

Three Realms 1991

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

Chapter 1991: Blockade and Robbery

From the way they dressed, it was clear that they weren't from the same faction. The six people were divided into three groups. They'd formed an alliance for a specific purpose.

Jiang Chen wasn't their only target. They planned on robbing any genius who passed by.

The leader of the group was from the Flora Sacred Land, Qin You. He was among the top three young geniuses in Flora.

Next to him was a young man who was similarly dressed. His shock of short, white hair made him stand out.

The other four geniuses were from Polylore and Void.

These three sacred lands had always been on friendly terms. Under the table, they interacted closely and could be considered an alliance. Among them, Flora was the leading faction.

They'd come to the grand competition to fight for the seat of the alliance leader. Flora was especially hungry for the title.

When Qin You heard that Jiang Chen was nearing the trap they'd set up, he'd thought they were going to catch a big fish, gaining orbs and avenging Flora at the same time.

Unfortunately, Jiang Chen changed directions before setting foot into the trap.

They couldn't help but wonder if it'd been a coincidence, or if Jiang Chen had purposefully avoided them.

"Senior brother Qin You, I hear that my Polylore's Hu Lei was defeated by Jiang Chen last night," remarked a Polylore genius. The green outfit he wore made him blend together with the island.

"So what?" Qin You scoffed. "Hu Lei is bold but brash. He often strikes before getting to know his enemies. I'm not surprised that he'd be defeated. Even if he hadn't met Jiang Chen, he would've lost after running into other strong opponents."

Qin You dismissed the top genius like he was nothing.

The Polylore genius in green opened his mouth to say something but decided against it. He wasn't pleased that Qin You had belittled his senior brother, but Flora was on the rise and the sect was Polylore's close ally. He kept his mouth shut even though he was unhappy.

One of the geniuses from the Void Sacred Land spoke up, "Jiang Chen is remarkable, but standing out too much isn't necessarily a good thing."

The Polylore genius dressed in green asked curiously, "Why?"

"Think about it, Jiang Chen will garner even more attention after defeating Hu Lei, won't he? People are going to be more wary of him, aren't they?"

"True. Jiang Chen is indeed talented. I wonder if there are any youths from the ten sacred lands who can rival him."

"Maybe there are, maybe there aren't. It doesn't matter. The tallest tree will be toppled by the wind first! The more Jiang Chen stands out, the fewer allies he has. If he's powerful enough to alarm most geniuses, people will reach an unspoken agreement to target him. Imagine what will happen if everyone else work together to fight Jiang Chen. No matter how good he is, he can't overpower so many people."

His analysis was very convincing.

Even Qin You cracked an intrigued smile. "I didn't know you were that insightful, junior brother Ding. You're right. Jiang Chen better keep a low profile, or people will gang up on him soon enough."

"Hmph, even if we put that aside, hasn't our trap deterred Jiang Chen? He's afraid!"

The group of six muttered among themselves, but there was little they could do to Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen came to a sudden stop after he and Gan Ning had walked toward the west for some time. He turned into a narrow path covered in thorny vines, which led them back to the north.

"Senior brother, we're headed back to the north again, aren't we?" asked a curious Gan Ning.

Jiang Chen focused his senses and suddenly asked, "Have you noticed that the smell of the weeping trees is stronger in this section? There aren't many weeping trees in this area at all."

Gan Ning paused. "What do you mean?"

"I suspect that Wu You's passed through here," Jiang Chen explained.

"Senior brother Wu You has been here?" Gan Ning didn't expect that. "Where did he go? To the north?" He tracked the winding path with his eyes.

"There are obvious signs that the path was set up on purpose. It was meant to direct people to the north." Jiang Chen had great attention to detail.

"On purpose?" Gan Ning was even more surprised. "Has senior brother Wu You been misled?"

"Very likely." Jiang Chen nodded. "Otherwise there shouldn't be so many man made signs along this path."

Gan Ning wasn't sure what that meant. "Then should we take the path, or...?"

"We're going along, of course, but the path will take us to the trouble I mentioned. We'll be walking right into a trap. Many cultivators are waiting for us. They've set up an ambush for candidates passing by." Jiang Chen was confident in his speculation.

"What should we do then?" Gan Ning was at a loss. If they did run into a group of cultivators, he worried that even someone as powerful as Jiang Chen wouldn't be able to win, given he was a dead weight.

"What should we do?" Jiang Chen smiled lazily. "They've put in so much effort to welcome us. We shouldn't disappoint them. However, we're not taking the path they've set up for us. That'd be suicide. Let's take a different path and find out how many orbs they have in their possession."

Realization dawned on Gan Ning.

Jiang Chen had never intended to take any orbs from him. He was going to steal other people's orbs! Those who had formed set up ambushes should possess even more than the average genius.

If Jiang Chen's plan went well, it was very likely for the team to get a good rank in the end.

Qin You and the others were still in the dark, lamenting the fact that Jiang Chen had avoided their trap. They hadn't realized that their target had become their hunter, and they themselves the prey!

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1992: Strange Runes

Qin You's gang had six people total with clearly defined roles. The two in the center held down the fort. Two more geniuses fanned out to either side, observing suspicious movements from every cardinal.

This division of labor blessed their highway robbery with great efficiency. In only one or two days, they had amassed quite a sizable sum of orbs. Each genius possessed several.

If they kept doing this, they would have at least a hundred-odd orbs among the six of them when the half-month was over.

"Senior brother Qin, I see something in that direction. I'll go take a look." The Void Sacred Land's cultivator, Ding, volunteered.

"Sure. Go see if a fat target has arrived." Qin You was the clear leader of the gang and one of the two that commanded the operation.

"Junior brother Lin, you go scout for business as well." This junior brother was the Polylore genius in green from earlier.

The genius nodded, then headed out as instructed.

However, neither junior brother Ding or Lin returned after a full half-hour.

A white-haired cultivator furrowed his brow. "What're they doing? They're so undisciplined! Didn't we agree that each scouting trip isn't to exceed half an hour? We're not here on vacation. Why aren't they taking this seriously?"

His white hair made him unique among the crowd, and his demeanor showed that he was rather upset.

Qin You was a bit frustrated as well. But as the leader, he had to be more tolerant of his underlings' faults. The white-haired cultivator was free to speak his mind, but he was not.

The geniuses of the other sacred lands were hardly inferior to him in status. They had yielded authority to him merely out of respect for the Flora Sacred Land's renown.

Technically, they were free to leave at any time.

Another fifteen minutes passed, but Ding and Lin were nowhere to be found.

Wrinkles appeared all over Qin You's forehead. "What the heck are those two up to?" he murmured. "Did they plot to pull a prank on us or what?"

