirit stone veins gotten out that far?

To the imperial prince, this must indeed be the case.

The amount in the veins here was so abundant to be attractive to even first rate factions. It was natural that the second rate Heavenlight would covet this wealth.

For them, this could very well be the springboard into advancing in rank. If they could make this place theirs, it was a chance for them to finally take wing and join the ranks of the first rate factions. This prospect was too good for Heavenlight to pass up.

Moreover, there was minimal effort involved in invading Rejuvenation. Even before the disaster it had suffered in recent years, it had been no match whatsoever for Heavenlight.

This was a dog-eat-dog world.

Imperial Prince Huo was tremendously thankful for his extremely wise decision. Thank goodness Rejuvenation was under young lord Jiang Chen's protection!

Otherwise, they would've engaged in a vain struggle against Tritalent before noticing far too late that Heavenlight had come in and plundered it.

"I've guessed where you're from, Han. Has the well-known Heavenlight Isles begun to resort to banditry?"

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

Chapter 1917: Terrified and Fearful

Imperial Prince Huo unrelentingly revealed the identity of these mysterious enemies.

The middle-aged man turned absolutely furious. If the imperial prince had done this before, he wouldn't have been embarrassed at all. Rather, he would have enjoyed it quite a bit.

He had held the advantage at the time and saw Imperial Prince Huo as nothing but prey. He enjoyed seeing the terror of others.

But now, Azure Ox and Azure Tiger had died for seemingly no reason at all. The middle-aged man began to suspect whether these people were even from Rejuvenation. Since when had it become this strong?

He glared at Imperial Prince Huo angrily, his alert eyes roving for something.

The imperial prince knew that the man opposite him was filled with terror right now. This was especially true because Jiang Chen and his draconic friend had fought in an inscrutable way. Not understanding what one's opponents were doing was the most frightening blow to one's morale.

"Master Han, was it? Heavenlight is used to being presumptuous in its own land, no doubt. However, this isn't your territory." Imperial Prince Huo was emboldened by the young lord's support.

The middle-aged man had evidently come amply prepared. Though his guards' fate had cast a shadow over his heart, he was here for the spirit stone veins. There was no way he would fail against the likes of Rejuvenation!

Fire spewed from his eyes as he fixed them upon the imperial prince. "If you've done all this knowing the great name of the Heavenlight Isles, that means Rejuvenation isn't scared of trouble, yes?"

"Rejuvenation doesn't make trouble for others, but we can handle any trouble that comes our way!" Imperial Prince Huo sneered. "Are the fates of Azure Ox and Azure Tiger not enough to make you repent?"

"Tsk tsk, Master Han, is he threatening us? Didn't you say that Rejuvenation was no better than an ant?" The seductive woman rubbed coyly against the middle-aged man's arm.

The man tossed her aside with a light flourish. "Women shouldn't interfere in the matters of men."

His cold anger cowed the woman into submission, though her resentment found a different outlet.

"Rejuvenation is really in for it this time!" She glared viciously at Imperial Prince Huo. "You can't possibly bear the consequences of angering Heavenlight."

"Windbag!" the imperial prince retorted. "I don't understand why you've brought a loudmouth like her with you. She's worse than useless and will only hold you back. Heavenlight's name doesn't seem to hold much water, does it?"

The middle-aged man ignited at these words. "You're trying to provoke me, aren't you?"

The prince shrugged. "So what if I am?"

"Congratulations, you've succeeded! Succeeded in bringing disaster to the Rejuvenation Isles, that is! I'm going to make this very clear. Before, I was just going to take all of the spirit stones here. Now, I'm going to conquer the entirety of Rejuvenation. I will crush your homes and annex your territory!"

Imperial Prince Huo laughed heartily. "An impressive boast! If I didn't know any better, I would think a senior from the Ten Sacred Lands was here."

The middle-aged man scanned the air with viper-like eyes.

