

Three Realms 1971

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

Chapter 1971: An Utterly Astounding Bluesmoke Isles.

Jiang Chen was unaffected by these rivulets of aggression. Captain Yan had informed him that there was a divine cultivator behind Bluesmoke's curtain. Just what kind of ambitions were they harboring with their presence here?

Regardless, now wasn't the time to drag that into the open. Statements without evidence were meaningless and would only serve to put him on the back foot.

There were roughly three thousand young geniuses taking part in the selection. One or two rounds of elimination reduced that to about two hundred.

These were comparatively elite among their brethren, but only a tenth were actually empyrean realm. That meant somewhere between more than a dozen to two dozen.

Even the best geniuses of the second and third-rate factions couldn't compare to those of the ten sacred lands, nor could they contest the first-rate factions in the divine nations.

What Jiang Chen didn't expect, however, was that Rejuvenation and Trivalent each had a genius among the top two hundred.

Heavenlight had two, while Bluesmoke had five. The difference between the former and the latter was immediately evident.

The Bluesmoke Isles was very close to being a first-rate faction. Its strength far outstripped a second-rate one.

Now that the top two hundred was decided, there would be round after round of matches between the geniuses to calculate their precise ranking.

Jiang Chen thought this process too convoluted, but those involved seemed perfectly happy to be wrapped up in the busywork. Though it felt like a waste of time, he was obligated to watch the entire thing.

"Do you think the selection is boring, Jiang Chen?" Ziju Min asked, smiling.

"The competition of geniuses should be between the ten sacred lands, shouldn't it be? Isn't this preliminary selection too complex in light of that?" Jiang Chen tried to be tactful.

"Haha, it wouldn't have been like this before. Because the ten sacred lands want to gather others to itself, a sense of participation for the second and third-rate factions is key. To put it bluntly, we're trying to win over their hearts. There's another reason as well, though: this is a good chance to audit all the other factions. This'll give us a better picture of how strong Myriad Abyss is as a whole."

Jiang Chen understood the explanation immediately.

The factions of Myriad Abyss were manifold and scattered far and wide, with essentially no opportunities to gather together. Without a call from the ten sacred lands, they wouldn't possibly be out in such force.

Therefore, it had always been a mystery as to exactly what the waters held. This was the best chance they had to clarify that.

There would be people and factions hiding their power, to be sure, but most were perfectly happy to show off their muscles in front of the ten sacred lands.

Anyone that did hide their strength had ulterior motives and designs.

Because the selection went into such detail, it took a very long time to complete. After half a month's time, the final ranking was finally revealed. Of course, the ranking was directed towards the geniuses alone rather than their factions.

As expected, Bluesmoke took the top spot.

Perhaps more surprisingly, two more among the top ten were from Bluesmoke as well.

This astonished practically everybody – Jiang Chen included. So Bluesmoke's heritage wasn't just for show, then? Its young geniuses were nothing short of exceptional.

It had taken first, fourth, and eighth place.

The faction itself became prominent through proxy. The remaining two geniuses who came from there were among the top forty.

"Bluesmoke, was it? A faction to be reckoned with," Ziju Min commented to Jiang Chen.

"The Bluesmoke Isles has a tradition of ancient jade. There are many opportunities for young geniuses to drastically improve there."

Though Jiang Chen's last stay there hadn't been pleasant, that didn't stop him from giving an objective analysis. He was unsurprised at Bluesmoke's results. In fact, he wondered whether it had sent all of its geniuses to the competition.

Regardless, it quickly became a hot topic after the selection process. Its second and third-rate peers envied and resented it.

Some resorted to flattery to get into Bluesmoke's good graces. Everyone had the feeling that it was going to become a lot more important very soon.

The first prime had observed the participating geniuses in secret. "Jiang Chen," she declared seriously, "Lan Huang from Bluesmoke is first place in the selection. We have to figure out a way to get our hands on him. Any ideas?"

It was obvious that she put a lot of stock in the champion's performance.

Lan Huang was talented enough to rank among the ten sacred lands. Even Eternal's Five Great Gentlemen didn't have an absolute advantage over him.

Though he had reported his cultivation to be third level empyrean, Jiang Chen doubted whether he was any weaker than Xiahou Zong had been. A certain amount of praise and currying favor was thus expected.

But because he was from Bluesmoke, Jiang Chen was unsure of how to judge him.

The young man's silence prompted the first prime to frown. "Is there some difficulty, Jiang Chen?"

Jiang Chen smiled a little. "I have a few disagreements with the Bluesmoke Isles, so I'm not sure how I can help without having the opposite effect."

The first prime blinked with some disappointment, though she quickly cleared it away. "That's alright. If Bluesmoke knows what's best for them, they'll be happy to wipe the slate clean."

Jiang Chen laughed, but said nothing more. I'm not so sure that a few words will be enough to resolve the enmity between us.

Moreover, all ten of the sacred lands were likely to have their sights set on this Lan Huang. Since he was obviously a proud youth, it would be extremely challenging to make him join Eternal specifically.

Finally, the fact of the matter was that Jiang Chen didn't have nearly as high an opinion of him as the first prime did.

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Chapter 1972: A Cruel Drafting Process

The ranking for the selection was shown to all the participants.

Jiang Chen observed that aside from Bluesmoke's uncommonly impressive performance, no two geniuses among the remaining seven in the top ten were from the same faction.

Though Heavenlight was ambitious in its own right, twelfth place was the best it could do – no doubt a painful wake-up call to its confidence.

Rejuvenation and Tritalent's geniuses managed to place in the rankings, but the former was around sixtieth, while the latter was below ninetieth.

Such scores were appropriate to the factions they represented, to be sure. In the immensity of Myriad Abyss, Rejuvenation and Tritalent were only third-rate at best.

"The rankings are quite telling. I personally don't think these factions sent their best here," Ziju Min remarked.

Jiang Chen nodded. "Elder Ziju, these factions are weaker than us, but they have their own ways of living and surviving. I think they would rather keep the best talents for themselves. What if the genius they sent to the competition was recruited? The geniuses here today definitely have potential, but they're not necessarily the strongest."

"Hmm, I suppose you have the right of it. We would do the same if we were in their shoes, no?" the elder mused.

“They want to get on our good side, but not at the cost of their own future. If it were us, we would only send our most promising, or most ambitious geniuses.” Jiang Chen voiced his perspective.

Ziju Min inclined his head in agreement. “Any takeaways after watching for so many days? Do you have a few that you particularly favor?”