If the geniuses' comrades weren't still here, he would almost wonder whether they'd run off by themselves. Perhaps they no longer wanted to cooperate?

"Big brother Qin, senior brother Lin still hasn't yet returned. I'd like to see what's happened to him," the other cultivator from Polylore suggested.

The remaining cultivator from Void did likewise.

"Hold on." Qin You was rather less supportive. "If something's happened to the two junior brothers, won't you going out there be like moths to a flame?"

The two young geniuses both paled. Has something happened?

"Big brother Qin, my team will be in big trouble if something bad has happened to senior brother Ding. I really must go take a look."

This gathering of six was only a temporary alliance, formed out of desire for raw profit alone. Their modus operandi was to ambush others and share in the plundered loot.

When it came down to things, the geniuses tended to think more highly of their teammates. After all, the rankings were decided based on teamwide achievements. The fact that their long absent teammates were also their peers only added to their worry.

"You two are really stubborn," Qin You frowned, then nodded. "Well, be careful out there. Remember to signal immediately if something happens, don't just brute force it. Use your brains."

The two remaining geniuses weren't in the mood to accept advice. They inclined their heads in a perfunctory manner before escaping.

Only Qin You and his white-haired comrade from Flora were left.

"Senior brother Qin, I feel like something's off." The white-haired cultivator was forthright towards his peer and captain.

"Yes, I've realized that as well. Prepare yourself, junior brother. We should leave this place at once. Those other guys are probably in deep trouble. They would send a message back otherwise."

The white-haired cultivator blinked. "We're not waiting for them?"

"I don't think they'll come back." Qin You shook his head. "Plus, us lingering here will have alerted others for sure. We need to relocate this little enterprise of ours."

"Alright then."

The white-haired cultivator was very accommodating to this. He had sensed something awry quite a while ago. If the four others didn't come back, the two of them wouldn't gain anything by staying.

Any attempt to waylay others would likely backfire on them.

As they readied to leave, Qin You glanced inquisitively toward a patch of space.

“Who is it?”

The two Flora geniuses moved in synchronicity. Qin You’s voice barely fell before their backs were already turned to each other’s in caution.

Suddenly, strange runes appeared suspended in midair. More and more came into view, like transparent bricks that were built upon each other into great walls. It was a spooky sight to see.

The runes were fluid and esoteric, impossibly difficult to make out against each other’s radiance.

“What is this, senior brother?” The white-haired cultivator couldn’t make heads or tails of it. “Is this a formation?”

Qin You frowned and shook his head. “Doesn’t look like it. Still, these runes are very strange. We need to retreat before they lock us in!”

“Where to?”

“The south looks the thinnest. Come!” Qin You fled without hesitation.

The two geniuses shot with impossible swiftness toward the south.

Unfortunately, they soon realized that the runes in this direction were only multiplying. There was no exit to be had here.

“Not good. We can’t get out this way. This way!” A cursory test was enough to reveal to Qin You the runes’ terrifying energy. They couldn’t possibly brute force their way past!

They switched directions four or five times, but was walled off each time by the interwoven fabrics of reality and illusion. None of the directions they had headed in had actually been weak spots.

Their flight was like that of headless chickens.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

As they attempted to break away, the four who’d disappeared earlier fell at their feet.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1993: An Enormous Harves

Qin You’s expression froze instantly. He was fully aware of how much trouble he was in now.

The runes approached even during this momentary loss of focus, their walls crushing in the space they occupied.

“What the hell are these things, senior brother Qin?” The white-haired cultivator was blindsided; his voice terrified. They had a reasonable breadth of experience as geniuses of a sacred land, but never had they witnessed so weird a sight before.

A regular formation couldn’t possibly move around, could it?

These approaching runes felt like one that could. Moreover, they were so powerful that the geniuses had no hope of escape.

Outside the entrapment of runes, Jiang Chen was perfectly relaxed. He had only wanted to do a little experiment, but the suspended runes turned out far more powerful than he expected.

They were significantly more flexible than formations to boot. Yes, they weren't equally as strong, but their ease of use in combat meant that they were much more convenient and agile.

Gan Ning's only remaining emotion was astonishment. The abilities that Jiang Chen were casually exhibiting were too incomprehensible for him. He could do nothing more than admire his senior brother's exploits.

After a period of futile resistance, Qin You and the white-haired cultivator were utterly overwhelmed.

.....

About an hour later, Jiang Chen collected forty-some orbs off of the other geniuses' unconscious bodies. Gan Ning could only watch on, completely flabbergasted by what his senior brother was doing.

He now understood why Jiang Chen hadn't cared for the orbs they found along the way. If he could do all this, was there even a point to fighting over the strays?

Jiang Chen generously gifted five of the orbs he won to Gan Ning.

"I... I can have these?" stammered the young genius.

Jiang Chen laughed. "Take it. A portion of their ill-gotten gains."

"Ill-gotten gains?" Gan Ning was confused.

"These guys had six or seven orbs each. Given their abilities, how could they find so many in only a day or two? The fact that they were gathered together here means that the orb per head should be even fewer. The only explanation is that they banded together to rob others. Honestly, a much better deal than trying to find orbs themselves, I have to say."

His analysis was quite reasonable.

"Oh, I see. These bastards!" Gan Ning cursed. "I've always heard that Flora, Polylore, and Void were secret allies. Seems those rumors were true. Regardless, these guys are pretty lucky to assemble in so short a period of time."

"They have their ways of making that easier. There's a bit of luck as well, I assume." Jiang Chen waved a hand. "We need to hurry and find Wu You."

Gan Ning was still mildly concerned. "Didn't you find the lingering aura of the weeping tree around here, senior brother? I'm bothered that Wu You might have fallen prey to their surprise attack."

"I don't think so," Jiang Chen shook his head. "Let's look around a bit more. The trail's not cold yet."

"Uh huh. We need to take care of ourselves. These temporary alliances are hard to defend against," Gan Ning suggested discreetly.

Jiang Chen grinned at that. "I actually want to run into them more often. To pick up so many orbs so quickly and easily is a real blessing."

Gan Ning blinked, then burst into laughter.

Senior brother Jiang Chen was right. He was strong enough to cut through even well-known geniuses such as Qin You like butter. They were as pliant as clay in his hands.

What else would he possibly be afraid of?

As long as his senior brother employed some common sense, he could do as he wished on this island. He and Wu You were lucky to be on the same team as him! If Jiang Chen acted independently, he might reap even greater rewards.

No more amazing opportunities arose as they traveled past. Clearly, Qin You and his fellows' banditry had induced the other geniuses to steer a wide berth around this area.

This was another important reason that Qin You had wanted to leave this place.