"Hmph! I confess I did underestimate Rejuvenation. Still, do you think that killing two guards will spare you from catastrophe? Don't be naïve! We investigated every detail about you before we came. If you know what's good for yourself, don't resist. Otherwise, I guarantee that there will be mountains of corpses and rivers of blood!"

The imperial prince scoffing. "Your bragging is truly one of the history books. Didn't you ask around before you came here, Han?"

"About what?" the middle-aged man replied proudly.

"Alright. Even if you didn't, aren't you the least bit worried after your two guards died for no reason?" Imperial Prince Huo continued, snickering.

The middle-aged man's heart sank. He was still filled with determination, but the repeated questions from Imperial Prince Huo in a strange tone tipped him off that something was wrong.

Was he still dealing with Rejuvenation? If so, what were they so sure about? They should be terrified and listless instead.

Wasn't this imperial prince far too calm for the situation?

Why was that?

The middle-aged man didn't care all that much about Rejuvenation. He thought their forces too insignificant compared to Heavenlight's.

However, reality was overruling instinct. Everything about this was strange.

"What are you trying to say?" His voice became a little strained.

In comparison, Imperial Prince Huo was very relaxed. "Didn't your woman say that I was blind just now?" He shrugged. "Actually, I think you're the one who needs to get your eyes checked."

"Hahaha!" the middle-aged man roared with laughter. "Are you telling me that Heavenlight is ignorant about Rejuvenation's supposed strength?"

"Who told you that these islands belonged solely to Rejuvenation?" the imperial prince declared seriously. "Don't you know that someone else owns this place as well?"

This news stunned the man from Heavenlight.

This revelation hadn't been in their report. The only thing they knew was that the Tritalent Isles had been fighting over these with Rejuvenation.

Tritalent was hardly a major faction either though. Certainly nothing worth being concerned over for Heavenlight.

Now that the middle-aged man's origin was plain, Imperial Prince Huo no longer needed to hide who Jiang Chen was, either. The young lord chose this moment to materialize.

He swept his eyes across the islands below coldly. "I don't know how strong the Heavenlight Isles are, but I own half these islands. You came without notice, which means you are trespassing invaders. Tell me, is there anything you believe will save yourselves from my wrath?"

He was truly upset by Heavenlight's actions here. If they continued in their foolish ways, he didn't mind killing them all.

Before that, though, he was content to press for spirit stones. He needed resources, not grudges.

If the Heavenlight Isles was willing to pay a substantial fine, he would consider giving them a chance at life. If the middle-aged man insisted on resisting, he would no longer worry about mercy.

The aura the young man exuded as he emerged from thin air clearly distinguished himself from Imperial Prince Huo.

The middle-aged man was shaken by his appearance and felt mildly uneasy.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1918: Complete Capitulation

Jiang Chen's strong presence immediately raised the hackles of the middle-aged man from Heavenlight. He looked at the young man with guarded eyes. He had a bad feeling about this. There must be a reason why Imperial Prince Huo had been so brazen, and the young man was very likely to be it.

Was he someone very important? Most who called themselves young lord had the influence to back that up.

Master Han cautiously toned down his arrogance.

"Who might you be?" He stared at Jiang Chen carefully.

Jiang Chen scoffed. "Why do you ask? Are you trying to see if I'm someone you can afford to offend?"

Jiang Chen's mocking expression angered Master Han greatly. For the longest time, it had been him looking down on others. When was the last time someone from Heavenlight had been subjected to such scorn?

An elder looking bodyguard transmitted with a solemn expression, "Master, from the way he holds himself, it's obvious he's no small fish. The deaths of Azure Tiger and Azure Ox are very likely his doing as well."

Master Han managed to contain his anger and swallowed a curse. "If you're someone I can't afford to offend, I'll get out of your hair. In Myriad Abyss, strength is law."

"Get out?" Jiang Chen huffed out a laugh. "That's easy for you to say. You've trespassed into my property and tried to steal what's rightfully mine. Do you think I'll just let you off the hook?"