None of the geniuses had made a deep impression upon Jiang Chen. Fifteen days wasn’t nearly enough to display each and every talent from all the entrants, and the more dominant personalities often got more time in the spotlight. It was very hard to thoroughly get to know a specific genius.

Still, Jiang Chen looked at the world differently from everyone else. He didn’t use ordinary methods of determining a person’s worth.

Measuring a genius’s capabilities required lateral analysis of the finer details. Everyone came from different backgrounds, which meant that the experiences and resources they’d had were completely divergent. Their development so far generally reflected this nurture far better than anything in their nature, and the fortnight or so of time wasn’t nearly enough to bring the latter into the open.

Yes, using cultivation level to decide potential was simple and straightforward, but it was also prone to error.

Jiang Chen firmly believed that barely any among the top ten were worth his attention.

If the sacred land was willing to spend the resources and effort, geniuses of this caliber were a dime a dozen. Why take someone in from the outside just for that?

This was why Jiang Chen was loath to give a concrete answer to Ziju Min’s question.

“Don’t worry, speak your mind. This selection isn’t that important. We’re just having a discussion about it anyway.” Ziju Min looked at his former charge encouragingly.

Jiang Chen didn’t want to vocalize his ideas. Instead, he smiled. “Let’s talk more when the drafting process begins.”

The elder knew Jiang Chen to be a driven individual. It was clear that he’d already made up his mind; Ziju Min looked forward to hearing it.

A hundred fifty elite geniuses had been chosen to be ranked. The draft then, began from the hundred-fiftieth.

Number hundred-and-fifty was a young, burly man. His cultivation was robust and virile, which didn’t win him any points with the sacred lands. Cultivators like him weren’t likely to display delightful surprises, but they were decent candidates for stalwart warriors.

According to the rules, any of the ten sacred lands could bid for him by raising their signs. The bidders could then attempt to recruit him using promises and speeches.

Once chosen, the winning sacred land was obligated to give a present to both the cultivator himself and his faction. As for exactly what that present was, that depended on the gift-giver’s generosity.

This compelled the ten sacred lands to avoid malicious interference.

This burly youth quickly became rather embarrassed. Those from the sacred lands pretended he wasn't there. They were clearly not interested in making an investment that seemed like it would have a poor return.

Resources were limited, and this wasn't the right caliber of person to use them on.

Anticipation written all over number one-fifty's face turned slowly to entreaty over time. That no one raised a sign to signify their interest in him was a tremendous blow to his self-confidence.

Jiang Chen glanced at the first prime and the others, but they kept their eyes meditatively half-closed. They obviously had no interest at all in this bulky youth.

Sighing to himself, Jiang Chen noted the lack of compassion in this selection's details.

If the genius onstage wasn't chosen, his self-esteem wouldn't be the only thing hurt. The worst consequence would be that he would no longer be able to make any further progress in cultivation.

The allotted time was about to tick down when he cleared his throat. "What is your surname, friend?"

Life returned to the well-built youth's despairing eyes when he heard a word from the sacred land factions. "I am Gong Hu, from Greattusk Island."

"I see. I am Jiang Chen." The young man smiled. "I speak not on the Eternal Sacred Land's behalf, but only for myself. I'd like to take on a few retainers. Are you interested?"

Gong Hu's body shook. He didn't bat an eyelash before shouting, "Yes, yes, absolutely!" He had already given up all hope of being picked for anything.

Being offered a position as a retainer was something, at least!

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Chapter 1973: Competition Heats Up

Everyone knew of Jiang Chen's name. Service to him was probably more fruitful than being a regular disciple of some sacred land. After all, countless marvelous stories had been told about him already. He had a reputation for the miraculous.

Because he'd been ignored by all of the sacred lands, Gong Hu had been feeling quite dejected. He was sincerely thankful for the sudden olive branch.

"Very good. Follow me from now on." Jiang Chen smiled coolly. "You come from Greattusk Island. According to the rules, I must give you and your faction a present.

"Since you are very close to peak great emperor, allow me to provide you with an Emperor Supremacy Pill to speed you on your way."

Jiang Chen took out two of the named pills, giving one each to Gong Hu and Greattusk.

These pills had been valuable to him once upon a time, but after obtaining a large batch of Heavencloud Ganodermas, he had refined a similarly shocking amount of them to stash away for the future. Two was trivial to him.

Gong Hu had only desired to follow Jiang Chen. The worth of the present was immaterial to him. His heart was warmed when he saw his new master attending to his needs.

As Greattusk Island was a third-rate faction, it had little right to speak under such circumstances.

In fact, its representatives were quite proud of the fact that its very own Gong Hu had been chosen by the young lord Jiang Chen. His future was going to be far brighter than it could have been anywhere else.

The Emperor Supremacy Pill held more symbolic than actual value for them.

They could very well announce to the outside world in the future that the young lord Jiang Chen had their back. It would certainly elevate their position in the eyes of their peers.

Some were astonished at the fact that Jiang Chen hadn't passed up even the last guy on the rankings. Was he really that hungry for talent? Yet others were annoyed and disinterested.

A genius who hadn't reached empyrean realm was plentiful in Myriad Abyss. There was no point going out of one's way to nab one here, was there?

Among numbers 149 to 140, only one piqued the interest of the Void Sacred Land and received a corresponding invitation.

Jiang Chen didn't extend his hand to the remaining eight. They were much less useful and malleable than Gong Hu.

He had chosen this stocky youth not because of his talent, but his character. Clearly, Gong Hu wasn't the kind of person given to deceit. It was easy to tame someone like him, since his loyalty would be essentially unchanging once earned.

To put it more harshly, he was easy to brainwash. The other eight didn't share this trait.

Jiang Chen didn't like people who tried to use what cleverness they had to gain an advantage. Only true wisdom went far; too many martial cultivators had only a semblance of guile.

Initially, everyone had thought Jiang Chen would simply lap up anybody who was left behind. That he didn't pick up anyone aside from Gong Hu was rather unexpected.

The geniuses who were skipped over were somewhat disappointed by this.

From genius 139 onward, the sacred lands began to move with a bit more frequency. Two or three out of every ten were chosen.

Among these ten, Jiang Chen moved once more. This time, he got his hands on a teenager. This youth was probably the youngest on the rankings – as well as the most rebellious.

"Zou Lie, I have need for more personal attendants. Are you willing to come with me?" Jiang Chen's tone was as detached as ever.

Zou Lie's boyish eyes radiated joy. "Big brother Jiang Chen," he responded excitedly, "Myriad Abyss is a huge place. I don't respect many people in my life, but you're my number one. Helping you do great things has always been my dream!"