But after all of what had transpired so far, there was still no news of Wu You whatsoever.

At first, Gan Ning was very anxious about his friend's whereabouts. After a while though, he felt that it was probably alright even if Wu You didn't show up until the end.

Senior brother Jiang Chen was harvesting orbs at an alarming rate. Even without Wu You's contribution, he would lead the pack in the rankings. Their team would definitely be top three – or perhaps even the winning one.

Since it was forbidden to kill anyone in the trial, Wu You's safety was assured.

There was still no trace of their missing third member at the second evening.

Last night's experiences had taught Gan Ning not to mention keeping watch again. He really didn't need to. Anyone blind enough to run into senior brother Jiang Chen was delivering their own orbs right into his hands.

As expected, two more would-be ambushers crept up on them in the night, thinking that they were stupid to be so defenseless in the trees.

Jiang Chen took care of the two excited criminals on the spot. They didn't even see his face before being knocked out. Their orbs were duly confiscated, though the duo had only five among them.

Still, something was better than nothing.

Gan Ning was passed another orb from the spoils. Profit without working was a little embarrassing; he had made almost no contribution to the team's efforts.

On the third day, Jiang Chen and Gan Ning noticed that the other teams were beginning to gather together. Many trios had already found each other.

The situation on the island shifted. Geniuses no longer roamed by themselves, but rather in teams instead.

This affected Jiang Chen's movements somewhat.

Since Jiang Chen was so far above his teammates in terms of strength, his team had a very different dynamic compared to the ones where all three geniuses were evenly matched.

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

Chapter 1994: Poison Consort Shi Qinglu?

On the fourth day, Jiang Chen and Gan Ning finally picked up news of Wu You's whereabouts.

The Goldbiter Rats delivered an unfortunate revelation: Wu You was in the hands of someone else.

The rats had no idea who his captor was, but they did mention a rather large band that included Qin You and his friends – yes, the very same ones Jiang Chen had beaten up a short time ago.

"Qin You?" Jiang Chen frowned. Rather than locking up the six geniuses after overpowering them, he had knocked them out and tossed them in a corner somewhere.

It had only been two days since then. The troublemakers were out and about already?

"Gan Ning, I know where Wu You is." Jiang Chen glanced at his junior brother.

Gan Ning had no idea what Jiang Chen's communications with the Goldbiter Rats entailed. "What discovery have you made, senior brother?" He blinked.

"He's fallen into enemy hands," Jiang Chen stated coolly.

"Huh? Whose?" Gan Ning was shocked.

"I don't know just yet, but I'm guessing it's related to the Flora Sacred Land." Jiang Chen's eyebrows jumped a little. "Specifically, that Qin You from earlier is definitely involved."

"That bastard!" Gan Ning gritted his teeth. "We should've crippled all of them back there."

The ten sacred lands didn't have a deep-seated hatred of each other to begin with. In fact, they were allies when it came to defending their realm against offworld bandits.

Therefore, the sacred lands in general paid heed to maintaining reasonably cordial relations. Killing was frowned upon, as was actively damaging diplomatic connections in any other way.

This was why the rules had forbidden killing of any kind in the trial. However, there were no rules against permanently crippling people.

If Jiang Chen had wished it, he could've skirted around the rules by rendering useless the cultivations of the geniuses they'd run across earlier. However, it would have damaged the Eternal Sacred Land's reputation as well as the sacred lands' current alliance.

In the world of martial dao, removing someone's cultivation wasn't much different from killing them outright.

Thus, Jiang Chen had shown mercy to Qin You and his compatriots. That Wu You would end up falling into their hands was a small surprise.

Now that they knew where their third teammate was, Jiang Chen wasn't going to just ignore him.

"Come on, let's go get him," he said after musing a moment.

Gan Ning nodded and quickly followed behind his senior brother. Suddenly, he remembered something important. "Senior brother, Qin You isn't too bad as a Flora genius. If we run into Shi Qinglu however, we need to be a bit more careful."

"Shi Qinglu?" Jiang Chen frowned. "Any relation to Shi Xuan?"

"Yes!" Gan Ning nodded. "The surname Shi is quite well-known in the Flora Sacred Land, and in fact the house is one of its pillars. Shi Qinglu is considered the best genius Flora has seen in five thousand years. In recent years, she hasn't bothered participating in any contests among the younger generation. It's quite a surprise that she came to this competition in the first place. I guess that shows how dearly the Flora Sacred Land values it."

"Hmm. That's a remarkable reputation to have. She isn't going to be easy to deal with, I assume." Jiang Chen didn't have a habit of underestimating his opponents.

"Indeed. Though Shi Qinglu has kept a pretty low profile recently, she was called the Poison Consort once upon a time. Despite her youth, she's made a name for herself in art of poisons." Gan Ning was very serious when he mentioned her strengths. Obviously, he was very wary of what she could do.

Jiang Chen frowned. He had come to the Eternal Sacred Land for a while now, but hadn't paid much attention to the other sacred lands' affairs. It looked like they really didn't want for geniuses.

Back then, he had heard rumors that Xiahou Zong was as good as the best that the ten sacred lands could offer – maybe even better.

He hadn't put much credence in those rumors, but he hadn't expected them to be too far from the truth. As a result, after defeating Xiahou Zong, he had thought very little of the young geniuses of the ten sacred lands.

It seemed that his assumption had been mistaken. Yes, Xiahou Zong's talent had been remarkable, but it was ridiculous to claim that he was better than many of the geniuses Jiang Chen had seen so far.

Hu Lei, for example, was his superior in several ways. This Poison Consort Shi Qinglu was likely the same way.

"Senior brother, we really need to take care around this poison consort. I hear she can turn a radius of several thousand miles into a zone of death. Nothing can live through the miasma she produces." Gan Ning had clearly heard some rumors of Shi Qinglu before. He spoke of her with a guarded tone.

Poison users were always the most dangerous among cultivators. Jiang Chen understood why Gan Ning was so apprehensive.

However, he was a master of poisons himself. Much of his knowledge about them had been inherited from his previous life, in fact. Jiang Chen wasn't going to take this Shi Qinglu lightly, but he saw no reason to be scared of her.

"Don't worry, Gan Ning. I know of many exotic poisons in the world. If this poison consort is as competent as you say, I'd like to fight her myself. I just hope she doesn't disappoint."

Jiang Chen's tone was very relaxed. The smile on his face was as sunny as the thawing rays of early spring. Gan Ning was calmed considerably by his demeanor.

The Goldbiter Rats ferried a number of messages back as time went on.

According to their reports, there were a number of exotic poison formations within a dozen miles in that area. Strangely enough, the formations didn't entirely seal off the space.