“What else do you want?” The middle-aged man believed he’d made enough compromises. If the young man refused to back down, he would tolerate things no further.

“You don’t have the right to know. You better pray that you haven’t laid a finger on the spirit vein or extracted any stones. Otherwise, none of you will be leaving here alive.” Jiang Chen’s forceful tone allowed no room for argument.

The air thickened with tension.

Imperial Prince Huo silently praised Jiang Chen for his assertion of dominance. Heavenlight was nothing compared to the Eternal Sacred Land!

Master Han boiled with rage. He’d met his share of arrogant men before, but none as arrogant as this young man. None of them will be leaving here alive? Did the young man honestly think he’d be able to capture all of them with so small a force?

How ludicrous!

Jiang Chen clapped his hands, ignoring the man’s reaction. “Brother Vermilion, let’s give them a show.”

Without missing a beat, the Vermilion Bird shrieked and emerged from the void. It expanded its wings, its body growing in the howling wind until it was a hundred times bigger. The sun was obscured by its wings and the airspace shrouded by its enormous body. Fire spread and dyed the firmament red.

The bird exerted its power over the area like it had capped a lid on the skies. The surrounding space was sealed off, making everyone from Heavenlight feel infinitely stifled and sick. Blood boiled and they almost collapsed.

Even the bodyguards, the most powerful of them all, felt a bone-deep terror they couldn’t describe. Fear turned all of their faces ashen.

Shocked, the old bodyguard turned to the middle-aged man, “Master, this is the power of a god!”

Master Han was already trembling under the bird’s might. His mind went blank with explosive shock when he heard the old man’s words.

A god!

He never expected to run into a god in Rejuvenation’s territory! How was this even possible? The middle-aged man broke into a cold sweat.

“From this moment on, none of you are allowed to move,” Jiang Chen said faintly. “Whoever takes even a single step will be killed without prejudice!”

His tone wasn’t particularly vicious, but there was an undeniable killing intent to it. Those from Heavenlight cowered and lowered their heads reflexively, too afraid to meet his gaze.

“Imperial Prince Huo, take your men and look for Rejuvenation’s members stationed here,” said Jiang Chen. “Find out what’s happened.”

Imperial Prince Huo sighed softly. “I’m afraid there may not be any survivors.”

Jiang Chen nodded. "An eye for an eye. If all of them were killed, Heavenlight will pay for it in kind."

Imperial Prince Huo's eyes lit up with gleeful delight.

Without Jiang Chen's support, it'd be impossible for them to kill those from Heavenlight to avenge their people. With the young lord here, Heavenlight wouldn't dare resist at all.

If they angered Jiang Chen, their own deaths would be the least of their worries. The entirety of Heavenlight Isles would be in danger.

The middle-aged man rushed out, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, please listen to me. The ones stationed here are still alive..."

"Where are they?" Jiang Chen asked sharply.

"They... they..." stammered the middle-aged man. He gritted his teeth and admitted, "We made them our slaves and planned on having them excavate the mines."

Imperial Prince Huo flew into a rage. "How dare you! This is ridiculous!"

The middle-aged man had lost all his air of superiority. There was no place for pride when faced with a god. He had no power to back his arrogance up.

Although he hadn't guessed the young man's identity, it was unquestionable the young man must be from a faction at least ten times more powerful than Heavenlight.

A god could easily destroy Heavenlight ten times over!

The old bodyguard's expression changed when realization dawned on him. He leaned closer to his master and transmitted, "This subordinate has figured it out, master. The young man... is young lord Jiang Chen from the Eternal Sacred Land!"

"The Eternal Sacred Land?" A shiver ran down the middle-aged man's spine. He'd made the connection too. He looked at Jiang Chen's proud stance, then at the enormous Vermilion Bird blotting out the sky.

That was Jiang Chen, whose reputation was far-reaching and growing exponentially.