This astonished many once more. Common opinion was that this Zou Lie was too unruly to bring to heel, hence why none of the sacred lands had chosen him. His worship of Jiang Chen certainly made things easier for the latter.

Jiang Chen broke out into laughter. "Alright, then. I promise we will accomplish some amazing things together. You won't regret it!"

He gave out two more Emperor Supremacy Pills, just like with Gong Hu.

The drafting slowly heated up. As the ranks descended, the quality of the geniuses became better. Real competition began to appear.

Jiang Chen gave the Eternal Sacred Land some suggestions from time to time about who to choose and avoid. Whether the first prime listened was up to her. He wasn't going to make decisions in her stead.

As it turned out, the first prime and Ziju Min were very attentive to Jiang Chen's advice. They heeded it most of the time.

About half of the geniuses were gone at this point.

Aside from Gong Hu and Zou Lie, Jiang Chen acquired another attendant under his wing. The new guy named Xiao Hong was above his two predecessors in cultivation.

The Eternal Sacred Land had adopted five or six geniuses by this point as well, a large number compared to their peers.

The Flora Sacred Land was even more generous. It had accepted nearly ten geniuses into its fold.

The other sacred lands marveled at the amount of resources it had paid out in order to do so. It seemed that Flora was intent on rising above the rest.

The first prime was very displeased because of this. She believed that the Flora Sacred Land was intentionally butting heads with them.

Alas, open competition was completely permitted. Flora was wealthy enough to take on so much risk, and the other sacred lands could do nothing except envy it.

No underhanded methods had been employed in order to win these geniuses over, after all.

The number of remaining geniuses began to dwindle below seventy. The ones left were of an even higher caliber.

"Jiang Chen, the first prime would like you to help the sacred land recruit more geniuses. We can't let the Flora Sacred Land steal the show," transmitted Ziju Min.

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Chapter 1974: Meeting An Old Acquaintance

Jiang Chen knew what the first prime meant. The Flora Sacred Land's affectations hinted at ulterior motives. Clearly, it also wanted to become the leader of the sacred land alliance.

However, he believed that a few inconsequential gifts during this selection of geniuses wouldn't ultimately help it to win the leadership.

The fact that it was openly courting them with lavish presents and promises was far too eye-catching for its strategy to have any success. It was equally likely that it would become the psychological enemy of the other sacred lands.

"Elder Ziju, I'm not so sure we should take such an elevated stance during this drafting process. The Flora Sacred Land's behavior will only attract the others' ire. We don't exactly need to oppose them. If they want to draw fire to themselves, then so be it."

Jiang Chen didn't lose his reason, but Ziju Min was rather more anxious. "The first prime is worried that they'll only amplify their efforts later on. What if they get all of the best geniuses?"

"Don't worry. There's not too much of a difference in talent between those ranked in the top ten and at a hundred fifty. Some simply had access to more resources or came to an earlier understanding of the dao. I think we need to take a more holistic approach and examine the finer details that others might miss. Only looking at the rankings is a sure-fire way to make mistakes."

Jiang Chen patiently instructed. He absolutely didn't want the Eternal and Flora Sacred Lands to compete in such a meaningless way. There was no commensurate return from expending more than necessary here.

Fewer than twenty among these hundred fifty were actually worth gathering to one's side. Among these, the especially remarkable were virtually nonexistent. As they spoke, it came to the genius number 65.

He was already introducing himself. "I am Su Tong, a junior cultivator from Tranquilcloud Island."

Suddenly, Jiang Chen scrunched up his face. A hint of a smile curled at his lips. He hadn't paid much attention to this man before, but he now noticed that he knew the genius.

Though the genius was wearing a disguise, he had a strong hunch that this was an old acquaintance of his.

"Elder Ziju, what kind of place is Tranquilcloud Island?" Jiang Chen asked with some curiosity.

"Haha, Tranquilcloud doesn't exactly have a pristine reputation. Truthfully, it's a pirates' cove with a smattering of gangs. A pretty chaotic place, all told."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen watched the scene with some interest. As soon as Su Tong declared that he came from Tranquilcloud, the ten sacred lands collectively fell silent.

"Is our sacred land not interested in him?" he asked Ziju Min.

“Not at all. Cultivators from Tranquilcloud often have murky pasts. Rather than mount a difficult investigation, it’s best if we skip potential trouble.”

This seemed to be the common sentiment from every sacred land. They didn’t like young geniuses with troubled pasts. Gangs were much more profit-oriented than houses and sects.

Sects were held together by a common faith and heritage, while houses were tied by bonds of blood.

Since gangs were formed purely on the basis of gain, it was difficult to sort out the complex web of relationships, grudges, and favors.

Jiang Chen could tell that Su Tong was spending a great deal of effort on self-promotion. Obviously, he desperately wanted to be chosen by one of the sacred lands.

Alas, the ten sacred lands cared too much about their own prestige. They were uninterested in someone from Tranquilcloud Island.

Jiang Chen smiled before opening his mouth. “Your name is Su Tong?”

“Yes.” Su Tong replied with great sincerity.

“I know you,” Jiang Chen chuckled. “Are you interested in serving me?”

Su Tong blinked. He knows me?

He looked askance with some shock. The name of the young lord Jiang Chen resounded across the world like thunder. He was just a youth from a den of pirates; how would the famous young lord be acquainted with him?

Can it be?

Suddenly, Su Tong remembered his experiences before arriving at Tranquilcloud. It had been many years since then.

Once upon a time, he had been a puppet upon Winterdraw Island. Amid the tumult there, a genius named Jiang Huang had been listed as one of the wanted targets for a number of Polylore’s first-rate houses, alongside himself.

Su Tong’s heart skipped a beat. His eyes considered Jiang Chen’s visage seriously, pondering what the depths of his eyes meant. His recollections stirred a little.

Su Tong had not always been called this. Long ago, his name had been Su Hong.

Jiang Chen smiled in return. “Do you need to think for so long? Honestly, I think you should be in the top ten, not number sixty-five.”

As soon as he said this, there was an uproar among the crowd. Su Tong didn’t seem like a genius that would rank so highly at all. Was Eternal’s young lord mouthing blatant falsehoods?

Someone from the Flora Sacred Land immediately snickered. “Is your word supposed to be proof, eh? You’re not the one in charge of ranking these geniuses.”

The speaker was very young himself, probably one of Flora’s own best geniuses.

Jiang Chen shot him a cold glare. "I don't explain myself to the ignorant. What are you blathering on about?"