An impish smile curled at the corner of Jiang Chen's mouth. This poison user was the furthest thing from ordinary.

Leaving holes intentionally in the setup was like herding someone into the opening of a bag. Anyone that fell for the trap was as good as clay in the poisoner's hands.

"Is it just like Gan Ning said? Is Poison Consort Shi Qinglu on the scene?" Jiang Chen found this rather interesting. Shi Xuan had lost to him and become his slave, and now one of his junior relatives was directly opposing him. If it really was her, he admired her audacity.

If she knew that Shi Xuan had lost to him, she was either ignorant or supremely confident in her gifts.

"Gan Ning," he asked his junior brother, "Are there any other strong geniuses from Flora aside from Shi Qinglu? The Qin You we met earlier – is he worth anything at all?"

"Qin You? Number four at best. Aside from Shi Qinglu, there's Lu Mingye as well. He is said to be just as capable as her. They are the Flora Sacred Land's twin treasures."

Despite his mediocrity, Gan Ning was reasonably informed about the ten sacred lands' affairs.

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

Chapter 1995: Formidable Formations

Since it was Poison Consort Shi Qinglu who had taken Wu You, it'd be risky for Jiang Chen to bring Gan Ning with him. He didn't fear the poison genius, but he couldn't guarantee that he'd be able to protect Gan Ning at the same time.

He first left Gan Ning somewhere safe.

Given Gan Ning's strength, even hiding in the most obscure location wouldn't guarantee his safety. Many teams on the island had found each other. There were too many eyes watching, making it easy to find Gan Ning.

Jiang Chen found a hiding place for Gan Ning and set up a defense formation, which would be enough to protect him.

Only the most stubborn of people would pick such a difficult target. This was a timed competition. Most contestants wouldn't waste their time on breaking the formation.

It wasn't worth a couple of days to get a nebulous amount of orbs. Every participant was shrewd enough to do the math.

"Gan Ning, it'll take even seventh level empyrean cultivators a couple of days to break through the formation. You should be safe enough in here. Of course, you can walk around if you get bored. Once there's a threat you can't deal with, hop back in the formation to protect yourself."

Gan Ning was grateful. He knew that he and Wu You were more trouble than they were worth. Jiang Chen was better off without them.

"I feel guilty for continuously dragging you down, senior brother Jiang Chen."

"We're from the same faction. It's only right for us to support each other." Jiang Chen smiled. "Alright, wait here patiently. I'll bring Wu You back with me."

Gan Ning looked at him with genuine concern. "Senior brother, you must be careful if you run into Shi Qinglu. She hasn't been defeated yet by any youths in Myriad Abyss. Countless people have lost to her. I worry that she's with Lu Mingye, making them even more difficult to deal with."

"Haha, I'm not afraid of even Shi Xuan. Why would I be intimidated by his junior?" Jiang Chen smiled easily. "Don't worry. I'll be back in at most a day."

Watching Jiang Chen walk away, Gan Ning knew there was nothing else he could say to change his senior brother's mind. The only thing he could do was to silently wish Jiang Chen luck.

Jiang Chen was the only thing keeping him in the competition. If his senior brother was defeated, Gan Ning wouldn't be able to sustain himself for fifteen days unless he stayed hidden forevermore in the formation.

He already had about ten orbs, which gave him an average score and would put him among the top half of the contestants.

He knew there would be plenty who didn't end up with a single orb at all. Some of them might have even been crippled as soon as they set foot on the island.

The orbs would be concentrated in the hands of the selected few.

Having settled Gan Ning in, Jiang Chen made his way to Wu You with a lighter heart.

Through the Goldbiter Rats' incredible sleuthing abilities, he soon zeroed in on a specific area. As the rats had observed, there were many poison formations scattered around.

Once activated, the formations would cover the entire area, poisoning anyone who set foot in it.

Jiang Chen made a round along the fringe of the formations. His observation gave him a basic understanding of the cultivator who had set them up. He had to admit the deployer's skill. It was his first time meeting someone who'd shown this much mastery in poison.

He'd encountered a few poison experts in the human domain, but none were good enough to catch his eye. There had once been an Order of Wind and Cloud, established by representatives from House Xiahou. Among them were a few poison experts, but they were also nothing in Jiang Chen's eyes.

This poisoner, on the other hand, piqued his curiosity.

"The ten sacred lands do have a solid foundation." One of Jiang Chen's positive traits was that he never underestimated his foe.

Even when he believed his enemy wouldn't pose a threat, he'd first study his enemy and formulate a plan before making a move. That was a habit that set him apart in his two lives.

He knew how many remarkable talents there were in the world. Carelessness could be his downfall.

Jiang Chen noticed a few cultivators standing guard around the parameters.

"The one who set up the poison formations must have high status. Otherwise they wouldn't be able to mobilize so many people. Is it really that Shi Qinglu?"

That was Jiang Chen's speculation. According to Gan Ning, the most talented poison expert in the Flora Sacred Land was Shi Qinglu. She was their foremost young genius and one half of the Flora twin treasures, along with Lu Mingye.

What surprised Jiang Chen was the fact that Qin You was standing guard on the outer circle.

"This guy again, but it seems he's merely one of the lackeys this time, which means the one who has given him the order must rank higher than he does. The Flora Sacred Land is already a leading sacred land. It must be either Lu Mingye or Shi Qinglu."

Qin You's presence further cemented Jiang Chen's speculation.

.....

On the other side of the woods, Qin You and the white-haired cultivator stood close together. A few more people came to them from all directions.

"So? Did you find the guy?" The look in Qin You's eyes was piercing.

The others shook their heads.

"Senior brother Qin, are you sure that the one who attacked us was Jiang Chen?" asked the white-haired cultivator doubtfully.

Qin You wasn't actually sure, which was what made the whole experience even more humiliating. He'd been defeated miserably without knowing who his opponent was. He couldn't have suffered a worse failure.

But his prime suspect was indeed Jiang Chen.

Scowling, Qin You declared in a deep voice, "We'll know if it's him after we catch him."

The white-haired cultivator pursed his lips, swallowing his words nervously.

Qin You threw him a look. "Do you have something to say?"

"I'm just wondering... Since Jiang Chen could subdue us in an instant, he's more powerful than we expected. If we target him again... perhaps..."

"Scared?" Qin You looked at him coolly.

"I..." The white-haired cultivator hesitated to respond. He was scared, but it'd be too cowardly of him to say so.

"Lady Poison Consort and senior brother Lu are in charge this time," Qin You said through gritted teeth. "That kid better stay far away, or he's going to suffer!"

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1996: Repeat Robbery

Just when Qin You gnashed his teeth together, a dazzling light flicker registered before the Flora gang. A shower of gold surged all around them, enveloping where they were in an aura of light.