He couldn't believe his eyes; his mind swirled with a mass of unanswered questions. Young lord Jiang Chen was a prominent figure from the Eternal Sacred Land. Why would he have anything to do with a third-tier faction like Rejuvenation?

What had Rejuvenation done to deserve Jiang Chen's support?

Or did the young lord truly own half of the spirit stones here?

Seized by panic, Master Han finally realized what an enemy he'd made for himself.

He'd offended the most well-known young genius in Myriad Abyss, and the Eternal Sacred Land behind him! If he did nothing to control the damage, their heads would roll, and Heavenlight was doomed to total destruction.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1919: Enacting Punishmen

Imperial Prince Huo soon returned with the cultivators originally stationed on the islands. They'd been turned into mindless slaves.

The imperial prince shot Master Han a glare. "You certainly stretched your hands out far! The islands are hundreds of thousands of miles away from your isles. You have no business being here! How dare you barge in and claim it as yours? Do you consider Myriad Abyss a lawless land?"

Normally, the middle-aged man would've killed Imperial Prince Huo ten times over for talking like that. The prince was inferior to him in both status and cultivation. Now however, he kept averting his eyes.

"Imperial Prince Huo, we can restore their minds," he stammered. "Also... we didn't know the islands are the young lord's. If we'd known, we wouldn't have had been bold enough to stir up trouble here, even with all our courage combined."

That was the most honest thing he'd said so far.

He carefully didn't address Jiang Chen by name before introductions were made. He'd be in a world of trouble if he got the wrong person.

His blunt remark jabbed the imperial prince where it hurt the most. "So Heavenlight set out to walk all over Rejuvenation, didn't it?"

Such was the truth, but the middle-aged man couldn't possibly acknowledge it. He knew that Rejuvenation had gained a powerful patron. Although Rejuvenation itself was nothing in his eyes, it'd be unwise of him to offend them while this young lord was here.

He bowed timidly to Jiang Chen. "Your achievement is great despite your youth, venerated young lord. Very few possess such cultivation and might at your age even in Myriad Abyss. If I'm not mistaken, you must be young lord Jiang Chen, aren't you?"

He had exceedingly thick skin and knew when to change his tune. One moment before he'd been an arrogant bully, but he quickly set aside his pride and spouted off flattery as easily as breathing when the situation called for it.

Jiang Chen had met many like him. Without proper punishment, the man would soon forget about his lesson and repeat his mistakes. If shown too much mercy, the man would consider the young lord a pushover.

He ignored the man's words and turned to Imperial Prince Huo with a cold expression. "Have you checked the mines yet? Have the spirit veins been touched?"

Imperial Prince Huo had surveyed the area. "They're still at the planning stage and haven't really put their plans into motion yet."

Master Han responded in a servile tone, "We haven't done a thing. Although we've sketched out a development plan, we weren't going to get started until the day after tomorrow. That's the most auspicious time."

Jiang Chen snorted. "Consider yourselves lucky."

"Yes yes, we are." Master Han was a professional brown-noser through and through. There was no trace of pride left in him.

"But I'm not done with you."

"We foolishly offended young lord Jiang Chen," the middle-aged man rushed out. "Naturally we should pay for it. We'll willingly accept any punishment. I only hope you'll give us a chance to atone for our crimes. Whatever Heavenlight is capable of, we'll do it."

Tritalent had realized they couldn't defy Jiang Chen after knowing his true identity. The same was true for Heavenlight. They didn't dare play tricks nor were they bold enough to stand their ground. Compromise was the only way for survival!

It didn't take long for the cultivators from Rejuvenation to recover their mental faculties. They were shocked to see Imperial Prince Huo and their peers. Their jaw dropped even further when they noticed how much deference the middle-aged man was showing to the imperial prince. What was going on here?

They knew the man was from the Heavenlight Isles. Why would he be so respectful to Rejuvenation?