Su Tong had half a mind to comply already. "I am willing to follow you to the ends of the sea, young lord Jiang Chen."

Men were willing to die for those who truly appreciated them. Perhaps Jiang Chen was just being polite, but Su Tong felt a sense of approval in the most visceral way.

More importantly, his escape from Winterdraw had owed a tremendous deal to that Jiang Huang – likely the very same man as this young lord Jiang Chen. In other words, the person holding out an olive branch right now had also saved his life back then.

The genius from Flora secretly despised Jiang Chen's retort. "Looking at the undesirable leftovers you've taken an interest in, it's obvious where your tastes lie."

This was a rather blatant insult. Only a capable genius from a lofty background would possibly resort to such a brainless statement.

Everyone Jiang Chen had chosen so far turned a baleful eye upon the foolish genius. If this antagonizing rascal wasn't an important member of a sacred land, they would have cursed him on the spot.

Jiang Chen's expression darkened. "I choose only those I know to be suitable. In ten or twenty years, it'll be obvious which one of us was the short-sighted one!"

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Chapter 1975: A True Genius Appears

In truth, Jiang Chen had a lot of respect for Su Tong, who he'd known as Su Hong. Su Hong's talent had been unrivaled back in Winterdraw among the youths. If not for Jiang Chen, he would've been the unequivocal top genius.

Moreover, the fact that Su Hong had escaped the island was proof of his uncommon luck, which wasn't the only reason he'd survived Winterdraw.

His lucky escape had been the culmination of his judgement, personal strength, survival skills, and the ability to think on his feet.

Thus, Jiang Chen had high expectations for Su Hong. What the young man lacked was an opportunity. He didn't know how Su Hong ended up in Tranquilcloud Island, but he must have been left with no other choices.

Jiang Chen wasn't going to stand by and do nothing now that they'd met again. He was willing to give Su Hong a chance to truly fulfill his potential.

Su Hong was inwardly elated. This was it! A ray of hope had finally dawned in his life after the tumultuous hardships of his life.

He became another addition to Jiang Chen's personal guard.

The others had doubts about Jiang Chen's choice. Although it was difficult to tell if Su Tong was as talented as Jiang Chen had claimed, the fact that he came from Tranquilcloud was enough to deter them. If there was a flaw in Su Hong's character, he could be more trouble than he was worth.

Jiang Chen didn't seem at all fazed. He was under no obligation to answer others' questions.

That wasn't the most infuriating thing that would happen during the draft.

Genius number 61 was from Rejuvenation. The Void Sacred Land had settled their eyes on him, but the young man turned their invitation down and offered his allegiance to Jiang Chen instead.

Every Rejuvenation youth knew about their young lord. The entire isles was under Jiang Chen's command. The young genius knew he'd receive better treatment serving Jiang Chen as a servant than joining the Void Sacred Land.

If he joined the sacred land, he'd be no different from the other geniuses. With Jiang Chen, he might be given more opportunities. Therefore, the young genius chose Jiang Chen without any hesitation.

Jiang Chen was caught off guard, but he wasn't going to turn the young man away. He accepted the Rejuvenation youth into the fold. Another genius thus joined his guard.

The competition for new blood grew fiercer.

Jiang Chen refrained from making further moves. He didn't want to be criticized for getting in others' way. Besides, most of the geniuses didn't really interest him. He wasn't going to make them an offer to win them over.

More importantly, the higher-ranking the geniuses, the greedier they were. Some of them made ridiculously high demands. Even Jiang Chen disapproved.

No matter how talented the geniuses were, they came from second or third tier factions. One should know their place in such an occasion.

Some of them overestimated themselves and started bargaining for better offers simply because a few sacred lands were fighting for them. Fools like them would never go far despite their talents.

However, the ten sacred lands was desperate for new talent. Although some geniuses were off-puttingly greedy, it didn't douse the sacred lands' enthusiasm.

Every top fifty genius was greatly sought after. Sometimes there were even three to four sacred lands fighting for one.

Tension ran higher and higher, and the sacred lands made more and more outlandish promises and offers. Jiang Chen sighed inwardly.

He wanted to advise the first prime to stay calm. Once the draft became a competition, the focus would shift from winning the geniuses to winning face.

It was human nature to be vain.

Since the first prime had made up her mind to be overly generous, Jiang Chen wasn't going to object. However, there were some geniuses that he took an instant dislike to. He made his opinions known and explicitly disapproved of recruiting them.

He couldn't read minds, but he had a good grasp of the human heart with his God's Eye, Boulder's Heart, and powerful consciousness.

Those who lacked integrity and had questionable character mustn't be brought into the sacred land, no matter how talented they were. People like them could be bought with material benefit, but once their greed outgrew what they were offered, they would be insatiable and untamable.

More importantly, they were naturally calculative and wouldn't hesitate to change allegiances. They might end up doing more harm than good.

Jiang Chen's insistence forced the first prime to give up on some geniuses who had piqued her interest.

On the other hand, Ziju Min trusted Jiang Chen's judgement unconditionally. He felt that Jiang Chen had a keen eye for character.

The selection continued. Soon, the top twenty were taking the stage.

The genius ranked twentieth seemed quiet and somewhat of an airhead, but he was remarkably talented. Moreover, the young man possessed a wood spirit constitution of a high order like Mu Gaoqi, which was an exceptional bloodline.

Although there were countless geniuses in Myriad Abyss, only a selected few possessed such constitutions.

Mu Gaoqi was talented, but he had been held down by the limits of his sect, background, resources, and a lack of foresight. If not for Jiang Chen, he would've never met Myriad Abyss' standards.

In comparison, this young man had been raised in Myriad Abyss and thus received a lot more resources.

"You can compete for this one, first prime. Don't let the Flora Sacred Land get him. I believe they'll be willing to pay a great price for him." Jiang Chen transmitted to the first prime.

The young man didn't talk much. His self-introduction reflected his personality. He didn't try to appeal to any sacred lands but instead put on a defiant look. It wasn't the sacred lands doing the choosing. He would be the one making the final decision.

Before him, some geniuses had abstained from making a decision to increase their value, some had bargained for a better offer, and some had changed their minds several times. However, he was the first to show such arrogance.

Nevertheless, Jiang Chen was genuinely interested in the thin-faced genius with a lazy mein.

"Gongxi Hu?" He considered the young man curiously.

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Chapter 1976: Winning One Match

As Jiang Chen expected, six sacred lands showed initial interest in Gongxi Hu. Soon however, the other sacred lands were deterred by the fierceness with which the Flora Sacred Land fought for the young genius and opted out.