A figure walked out from within that light, his face entirely enshrouded by the radiance around him. His expression was completely hidden.

"How exactly do you intend to make me suffer?" the voice declared slowly.

Jiang Chen?

Qin You and the others trembled like they were seeing a ghost in broad daylight. They looked fearfully towards the voice's source.

Usually, they at most respected strong cultivators in the same generation. They wouldn't dread or despair over encounters with their peers.

But the person leisurely walking out of the golden light was an exception. They shuddered and trembled just to behold him. Some wanted to instantly turn and run.

Alas, the frightening presence this person within the light exerted upon them took away their strength to walk. Their legs turned to jelly.

As the figure approached, Qin You could barely make out the outline of a person within. It looked like Jiang Chen, but was it really?

His anguish deepened with every step the figure took.

Naturally it was Jiang Chen.

"If I were you, Qin You, I would keep my tail between my legs and live more honestly. Every criminal deserves a second chance, but not necessarily a third. Wouldn't you agree?" Jiang Chen's tone was as aloof as ever.

Qin You was floored by what he heard.

"You..." he hissed. "So you did rob me of my orbs last time?"

"Your orbs?" Jiang Chen snickered. "You lost them the same way you got them."

Qin You was utterly speechless. Yes, he had found almost none of his orbs himself. They'd been amassed through force of arms alone.

He grew anxious at Jiang Chen's proximity. "You won't be allowed to run wild here, kid!" he tried to present himself as fiercely as he could.

Jiang Chen laughed lazily. "Is that so? I'd like to know how you'll make me. It's been two days since we last met. How many orbs have you gotten your hands on since then?"

Qin You's heart trembled at the question. "Don't you dare try to push me around!" he called out anxiously. "This territory belongs to senior brother Lu. He won't let you off easy if you try anything!"

Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered with idle threats. He glared at Qin You with his Evil Golden Eye, landing a direct hit that briefly stunned the group of geniuses. He took advantage of that time to relieve them of their orbs again.

Because the rules forbade him from killing, his Evil Golden Eye's power was restricted. Otherwise, he would have turned them all to statues on the spot.

Qin You felt his soul being petrified. No matter how he struggled, his body refused to budge.

He could only watch while Jiang Chen took away his orbs once more. His face flushed beet red, but his mouth couldn't even move to curse.

Jiang Chen didn't let them off easily this time. He poked at their bodies a few times. "The rules prevent me from killing you, but you're going to suffer a bit for your misdeeds."

As soon as he finished speaking, Qin You and the rest felt their ability to move return to them. Very quickly however, they discovered that a new nightmare had arrived.

Now that they could move, their entire body began to itch. First they felt it on their skin, but the sensation soon spread to their bones and veins.

Qin You flopped against the earth, moaning.

The others weren't much better. They collapsed one by one into the mud, shrieking all the while.

This was ten times worse than breaking their limbs could ever be. Temporary pain couldn't compare to this sort of strange and unusual torture.

Jiang Chen didn't have any compassion for them. He was about to walk forward when he noticed something awry in the bushes to his right.

"Whoever's inside there, why hide yourself? Do you admire the suffering of your comrades the same way as I do?" His tone was subtly mocking.

“Insolent cur!” A rebuke instantly echoed from deeper into the forest. A figure drifted out from the green. It was a young man dressed in a robe of spotted deerskin. His clothes rather complimented his figure.

Without the newcomer having to name himself, Jiang Chen gathered that this was the Lu Mingye Gan Ning had mentioned, the cultivator who was every bit the poison consort’s equal.

He certainly had a sufficiently intimidating aura, and his eyes sparked with electric fury.

As expected of the Flora Sacred Land’s best, Lu Mingye was almost seventh level empyrean already. In other words, he was a notch above Hu Lei and the first genius Jiang Chen had met on the island who was advanced empyrean realm.

It seems the Flora Sacred Land is much wealthier than Eternal. Eternal’s so-called Five Gentlemen have no advantage whatsoever among the other sacred lands. Jiang Chen was beginning to notice that Eternal’s best were really quite average among their peers. They couldn’t even beat Xiahou Zong!

Xiahou Zong really didn’t match up well against many of the better geniuses from the other sacred lands.

And it was also Jiang Chen’s presence that allowed Eternal to foster the ambition of seeking the alliance leadership position in the first place. Without him, they would have no viable competitors in their younger generation. Sui Chen, first among the Five Gentlemen, was only so-so.

Lu Mingye projected his aura as soon as he came into the open in an attempt to pressure his opponent. He had supposed Jiang Chen to be sixth level empyrean at most, which gave him a natural edge in cultivation. Unfortunately, field testing showed that to not quite be the case.

His aura had very little of its intended effect. It disappeared without response after being cast out, like a rock into the ocean. His opponent displayed no fear whatsoever.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 1997: A Blind Eye to Evil Doers and Evil Deeds

Lu Mingye was inwardly surprised, but didn’t lose his bearings because of it. Yes, his opponent was strong, but his confidence wasn’t diminished in any way.

He examined Jiang Chen thoughtfully for a moment. “Jiang Chen,” he declared, “you’ve been talked about all over Myriad Abyss for the past few years. They all say you’re the best genius of our generation. Don’t you feel embarrassed at being called that?”

Jiang Chen didn’t expect such a bizarre angle. He’d expected Lu Mingye to defend Qin You and the others, or perhaps the Flora Sacred Land. Instead, his every word was tinged with personal jealousy.

The Eternal genius burst into laughter. He didn’t exactly want Myriad Abyss to be so attentive to his actions either. He didn’t care about that kind of fame.

Perhaps the Eternal Sacred Land enjoyed the boost in reputation. Perhaps they were even the ones responsible for it.

It was very positive to announce one's excellence in young geniuses to the world. This was especially true for an ambitious sacred land that wanted leadership and authority.

Qin You and his cronies moaned when they caught sight of their senior brother. "Senior brother Lu, you have to avenge us! That Jiang Chen kid is really vicious! He stole our stuff and hurt us for no reason... help us, senior brother!"

Lu Mingye was unmoved. He was a very proud youth and quite disliked the pathetic display his peers were putting on. They brought dishonor to the Flora name.

"Jiang Chen, it seems you don't plan on giving up your title of being the best. Maybe I should just take it from you." He stared provocatively at his chosen opponent.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "You're not even the best genius in the Flora Sacred Land, Lu Mingye. Don't you think you're biting off more than you can chew by wanting to be the best in Myriad Abyss?"

This was a pain point for Lu Mingye, one of the things he hated to be mentioned the most.

He was understandably furious.