Their questions were answered when they were told about young lord Jiang Chen

When asked, they told Imperial Prince Huo and Jiang Chen that Heavenlight had arrived two days ago. They'd come prepared, bringing craftsman so they could claim all the spirit stones in a short period of time.

These fellows certainly had a healthy appetite.

Jiang Chen mused and quickly came up with an idea after learning everything. Since Heavenlight had brought their craftsman, he might as well use them. He could spare them their lives, but they weren't going to escape punishment.

"You should've been killed for coveting my property, but I'm a merciful man. I'm not going to kill you. However, it's up to you to atone for your crimes."

Master Han immediately bleated, "I'm willing to do anything!"

"First, none of you are leaving the islands until the excavation is complete. If it takes a year, you'll stay for a year. If ten, then you're staying for ten years. Whoever tries to escape will run only to their death!"

Master Han shuddered. He knew Jiang Chen was serious.

"Second, all of you will work as miners to extract the spirit stones, employing labor to make amends."

Master Han pulled a long face at the prospect of being a miner, but he didn't dare voice his dissents. Not even all of Heavenlight's top experts combined would be able to save him now. Manual labor was a small price to pay for his life.

Young lord Jiang Chen had been merciful enough to spare him.

“Third, you’re my captives from now on. Even after your work here is done, you must buy your freedom with spirit stones. These are my three conditions. Any objections?”

Jiang Chen didn’t intend to list too many requirements. He was already essentially milking their value twice.

Master Han bobbed his head earnestly. “No objection! Young lord Jiang Chen is admirable for your magnanimity!”

He didn’t dare object. Jiang Chen could kill him with a thought. Although he had a lot of guards protecting him, they were nothing when facing a god.

The Vermilion Bird could easily take out all of them with a single mental strike.

It was good enough he was offered a way out. Of course he wasn’t going to argue.

Besides, It was just hard work. According to their previous estimations, it’d take less than a year for them to deplete the spirit veins if they were quick.

Afterwards, they’d have a chance to buy their freedom with spirit stones. It wasn’t that bad a deal. Better than fighting Jiang Chen head-on, at least, which was just courting death!

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

Chapter 1920: The Most Radical Plan

Imperial Prince Huo approved of Jiang Chen’s plan. He knew that killing these people would be enjoyable, but it would also create a permanent grudge between Rejuvenation and Heavenlight.

Once that happened, Rejuvenation wouldn't be able to stand unscathed against the hot vengeance of a faction much stronger than them.

Yes, Jiang Chen was their patron, but what if he wasn’t around? Or rather, if he was too far away in the Eternal Sacred Land to take care of them?

Heavenlight couldn’t openly deal with them, but it could easily make them suffer under the table.

It was better to avoid making enemies. A solution that was both peaceful and mutually satisfactory was optimal.

However, a little warning was necessary regardless. “I must remind you of one thing: you are now miners. If you harbor selfish desires, or worse, try to smuggle out any spirit stones, death will be the only result upon discovery.

“Don’t consider yourself lucky enough to get away. A single spirit stone is enough to warrant my wrath!” Jiang Chen warned ferociously.

Theft wasn’t necessarily actually going to occur, but it was best to pre-empt any problems before they arose. He didn’t want to end up benefiting these people after all his hard work.

Calling together all the craftsmen, Jiang Chen learned the general details about the spirit stone veins on the islands. Alongside those was a rudimentary excavational plan.

He wasn't happy with their proposition. It was too conservative and slow, and he didn't have that time to waste.

The craftsmen wanted to take two to three years to mine out the entire island, but Jiang Chen wanted everything to be done in that many months. Time was of the essence, and he didn't want to spend too much time here.

"Young lord Jiang Chen, it'll be impossible to excavate all of the stones within two or three months! Even the best masters in Myriad Abyss wouldn't be able to accomplish such a feat. All that work needs time. Plus, we don't have nearly enough people either."

"What do you mean?"