Flora's aggression was intimidating, and their promises impossibly generous.

Fortunately, the first prime of the Eternal Sacred Land had also made a generous offer as per Jiang Chen's instructions. The haughty genius must have been remarkable in some aspect for Jiang Chen to give her such serious advice.

Most geniuses were proud and somewhat quirky. Gongxi Hu was no exception. There was nothing wrong with having a strong personality as long as it didn't come back to bite him.

Everyone had young and reckless spate in their youth.

The competition for Gongxi Hu quickly grew fierce. Other sacred lands had given up one after another, leaving Eternal in a gridlock with Flora.

Enraged by Eternal's interference, Flora made increasingly generous offers.

Eternal gave as good as they got.

In the end, both made as good an offer as they could. It all came down to which side could give the better sales pitch.

Flora cut right to the chase. "We can tell you have a wood spirit constitution, Gongxi Hu, and that you're partial to refining pills. The Flora Sacred Land is well known in Myriad Abyss for our foundation in pill dao. If you join us, you'll get the best resources and receive the best guidance. What's more, we'll consider you one of the top most geniuses and treat you accordingly."

Flora's appreciation for Gongxi Hu was apparent.

However, the young man remained calm and didn't so much as blink. A lazy, noncommittal smile was his only reaction. He shifted his gaze to the Eternal Sacred Land, waiting for them to speak up.

The first prime smiled. "Gongxi Hu, there aren't a lot of young men with a personality like yours, but you're the kind of genius we want the most. I'll get straight to the point. Master Shi Xuan, the pill sovereign Flora was most proud of, serves us as a pill slave. Flora claims to be the dominant faction in pill dao, but the Taiyi Skymender and Crowning Empyrean Pill, which are the hot topic of Myriad Abyss, aren't their work."

After a pause, she added, "They were developed by us."

Her response was meant to antagonize, but Eternal and Flora had never been on friendly terms. The fight for the young geniuses was riling up both sides. It was only natural that the first prime would disregard her manners and go hard on Flora.

Flora quickly retorted, "You simply got lucky and stumbled upon two ancient recipes. What else do you have? You have no basic knowledge in pill dao, no robust pill dao discipline, or a mature education system for pill dao experts. To be frank, you're nothing but an upstart newcomer in pill dao! You have

the Taiyi Skymender Pill and the Crowning Empyrean Pill, but we'll one day reverse-engineer the pills and refine them."

They had torn down the thin veil of civility between the sacred lands.

But Jiang Chen was perturbed.

Originally, he'd planned to stay out of the fight and let the two sacred lands do their thing. However, as the creator of the two pills, of course he'd be displeased with the way Flora talked about his work.

"Wait a minute." Jiang Chen stroked his chin with a half smile. "I can't help but notice the flaws in your response. What do you mean by a lack of discipline and an education system? What do you mean by an upstart newcomer in pill dao?"

The representative of Flora scoffed derisively. "You know what I mean."

"Alright, let's put that aside and assume you're simply jealous," Jiang Chen said coolly. "Did you say you'd one day refine the Taiyi Skymender and Crowning Empyrean Pills?"

"That's right! People like you won't understand our illustrious history in pill dao." The man from Flora was very prideful.

Jiang Chen laughed. "Dream on! Let me put it this way, you aren't going to successfully refine the pills in a hundred - no, a thousand years." He made his contempt clear.

"You... you're arrogant, young man! A thousand years? Do you honestly think your pills are that good?"

"Oh, they are," Jiang Chen said with a smile. "I was being conservative in my estimation. Given your capability, you won't be able to refine the pills even after several millennia."

The Crowning Empyrean Pill was considered a premium pill even in the heavenly planes. There were only a handful of people who could refine it.

The Taiyi Skymender Pill wasn't as complicated. Refining a Crowning Empyrean Pill, on the other hand, required exceptional attention to detail. No one in the Flora Sacred Land would be capable of doing it.

That, Jiang Chen could guarantee.

He'd competed with Master Shi Xuan and knew the pill sovereign's ability. Since Shi Xuan set the bar of the Flora Sacred Land, that gave Jiang Chen a good idea about their pill dao.

Gongxi Hu listened to the two sacred lands argue with great interest. He was enjoying the show. Cackling, he turned to the Flora Sacred Land and shrugged.

"My apologies, it seems that the Flora Sacred Land is on the losing side. According to my analysis, you may have once been the top pill dao faction in Myriad Abyss, but no more. Young lord Jiang Chen's outstanding talent forces me to reevaluate Eternal's pill dao. Even if both factions are on equal footing, the young lord's charisma alone gives Eternal an edge."

"So!" Gongxi Hu pulled his lips into an infuriating grin. "I choose the Eternal Sacred Land. I want to be close to senior brother Jiang Chen's charisma."

He was calling Jiang Chen a senior brother even before joining.

The first prime's eyes lit up with delight. They were not only getting a new genius, but also striking a blow on the Flora Sacred Land!

The Eternal Sacred Land had defeated Flora head-on in the conflict. Nothing felt better than that.

All the attention the Flora Sacred Land had gotten before didn't matter. The Eternal Sacred Land had won a crucial battle! The first prime couldn't be more pleased.

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

Chapter 1977: Fighting Over the Top Ten Geniuses

The Flora Sacred Land was beyond furious. They'd made a generous enough offer to Gongxi Hu, and yet he chose the Eternal Sacred Land over them.

Moreover, Gongxi Hu had explicitly said it was Jiang Chen's charisma that settled the deal. Was Jiang Chen really that appealing? Had he become the antithesis of their existence?

The last time they'd clashed, Flora had lost Master Shi Xuan.

This time, the young genius they considered their prime target was taken away beneath their noses.

Nothing was more depressing than being defeated in a head-on fight.

The victory put the Eternal Sacred Land in high spirits. They wisely refrained from making a pitch for the immediate subsequent geniuses.

Their reputation was still important. They mustn't recruit every one of the geniuses, or they'd risk offending all of the other sacred lands. The others needed some new blood as well.

On the contrary, Flora was too furious to consider that.

Each genius among the top twenty was more impressive than the last. Flora was so eager for new talent, they fought for almost every one of them.

Nevertheless, the other sacred lands were not to be underestimated. They had given up on Gongxi Hu only because they didn't feel he was worth their effort.

But now, it was different.

Flora's forceful attitude bothered the other sacred lands. A subtle understanding was reached and they were determined to duke it out with Flora - even if they had to take turns going against that particular sacred land.