"It's not your place to chatter on about the affairs of the Flora Sacred Land, kid! I'm going to trample you underfoot and take your fame for myself!" Lu Mingye's voice was frigid.

"A nice idea. What a shame that it'll only stay that way. It won't be too late for you to challenge me after you become the best in your own sacred land either. Why don't you tell the rest of your pals to come out?"

"What pals?" Lu Mingye snickered. "I'm the only one here. I will step on you today!"

Jiang Chen's smile widened. "You're not worthy," he shook his head. "Though you want to deny it, it's written all over your face. You've been second place your entire life, and you'll always come in second! You've never been the top in your own sacred land, so I'm not sure why you're daydreaming about becoming number one in all of Myriad Abyss!"

A few exchanged words had imparted to him the thorn in Lu Mingye's heart. Poison Consort Shi Qinglu, no doubt.

Jiang Chen had a rather good idea of what was going on based on his opponents' order of appearance.

If Lu Mingye was the strongest, he would've shown up last. Because Shi Qinglu hadn't made her presence known yet, he was clearly ranked below his unseen peer.

This was a very exploitable weakness.

Lu Mingye's handsome face iced over. He was incensed by what Jiang Chen was insinuating. His anger burned even hotter when he saw what happened next.

Jiang Chen ignored him completely, walking right by him to head deeper into the forest.

"Wait, where are you going?!" he shouted angrily.

"I'm looking for the person who has my junior brother. You can go play elsewhere." Jiang Chen's leisurely tone radiated contempt for the other genius.

It was more than Lu Mingye could bear.

"I swear that I'll give you a real beating today, kid!" His face contorted with rage.

Nevertheless, Jiang Chen was completely unmoved. He proceeded onwards without hesitation.

Lu Mingye exploded. He stormed over, attempting to stop Jiang Chen in his tracks.

However, Jiang Chen was incredibly fast. His Kunpeng Meteoric Escape propelled him forward in a ray of light, disappearing right before Lu Mingye's eyes.

Whenever Lu Mingye felt like he'd just caught up, Jiang Chen would be a mile out in the next instant. When this kept repeating itself, Lu Mingye realized that he couldn't reach his enemy no matter how hard he tried.

As one of Flora's brightest, he was sensible enough to calm down.

"Jiang Chen, everyone else says you're some kind of hero, but I only see a coward who's running away. Are you such a wimp that the only thing you can do is run?" Lu Mingye tried his hand at getting a rise out of his opponent.

Jiang Chen wasn't going to fall for such an obvious tactic. He felt no qualms whatsoever ignoring the feeble attempt at stopping him.

Lu Mingye grew more and more anxious. They were almost at Shi Qinglu's domain.

She had authority over jurisdiction of that place. He would no longer have the right to fight. He had an agreement with her that if he could beat Jiang Chen before the Eternal genius got to her, then she would refrain from participating.

However, the reverse was also true. If Lu Mingye couldn't stop Jiang Chen's advance, Shi Qinglu would be the only one allowed to fight him. Any orbs acquired as spoils would be hers alone.

Though the two geniuses were from the same faction, they competed against each other nonetheless. They both knew that Jiang Chen was sure to have a large number of orbs. Winning would also considerably add to the honor of the victor.

Regardless of how anxious Lu Mingye was though, he could not close the gap between Jiang Chen and himself.

Lu Mingye sighed internally. He had not expected his ambush to be such a failure. He had let Jiang Chen go right in front of his eyes, without so much as touching a hair on the other genius's head.

"Jiang Chen, I'm warning you, if you fight me fairly here, you won't be too badly off even if you lose. If you're foolish enough to proceed, you'll definitely regret it!" Lu Mingye nearly blurted out the poison consort's name outright.

Jiang Chen smiled serenely. "Brother Lu, thank you very much for the reminder. You mean to tell me that Shi Qinglu awaits further in, is that right?"

Lu Mingye shuddered. As he was about to argue, an aloof voice sounded from the distance. “You told me you would cut Jiang Chen off, Lu Mingye, but you haven’t done much other than tell him off.”

The pitch of the voice was chilling to the bone.

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

Chapter 1998: Discord Between the Twin Treasures

There was no need to hazard any guesses. It was no doubt Shi Qinglu who was the speaker. The cool tones of her voice were incredibly unique and unforgettable.

Jiang Chen’s footsteps paused. He crossed his arms, poised to watch an unfolding show. His stance was that of a bystander’s, not someone remotely involved at all.

He could see plainly that though Lu Mingye and Shi Qinglu were the twin treasures of the Flora Sacred Land, they were at considerable odds with each other.

Still, he didn’t underestimate his opponents because of it. There was another possibility: that the two of them were putting on a show.

Even if they were competing against each other, they would probably work together when facing a common enemy. At the end of the day, they were peers that shared a common interest.

Jiang Chen stood in a mostly empty area. His eyes were coolly locked onto the space in front of him. His consciousness was more than powerful enough to instantly pick out where the poison consort was.

Within moments, a slender figure emerged from the foliage.

“Is this Poison Consort Shi Qinglu? She certainly deserves the name.” Jiang Chen was a little astonished by her appearance. Her skin was ivory to the point of translucence; she appeared slowly like a lotus rising out of water, striking any who beheld her with a pristinely exquisite image. Dressed in brightly varicolored clothes, she cut a figure that rather resembled a motley butterfly.

She was every bit Huang’er’s equal in character and appearance. A little less elegant, but all the more glamorous and stunning for it.

As expected of one of the sixteen hairpins. According to Gan Ning, she was touted as one of the most beautiful among them – if not the most outright.

That was the extent of Jiang Chen’s reaction though. He was taken aback by her beauty, but his heart instantly returned to unfettered calm.

Shi Qinglu’s eyes appeared as pure as a mountain spring. Their clarity made her all the more alluring.

Lu Mingye frowned when she came into the open.

“You can leave now.” Shi Qinglu glanced at him dismissively.

The other genius’s face frosted over. “Why? He’s not entirely in your territory yet.”

"If you could do anything to him, he wouldn't have gotten here. I'm not looking down on you, Lu Mingye. You're pretty capable, but there's nothing more you can do here."

Lu Mingye turned irate. "I tolerate you, Shi Qinglu, but that doesn't mean I'm afraid of you. You go too far!"

"I'm just being honest," Shi Qinglu replied coolly. "What can I do if you can't accept the truth?"

Jiang Chen didn't interrupt their argument. He was content to watch with a sneer from the side. Who knew whether or not this was an act?

He wouldn't be fooled by appearances alone.

Shi Qinglu didn't seem to have much interest in Lu Mingye. Her eyes rested upon Jiang Chen's face. "So you're Jiang Chen," she stated matter-of-factly.