"To excavate the spirit stones from the veins here requires a lot of manpower deployed in an organized manner. Unless you can get your hands on several million practiced miners and keep all of them in line, it simply cannot be done."

"Other than the manpower problem, is there anything else?"

"Some parts are especially difficult to dig up. We need people to prospect and separate the usable from the unusable as well. It's fine manipulation."

"Back to the manpower problem, is it?" Jiang Chen laughed.

"Indeed, but that's the hardest problem to solve, isn't it?" the craftsman remarked.

The young man nodded. "Do as I command. Don't worry about the requisite manpower; I'll take care of it."

"How many people can you get together, young lord Jiang Chen?" the craftsman looked rather astonished. "The mineshaft won't be able to hold nearly that many. Chaos isn't conducive to productivity."

"I don't intend on employing human hands."

"No human hands? What kind of hands are you using, then?" the craftsman was utterly bewildered. How else were they going to get the stones out of the ground? They weren't just going to separate themselves from the surrounding rock.

The Vermilion Bird was a powerful being, but it couldn't take the place of thousands of workers in excavation.

Jiang Chen smiled mysteriously. "I have my ways. Just do your job and revise the plan to be as fast as possible."

Off to the side, Imperial Prince Huo was as doubtful as the craftsmen.

The people from Heavenlight on the other hand, were relatively calm. They were here to dig, so the efficacy of the method used didn't really matter to them.

Without further ado, Jiang Chen summoned the king of the Goldbiter Rats.

“Ole Gold, how many rats are there in your tribe now?”

The rat king chuckled. “We passed the hundred million mark a long time ago. What, young lord? Is there work for us to do?”

“Some community service,” Jiang Chen smiled. “I need about just one million of you. Can you handle it?”

“What’re you asking me that for? Since when have I been unable to handle anything you’ve thrown at me? One million is nothing. I can do ten or a hundred, easy.”

“I don’t need that many. Also, they need to be able to listen to orders,” Jiang Chen said.

“Don’t worry. My first, second, and third generations of descendants have awakened their intellects very nicely and they’ve received the most from you as well. They are absolutely loyal. All of the Goldbiter Rats are extremely grateful to you, young master Chen. They’d leap at the chance to help you.”

Jiang Chen didn’t suspect the veracity of this statement.

He personally felt that he’d treated the rats very well indeed. However, he was worried that their love of gnawing on spirit stones would win out. What if they couldn’t resist eating the things they were supposed to excavate?

“Ole Gold, I don’t doubt the Goldbiter Rats’ abilities one bit. This job is a bit more special, though. I’d like to hear what you think about it.”

The rat king blinked. “What is it, young master Chen?”

Jiang Chen laid out his situation.

The king of the Goldbiter Rats stroked his whiskers, then laughed squeakily. “A reasonable worry, yes. I can see newborn rats doing that. I’m sure the mature ones will be able to overcome their hunger though. If they know that these stones are important to you, they will make every effort to resist their desires.”

Jiang Chen nodded. “These spirit stones are sorely needed. I’ll give you other compensation and rewards at a later date.”

“Don’t worry about that, young master Chen. You wouldn’t forget about us if you had something good anyways.” The Goldbiter Rat king knew the youth’s temperament from the time it’d already spent with him. It would actually earn the young man’s disliking if the rat king haggled endlessly with him.

The young man was relieved by the certainty in Ole Gold’s voice.

“Go prepare your children then. Tell them the importance behind this operation. Any rat that can’t handle temptation should stay home.”

“Yes, of course.” The rat king nodded.

No one else present understood a word of this conversation since the two of them had spoken in ancient beast language. They were utterly confused when they saw Jiang Chen talking with a big golden rat at length.

“Everyone, this giant rat is descended from the ancient race of Goldbiter Kingrats. The species is characterized by its incredible chomping ability. Back then, even the bloodlines closely related to the four sacred beasts didn’t like to antagonize them.”