As a result, although Flora gained a good number of geniuses, it cost them a great deal more than it should have. Only a faction as wealthy as they could afford such extravagance.

Soon, it was the top ten's turn. Every one of them had reached empyrean realm and was precious to the ten sacred lands.

It was a remarkable feat for young geniuses from the second and third tier factions to ascend to empyrean. Therefore, the ten sacred lands was prepared for fierce competition.

“Young lord Chen, who do you think we should target among the top ten?” Ziju Min transmitted.

“Truth be told, I don’t think any of them are a must pick,” responded Jiang Chen. “However, I believe the first prime would like to get a couple of them for the sake of pride. In that case, I believe number seven and number three are the better options.”

The top ten geniuses were the best in terms of their level of cultivation, but only for now. They weren’t necessarily the ten most talented participants.

Of course, regular people might not be able to tell who was more talented in such a short period of time, but Jiang Chen was able to thanks to his unique circumstances.

The seventh and third participants had decent cultivation levels while being less dependent on resources. Moreover, he admired their character more, despite not having approached them.

Ziju Min couldn’t help but pipe up, “Lan Huang, the top participant, is the one the first prime wants the most.”

Three of Bluesmoke’s geniuses had been shortlisted, and all of them were among the top ten.

However, Jiang Chen hadn’t considered them an option at all. He didn’t want the first prime to pick them either.

“This is just my personal opinion, Elder Ziju. If I were the first prime, I would never pick Lan Huang. Firstly, he’s steadfast and persevering, one who obviously doesn’t intend to pledge himself to a major faction. It’s impossible to earn his loyalty. I suspect that he’s a devoted supporter of Bluesmoke.

“Secondly, the situation in Bluesmoke is unclear. They’re ambitious. It’s hard to tell what their secret leader is planning. Thirdly, Lan Huang isn’t as talented as the first prime believes. He has some potential, but no more than the Five.”

Jiang Chen had laid down his points. Whether the first prime would listen was beyond him.

Ziju Min was quiet for a moment. “I’ll let the first prime know. I hope she’d make the right decision!”

The competition for the ten participants continued. The first prime took Jiang Chen’s advice and bombarded number seven with praise and promises.

To no one’s surprise, they successfully won him over.

For number six to number four, the Eternal Sacred Land put in an appropriate amount of effort, but no more.

With number three, the first prime made as good an offer as she could and even mobilized Jiang Chen, who had great appeal for the youths.

Like Gongxi Hu, the genius ranked the third chose the Eternal Sacred Land because Jiang Chen.

Two of the top ten geniuses had picked Eternal. This was a good showing for the drafting process. Buoyed, the first prime had made up her mind to win Lan Huang over.

The fight for the second place genius was fierce, who ended up choosing the Flora Sacred Land.

Finally, it was Lan Huang's turn. Curtains drew back for the finale showdown of the sacred land rivalry.

The first prime started out strong. Jiang Chen sighed inwardly. He had his own principles. Since he didn't consider Lan Huang a good option, he wasn't going to help even if the first prime asked for it.

He didn't think Lan Huang was worth it. In fact, he believed it was unwise to even fight for Lan Huang. He wouldn't touch any geniuses from Bluesmoke with a ten foot pole.

Nonetheless, there wasn't anything he could do to convince the first prime.

Fortunately, after getting their hands on the number two genius, Flora had resolved to obtain the first as well. It would be a glorious victory for them in the drafting process.

The fight for Lan Huang was exhilarating. All the sacred lands did everything they could to win the young man over. It wasn't just a competition between Eternal and Flora.

"Aren't you going to say anything, Jiang Chen?" Ziju Min asked insistently.

Jiang Chen shook his head without hesitation. "There's bad blood between me and Bluesmoke. I'm not going to speak up against their geniuses, but I'm not going to support them either. If the first prime insists on letting a potential traitor into our ranks, that's her choice, and I can only say I'm sorry."

The fact that Jiang Chen had called the young man a potential traitor alerted Ziju Min. He cursed under his breath. It would be unwise of them to win Lan Huang over at the risk of angering Jiang Chen.

The possibility sent a shudder down the elder's spine.

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

Chapter 1978: A Strange Situation

Ziju Min had always been resolute before important moral decisions. He immediately communicated Jiang Chen's thoughts to the first prime.

Because the first prime prized Lan Huang considerably, she glanced meaningfully at Jiang Chen when she heard it.

The young man hadn't spoken out of selfish motives whatsoever. He didn't mind being probed – he had nothing to hide.

The first prime might misunderstand his intentions and believe that he was preventing other geniuses from joining, but he wasn't going to explain himself overmuch. If the prime was set on her hypothesis, so be it. Jiang Chen would then be the one disappointed in her vision and worldview.

Thankfully, she didn't insist on pursuing Lan Huang further.

The Eternal Sacred Land's sudden exit from the race surprised most. It had been common expectation that Eternal would compete with Flora to the last.

The other sacred lands were understandably pleased though. One of their strongest opponents was gone.

But with Eternal's withdrawal, the competition for Lan Huang became significantly less exciting. The remaining sacred lands were far less decisive than Flora on the subject.

Eternal might have had the resolution and courage to fight Flora to the bitter end, but that wasn't the case for the rest. The non-Flora sacred lands quickly gave up.

With no doubt about it, Lan Huang became part of the Flora Sacred Land.

However, something very unexpected happened at that time.

When a representative from Flora was about to launch into a celebratory speech, Lan Huang suddenly cut in. "I am deeply grateful for your interest in me, Flora Sacred Land. However—"

He paused, great sincerity filling his eyes. "However, my only goal for coming here is to be blessed with the opportunity to join the Eternal Sacred Land. Even without being promised or given anything, I would like to join them."

The air froze over immediately.

The Flora Sacred Land's executives had been very pleased only moments earlier. Frost formed upon their faces when they heard what Lan Huang had to say.

Why was he making such a declaration at this juncture?

Wasn't this denying face towards the Flora Sacred Land?

Lan Huang's eyes were clear and apologetic. He bowed deeply towards Flora.

"Honorable seniors, the Flora Sacred Land is one of the leading factions of Myriad Abyss Island. In my heart, you are definitely one of the best. It's not you, it's me. I have only one goal in life: that I might join the Eternal Sacred Land and one day stand shoulder-to-shoulder to senior brother Jiang Chen."

Jiang Chen again!

The Flora Sacred Land's executives were livid. This assault out of nowhere sent them reeling. Still, Lan Huang's sincerity was not to be denied. Evidently, this wasn't due to any failing of theirs. He was the one who had the fixation.