"That's me," Jiang Chen admitted readily. "Give Wu You up, and I can let what's happened slide."

"Sure. If you can get past me, you can take whoever you want with you. But if you can't, what then?" Shi Qinglu's captivating eyes fixated upon Jiang Chen.

"To the victor goes the spoils. If I can't get past you, Poison Consort, then I will accept whatever consequences you propose." Jiang Chen's tone was carefree.

"Alright." Shi Qinglu nodded slowly. "I don't ask for your life or your cultivation. Simply release my great-uncle, Shi Xuan."

"Heh, now that you mention him, I should make it clear. If Shi Xuan can't do anything to me, what makes you think you can?"

Shi Qinglu frowned a little. "Who told you that he was my better?"

Jiang Chen smiled smoothly. "Oho, is that not true? I'll be waiting to see your performance. Make your move. I'll answer whatever you have in store. Of course, I won't mind if both of you come for me at the same time. Don't bother acting out your contentious charade. Such a played-out farce is too boring."

Shi Qinglu giggled at his presumptuous words.

"A lot of people in Myriad Abyss like to talk about your accomplishments, Jiang Chen. Those rumors say that you're supposed to be smart... but not smart enough, it seems." Upon recovering, her tone was chilly.

Jiang Chen laughed indifferently. "Enough small talk," he declared lazily. "Bring it. We're all busy people here, aren't we?"

Her failure to get much of a reaction out of him made Shi Qinglu more wary of her enemy.

She pointed at the leaves behind her. "Wu You is within this forest. If you can find him, you can take him with you."

Jiang Chen peered into the dense thicket. "Sure. Let me try doing just that," he said with a faint smile. Without a moment of hesitation, he darted past the veil of branches and foliage.

Shi Qinglu was astonished. What had just happened? She'd expected him to bargain, or perhaps wonder what trickery she'd been up to.

But Jiang Chen had headed inside just like that. Almost as if he'd never heard of her title as the poison consort!

Lu Mingye jeered a little. "Looks like your confidence was misplaced, Shi Qinglu. You said I couldn't stop him, but you're not faring much better, are you?"

Shi Qinglu shot back a derisive glance. "Either he's fearless because he's confident in his own abilities, or the rumors are entirely overblown about his intellect. Who knows? Maybe he's a brute and a simpleton."

"Hmph!" Lu Mingye didn't allow the conversation to be steered in this direction. "Our bet isn't over," he said. "If I beat Jiang Chen inside the forest, the orbs are mine."

Shi Qinglu's expression darkened. "This is my territory, Lu Mingye. You can go inside if you want, and I don't even mind if you help – but if you want to take what's mine, you better be ready to watch your back."

Saying this, she disappeared in a flash of kaleidoscopic light, rushing after Jiang Chen herself.

Lu Mingye's face rapidly changed colors over the span of mere moments.

Shi Qinglu didn't spare him a single shred of courtesy! He wanted to gnash his teeth with frustration, but it wasn't like there was much else he could do.

He didn't think his cultivation was inferior to Shi Qinglu at all. In fact, he believed he had a small edge. Alas, Shi Qinglu's mastery of poisons was a natural advantage that he couldn't hope to match. This was the biggest difference between them!

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

Chapter 1999: A Small Display of Talent

Jiang Chen expanded his consciousness to the fullest once he entered the copse of trees and carefully surveyed his surroundings.

This was clearly Shi Qinglu's territory. There was a drastic change to the environment. Outside, the poison formations were seamlessly chained together, but still there were paths purposefully left open to lure in and trap victims.

Here in the core area, the formations were carefully placed all around the woods. The design was so cleverly devised that even Jiang Chen had to admire the obvious craft on display.

"Shi Qinglu is indeed a natural talent in poison. The variety of applications here is impressive." Jiang Chen clucked his tongue.

What set the formations apart was the fact that every blade of grass and every leaf could be poisonous. The formations could be anywhere. Even the air was filled with all kinds of poison.

A novice in poison wouldn't notice anything wrong. Nothing actually seemed unnatural and out of place in the woods.

Those who knew a thing or two about poison might be able to pinpoint a few of the sources of the obvious threats, but those were merely smokescreens Shi Qinglu had purposefully employed.

Even masters of poison who would be able to spot many threats might overlook some of the extremely well-hidden sources.

Jiang Chen was heads and shoulders above any poison master on the Divine Abyss Continent. He kept his consciousness expanded to the fullest as he navigated the woods. Nothing artificial could escape his attention. With his consciousness scanning the area, he soon zeroed in on Wu You.

The man was hung on an ancient tree, his expression dull. He'd been subdued, his consciousness broken and body weakened by poison.

Jiang Chen stood tall and still, looking at Wu You from afar. Wu You's body swayed slightly whenever wind swept through the woods. He looked as pathetic as a dead dog.

Rage boiled in Jiang Chen's heart. He didn't consider his peers from Eternal his family, but Wu You and Gan Ning had voluntarily joined his team. To put it plainly, they were under his protection.

He'd always been protective of his own. He wouldn't tolerate any abuse to anyone under his wing. Naturally, he was furious at seeing Wu You tortured.

He heard the low hum of a flute. The sound was faint, almost silent. He wouldn't have sensed it if he hadn't been paying attention. It was followed by an unknown rustling sound - like silkworms devouring mulberry leaves. The sound was quiet, but clear.

Jiang Chen frowned and swept the area with his consciousness. All around him were swarms of snakes of different colors. They emerged from the bushes, writhing and squirming like a single entity. Anyone else would have been paralyzed with terrified horror.

The snakes came toward Jiang Chen in waves, surrounding him in only a few breaths of time.

Among the snakes were scorpions, centipedes, and many other strange poisonous creatures.

Jiang Chen looked at the dense mass of creatures calmly, an amused smile tugging his lips.

"The reputation of the poison consort is well deserved, Miss Shi." Jiang Chen laughed brightly.

"However, these things serve no purpose other than to disgust me."

If these creatures had been released to attempt him harm, then there was no threat to him here.

He had many ways to scare them off.

Shi Qinglu had manipulated the creatures with her flute, stimulating their neurological systems. It wasn't that impressive of a technique. She had simply entranced them and hadn't even really tapped into their base instincts.

Shi Qinglu stayed hidden. Her voice floated out from somewhere in the empty space. "This is merely my first trial, Jiang Chen. If you can't overcome this challenge, you don't deserve a chance to see me."

Jiang Chen smiled slightly. He channeled his inner energy and took in a deep breath. A roar rushed out of his mouth like a crushing tide.

He'd long since incorporated the true dragon bloodline. As he gave voice to the dragon roar, the aura of his bloodline radiated outwards.