If they took their anger out on Lan Huang, they would be the ones laughed at for their lack of magnanimity.

The Flora Sacred Land was hardly desperate for more geniuses. It could live without one.

One executive harrumphed. "Why didn't you declare this earlier, Lan Huang? Did you intend to embarrass us all?"

Lan Huang laughed with some helplessness. "I was inconsiderate, yes. I had thought that perhaps the Eternal Sacred Land would be interested in me as well, but... well, this is the first opportunity I had to speak, really."

If not for the sheer number of other people in attendance, Flora's executives would've surely severely punished this intrepid youth. But they were under too much scrutiny to do so at the moment.

And if they insisted on disciplining Lan Huang, the others might think that they were too narrow-minded to accomplish much of anything.

Regardless of that though, the Flora Sacred Land had suffered a substantial blow to its reputation. This was the second time: first Gongxi Hu, now Lan Huang.

Flora had wanted both, but was met with the cold shoulder. Most upsettingly, both of the geniuses seemed to be completely loyal to the Eternal Sacred Land.

This gave off the vague feeling that Flora was inferior to Eternal in some way.

Many of the other sacred lands enjoyed schadenfreude. They didn't appreciate the aggressive stance Flora had taken as of late.

The Eternal Sacred Land knew restraint when picking up geniuses. It focused on a few, only symbolically touching upon the others. That way, everyone had the chance to choose good geniuses out of the pool for mutual benefit.

The Flora Sacred Land, on the other hand, appeared to want to take every genius away from everyone else in a zero sum game.

Now came a different problem. All of the sacred lands glanced curiously at Eternal.

The sacred land in question was strangely silent. Shouldn't it be theoretically overjoyed that the first-place genius in the rankings wanted to join its ranks?

Why was there no show of anything as of yet?

Suspicious eyes were cast upon the first prime, who was instantly thrown into disarray. She knew that Jiang Chen didn't support a large expenditure from Eternal's part to pursue this Lan Huang.

But now, they had the chance to get him for free. The savings to be had here were amazing.

Should they accept or refuse?

The first prime felt an itch in her heart. She couldn't possibly refuse. The more she looked at Lan Huang, the more she liked him. He had almost as much potential as Jiang Chen!

If a genius like him could join Eternal, that would be an amazing thing.

Jiang Chen was mildly surprised. He hadn't expected the sudden use of this tactic.

Bracing himself, he examined Lan Huang slowly again. Alas, the other youth's eyes were as pure as the cerulean sky. This uncommon purity only repulsed him more.

His instincts told him that Lan Huang wasn't nearly as harmless as he appeared. What was he really after?

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1979: Officially Joining

Jiang Chen's mind buzzed with questions. He didn't believe Lan Huang's professed loyalty to Eternal for a second.

From his interactions with Bluesmoke, it was a faction brimming with ambition. Lan Huang's excellence meant that Bluesmoke must have poured a lot of effort into him. Would they not thoroughly brainwash him in the process?

Most importantly, Bluesmoke should already know about the ongoing feud between him and itself. What explanation was there for these actions?

Was Bluesmoke bending the knee?

That was the simplest explanation, but Jiang Chen didn't feel it likely. Bluesmoke should've informed Eternal privately of this beforehand if that was the case.

The fact it had put on this show indicated something fishy was at play.

Moreover, Commander Yan had given him critical information about a divine expert ruling currently over Bluesmoke. Said expert was apparently secretly building up a divine nation of his own.

This made him considerably more wary of Bluesmoke than he otherwise might have been.

Why would a faction that wanted to become a divine nation allow its young geniuses to join another sacred land?

Despite Lan Huang's conspicuous earnestness, he had declared his intentions only after the contest between the sacred lands was over. He had done so solely to smack at Flora's face!

Was there any hatred between Bluesmoke and Flora? Jiang Chen didn't believe so.

There was only one credible explanation.

Perhaps Lan Huang was intentionally riling up the tensions between Flora and Eternal. He wanted to create conflict where there was none.

With this hypothesis, everything he'd seen up to now made perfect sense.

"First Prime." There was no time left for Jiang Chen to bide. "I can see that you like this Lan Huang a great deal. You may think that I selfishly oppose his entry into the sacred land, but I can clearly tell you right now that he means ill. We may be openly at odds with the Flora Sacred Land already, but he is obviously adding fuel to the fire. The final decision is yours. I shan't voice any further disapproval.

"However, I think that Lan Huang and the Bluesmoke Isles behind him have ulterior motives. Did you know that Bluesmoke already has a new master, a god who escaped from the Boundless Prison? It's

bent on becoming a new divine nation. Why would Lan Huang be interested in the Eternal Sacred Land in that case?"

Jiang Chen thought his words objective enough.

If the first prime couldn't discern the truth, no amount of further argument was going to do the trick.

Meanwhile, the first prime was ecstatic. She had been totally overwhelmed by Lan Huang's positive points; the water that Jiang Chen had doused her with didn't lessen her emotions a bit.

"Jiang Chen, I admit that what you say is possible. What if you're wrong though? Wouldn't it be a shame to lose out on a genius like him? Why don't we take him in first, and if we find out he means us harm, we can deal with that after the fact. If not, it would be a tremendous gain for the sacred land! Wouldn't it be good if you and Lan Huang both could be Eternal's twin stars? I know you're generous. Surely you wouldn't mind if he joined?"

Jiang Chen didn't know how to respond to this.

Even someone as experienced as the first prime was impossible to convince once she'd made up her mind. Since the venerated forefather was absent, she was the de facto leader.

If she willed it, what could he do about it?

He sighed sadly and shook his head, but said nothing more.

On the contrary, he rather admired Lan Huang's charisma. This youth had come out of nowhere to charm practically all the executives of the ten sacred lands.

If he was a woman, his allure would be even more potent.

Lan Huang's handsome demeanor was not to be denied. His crystal-blue eyes were easy to get lost in; they looked pristine and incorruptible.

No wonder the first prime was so enamored with him.

"Even in the world of martial dao, people judge others by their appearances," he lamented internally.

"Don't worry, young master Chen," Ziju Min transmitted to him reassuringly. "Lan Huang wouldn't threaten your position. The venerated forefather thinks extremely highly of you already! He believes that you're a genius that comes along only once in ten thousand years, someone blessed with great fortune..."

Jiang Chen burst into laughter. Did the elder think he would be frustrated over something as trivial as this?

"Do you think I'm worried about him usurping me, Elder Ziju?"

"No, no," Ziju Min explained. "I'm just concerned you might take it the wrong way."

"Ha, I suppose I'm taking this quite differently from everyone else. Not exactly in the way you expect though! Never mind, it's too late to talk about that now. Time will tell." Jiang Chen didn't want to waste words on a foregone conclusion.

Lan Huang was as good as part of the Eternal Sacred Land. In the first prime's overflowing joy, she gave out an exceptionally hefty present to Lan Huang. The same was granted to the Bluesmoke Isles, where he originated from.

Ziju Min smiled wryly when he saw the prime's generosity. She had given much more abundantly than when Jiang Chen had joined the sacred land.

He felt mildly indignant on his old ward's behalf. Would Jiang Chen become disagreeable over this?

A glance at the young man showed that he was as cool as ever. In fact, he didn't even look like he was paying attention to the present. The elder let out a sigh of relief.

Young master Chen has a big heart and a clear vision. Maybe he really doesn't think anything of this. Does that mean he is truly on his guard against Bluesmoke and this Lan Huang?

The selection of lesser geniuses was finally over. Some factions were elated, while others were quite bitter. The Eternal Sacred Land was the biggest beneficiary without a doubt. Though Flora won in terms of sheer number recruited, the way it had gone about doing so had also angered the rest of the sacred lands.

Lan Huang was incredibly polite. He greeted the Five Great Gentlemen with perfect courtesy, and Jiang Chen with extraordinary enthusiasm.

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

Chapter 1980: Rules for the Grand Competition

One didn't slap a smiling face. Jiang Chen wasn't going to turn a cold shoulder when the new Eternal genius was being so friendly. He was wary of Lan Huang, but he wouldn't forget about proper etiquette.

"I greatly admire you for your glorious achievements given my own limited knowledge and talent, senior brother Jiang Chen. I'm sure to have many questions in the future. I hope senior brother will offer me guidance then."

The thing about Lan Huang was that utmost sincerity shone out of his eyes and earnestness in his tone whenever he talked.

If Jiang Chen hadn't already come to a personal judgement about Lan Huang, he'd have approved of or even taken a shine to the new genius.

"Haha, we should all exchange our experiences and learn from each other." Jiang Chen wasn't overly friendly, but he didn't keep the young genius at arm's length, either.

The first prime sighed in relief. She'd been worried that Jiang Chen would ignore Lan Huang or even knock the new genius down a peg. That would put her in a difficult place.

She relaxed when she realized that Jiang Chen was a bigger man than she'd expected.

Lan Huang was a sociable man. He soon engaged others in friendly conversation.

“Senior brothers, the genius competition is about to start. I’ll be cheering for you and bearing witness to your greatness!”

After the draft was the main course, the grand competition.

The competition was structured in a more unconventional way. It wasn’t a regular martial dao tournament or a game of random pairing-up and single elimination. The general public had grown tired of those age old tropes. Luck played too big a part in them. If the most powerful geniuses were pitted against each other in the early stage of the competition, one of them would be prematurely eliminated before their time.

The rules for this competition were more complicated.

The competition was divided into two stages with a group match for the first stage.

Every sacred land was to send six participants, and the six would be divided into two teams.

In other words, there would be sixty participants in total, divided into twenty teams.

“Everyone, you may decide your teammates yourselves. Every team needs to elect a leader. During the group match, the leaders will be awarded with more points.”

Generally speaking, it wasn’t difficult for the sacred lands to pick the two leaders. If there were two geniuses at about the same level, they’d each lead a team.

If there was one genius who was better than the others, it wasn’t hard for the sacred land to divide their participants, either.

It was trickier for the sacred lands with three geniuses at the same level. Picking the leaders required some careful consideration. One of the three would be sacrificed.

Once the rules were announced, both Wu You and Gan Ning turned to Jiang Chen with a smile. They both wanted to team up with Jiang Chen.

“Would you mind letting me join you, senior brother Jiang Chen?” asked Gan Ning.

“Same with me,” Wu You piped up as well.

Jiang Chen chuckled. “It’s us three then.”

“You be the leader,” both geniuses said without hesitation.

Jiang Chen didn’t excuse himself out of misguided humility. He nodded. “Alright, I’ll do my best so that you won’t regret joining my team.”

There were three other members of the Five Great Gentlemen. Naturally, they would become a team, with the strongest Sui Chen as their leader.

Sui Chen was determined to prove himself in the competition and restore his reputation.

The other two gentlemen were closer to Sui Chen than to Jiang Chen. Since Wu You and Gan Ning had already jumped on Jiang Chen’s bandwagon, their only choice was Sui Chen.

But, they had to admit privately that they stood a better chance of gaining more points if they were on Jiang Chen's team.

"Alright, the teams should be decided on. The rules will now be explained. Remember, they will only be explained once. If you fail to remember them and break a rule, you'll lose all your points and be ranked at the bottom."

The crowd listened with rapt attention.

"Twenty teams will enter a large, exotic, and isolated island. Six hundred trial orbs will be placed on the island. Every one of them is unique and numbered. It's against the rules to try masquerading other orbs as the trial orbs, and your score will be zeroed out if you attempt to do so.

"Every trial orb gives you one point. The number of orbs you gain will determine your total score. Utilize your intelligence, techniques, and power to locate the orbs. Remember, you're allowed to take orbs from other contestants. Anything goes as long as no one dies. The bottom line is no deaths. If you kill someone, you and your teammates will lose all your points, and you'll pay with your lives!"

No killing, but anything else was welcomed.

It was a simple and thrilling way of competing, which was especially motivating for the youths.

"You may be wondering, if everyone's score is calculated by the orbs they acquire, what's the point of forming teams?"

"The answer is simple. The team with the highest total score will be awarded additional points. Fifty to the leader, thirty to the team member who contributes the most, and twenty to the one contributing the least.

"For the team with the second highest score, thirty points to the leader, twenty to the member contributing the most, ten to the one contributing the least.

"For the team at the third place, twenty points to the leader, ten to the member contributing the most, and five to the other member.

"Only the top three teams will be rewarded with additional points.

"Since it's a group match, there are no individual prizes. Nevertheless, keep in mind that being a team isn't only about finding the most orbs. You have to locate your team members and protect them, working in concert to safeguard the orbs you've collected.

"As a team, you're in the same boat. If you fail to protect your teammates, it'll be difficult to get a good score. You may think you'll be able to collect many orbs on your own, but don't forget that you're allowed to steal others' orbs. Without your teammates, you may face a team of three or even several teams at the same time."