The venomous snakes that had gotten close fled like they'd hit a scorching iron plate.

Terror spread through the masses. The ones in the outer ring made a one-eighty and fled with higher velocity than they had in attacking.

Dragons and snakes were of the same origin, and snakes had always been considered the lowest of all dragon descendents.

Of course, there were other theories, but it was an undeniable truth that snakes were naturally terrified of dragons.

Jiang Chen's dragon howl and aura evoked the snakes' instinctual fear, turning things completely around. The snakes were too terrified to get close to him!

In a blink of an eye, the snakes had all retreated.

Jiang Chen chuckled and stopped roaring.

His form flickered. "Miss Shi, you're cutting corners by manipulating the snakes with your flute. It's the most basic of all manipulation techniques. There's nothing impressive about it. It only makes you look bad before a real expert." Jiang Chen was deliberately provoking Shi Qinglu. He moved toward Wu You.

Shi Qinglu had witnessed Jiang Chen disperse her snakes without breaking a sweat. It disappointed her deeply. She'd anticipated that Jiang Chen would be able to deal with the snakes, but had thought it'd take him some time and effort to kill them.

Once he was exhausted, she'd enact the rest of her moves and take him down.

Unfortunately, things hadn't gone according to expectations.

Jiang Chen had driven away the snakes with a few measly howls, catching Shi Qinglu off guard.

She sighed inwardly. Jiang Chen does live up to his widespread fame. He's not to be underestimated.

Shi Qinglu had rarely shown her face to the youths in recent years, considering most of them unworthy of her attention. She didn't think any young cultivators deserved to be her opponent.

It turned out that she'd made an error in judgement.

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

Chapter 2000: Jiang Chen Goes Missing

Nonetheless, a strange smile flicked through Shi Qinglu's charming face when she saw Jiang Chen making his way toward Wu You.

Every step Jiang Chen took revealed more sources of poison in the environment. The threats came at him in various different forms.

He smiled slightly. He knew Shi Qinglu must be watching him, waiting for him to take a misstep and collapse from poisoning. A fun idea took root in his mind.

Rays of golden light suddenly flared from his body, obscuring the area around him. He vanished in the blinding glow.

Shi Qinglu had been watching from afar. The sudden flash of light hid everything from view. It didn't last long, but when it faded, Jiang Chen was nowhere to be seen.

Wu You, who'd been hung on the tree, had disappeared as well.

Shi Qinglu's breath hitched and her lips twitched. With a frown, she expanded her consciousness to the fullest and searched for them.

There's something about Jiang Chen that I can't put a finger on. I've set up 36 different poisons in the area, any of which are potent enough to put him down. Not even ninth level empyrean cultivators can walk away once inflicted.

Shi Qinglu was very confident in her mastery of poisons. That was why she'd dared challenge Jiang Chen, even though Jiang Chen had defeated Shi Xuan, who was her senior.

She'd never once doubted that she was more talented than Jiang Chen. She could absolutely defeat him with her poisons.

Even now, after Jiang Chen had disappeared beneath her eyes, her belief never wavered. She huffed and flew toward where Wu You had been in a flash of light.

She no longer bothered with keeping herself hidden. Wu You was gone. The poison formations she'd set up were triggered as a result. If Jiang Chen had rescued Wu You, the poisons in the formation would cripple him. Even if he was powerful enough to withstand it at first, he'd collapse soon.

Shi Qinglu approached the tree with light steps and looked around. But after a while, she began to doubt herself.

She couldn't find any clues. Jiang Chen seemed to have vanished into thin air. She couldn't tell how he'd rescued Wu You.

One thing was for sure: Wu You had been rescued, which would then naturally trigger all of the formations in the area.

This befuddled Shi Qinglu even more. The thirty-six poison formations she'd set up were diverse, every one of them dispersing poison in a different way. Even if Jiang Chen could avoid most, he couldn't have detected all of them.

Any one of them should've been enough to keep Jiang Chen from escaping.

“He couldn’t possibly have walked away unscathed.” Shi Qinglu didn’t think Jiang Chen could’ve reacted quickly enough to avoid all of the poisons. Even if he had the reflexes for it, he still needed to be remarkably resistant to poison as well.

She paced around the area and declared in a steely voice, “I know you’re still around, Jiang Chen. I’ve sectioned off the area. You can’t escape my poison formations even if you soar to the sky or tunnel underground. Do you really think you’ll be able to hide from me?”

There was no response even after a long while. It was as if no one was truly left in the area.

However, Shi Qinglu still radiated confidence. She believed Jiang Chen couldn’t have gone far.

“Don’t blame me for not warning you, Jiang Chen. You might feel fine at the moment, but you’ve already been inflicted with all sorts of poison. They’re on your skin, in your meridians, and some even burrowing deep into your bones. Not even your consciousness has been spared.

“You can hide, but I’m not interested in playing hide-and-seek with you. Remember, the longer you wait, the more likely you might be permanently crippled. It’ll be too late for you to show and beg for mercy then. Not even the Great Immortal will be able to save you.”

She laid out her points in a deliberate, assured manner.

To her disappointment, Jiang Chen still didn’t show up. She’d made the pros and cons very clear. Anyone with a brain would have recognized the truth in her words and surrendered.

After all, killing was forbidden in the competition. Shi Qinglu couldn’t really kill him.

Still, Jiang Chen didn’t do as she’d suggested. Her frown deepened further.

“Fine, if you want to be crippled so badly, it’s your choice!” Agitation started to build.

Things hadn’t gone as planned. The sense of losing control upset her. She’d always been the one to toy with her enemies. Younger foe, especially, never escaped her reach.

This time however, things were different.

Lu Mingye emerged from the edge of the woods not too far off in the distance, coming into Shi Qinglu’s view.

He silently celebrated the fact that Shi Qinglu hadn’t emerged victorious as she’d planned. He still had a chance to get Jiang Chen!

“Haha, Qinglu, it seems your poison formations aren’t as invincible as you’d like to think,” Lu Mingye remarked with a touch of schadenfreude. “Perhaps I should step in?”

Shi Qinglu’s face darkened. “If I were you, Lu Mingye, I’d do the smart thing and get the hell away from here.”

Lu Mingye smiled lazily. “Why would I do that?”

“Because I’m pissed,” she said coldly. “And when I’m pissed, someone gets hurt. Do you want to feel my ire?”

Lu Mingye burst into laughter. “We’re from the same faction, Qinglu. I know all of your tricks and you know all my techniques. Without the poisons, your cultivation is a hair lower than mine. I may not be able to defeat you, but you can’t defeat me either.” His tone was lazily dismissive. Clearly, he was trying to anger Shi Qinglu.