

Three Realms 2001

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

Chapter 2001: The Scene Changes Greatly

Killing intent flashed through Shi Qinglu's stunning face.

Lu Mingye was clearly here to take advantage of the situation. Even now, she was absolutely convinced that Jiang Chen had been poisoned. That fact wouldn't change no matter how long the young genius stayed concealed.

But, if Jiang Chen ran out of the woods instead of showing himself, he might be picked off by Lu Mingye instead. That would be completely unacceptable.

The Flora Sacred Land was going to make a name for itself in Myriad Abyss and its case for leading the alliance of the ten sacred lands. At the same time, Shi Qinglu was aiming to be the champion of the grand competition.

There were only a selected few candidates who could threaten her. Lu Mingye was a fellow peer, but also one of her major opponents.

Once she'd taken out Jiang Chen, star candidate Lu Mingye would become one of the greater remaining threats.

He knew many of Shi Qinglu's techniques, and as a genius of Flora, he had a few tricks up his sleeve as well. Therefore, Shi Qinglu did consider him somewhat of a formidable foe.

If he decided to interfere, she wouldn't hesitate to teach him a lesson. This was her territory. Even Lu Mingye would be at her mercy!

Away from the heart of the woods however, Lu Mingye was too good to be taken out by the poison formations on the outskirts.

The two had been allies from the same faction with a common enemy in this matter. Now that Jiang Chen had been cornered and wounded, it was only natural that the two of them would fight for the right to finish off their prey.

Although Lu Mingye had been taunting Shi Qinglu, he was also quite wary of her. Despite his confident words, he hadn't taken a single step into the dense woods, especially not into the core area.

He wanted to stay on the fringes and be an opportunist. He'd be able to sense it if Jiang Chen escaped the area, and then secure his prey with one swift blow.

This was a chance for him to make a name for himself and climb to the top by stepping on Jiang Chen, a dream shared by all top geniuses from the ten sacred lands.

With a slight smile, he vanished from Shi Qinglu's sight. He would be waiting for his prey to come to him.

Shi Qinglu scoffed. Something dark flashed through her pretty eyes.

"I can't wait any longer. Jiang Chen couldn't have escaped into the sky. He must be hiding underground. Hmph, I'll find him even if I have to dig to the core of the world!"

With a single thought and a twist of her hand, a silver little animal was conjured from thin air. It was a marten.

Its fur was smooth and had a stunning shine to it, making it quite endearing. There was a high intelligence behind its eyes. Clearly it was a remarkable spirit.

“My little marten, search underground and find Jiang Chen for me.” As a poison master, Shi Qinglu had kept a good number of pets. The marten was one of her proudest possessions.

It was as quick as lightning and remarkably poisonous. It moved with amazing speed on and above ground and navigated within the earth with no difficulty at all.

The marten nodded and flashed an adorable expression before diving underground.

A confident smile tugged at Shi Qinglu’s lips.

“It’ll find Jiang Chen in fifteen minutes. He wouldn’t be able to get far when poisoned. Even if he does, my marten will be able to overtake him.” Shi Qinglu was convinced of her victory.

But after fifteen minutes, doubt flashed through her eyes.

Her marten should’ve found something by now. Why hadn’t she heard from it?

She was beginning to wonder what had happened when a few vines erupted out of the ground with a whoosh, splattering soil everywhere. At the top of the vines was a blue lotus.

Through its icy, translucent petals, she could see the lotus trapping something within it like a mouth - her marten!

It was curled into itself, completely frozen. Its eyes were unfocused like it’d lost consciousness due to the cold.

What?!

Shi Qinglu stared at it with her mouth agape. She knew how quick her marten was. When underground, it was too fast and agile for ordinary empyrean cultivators to capture it.

But it had been trapped by a strange lotus and its vines, completely turning everything she knew about her marten on its head.

Before she could recover from her shock, countless vines shot out from the ground with a series of dull, bursting sounds.

One, two, three... In the blink of an eye, tens of thousands of vines had emerged and surrounded the area, obscuring the sun and trapping Shi Qinglu under layers of vines.

The girl’s face contorted. She was in real trouble now.

A twist of her wrist manifested a dagger with the shine of autumn’s frost. Her dagger sliced through the vines surrounding her with a flash of cold light.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Dozens of vines were cut down.

However, that did almost nothing to the army of vines. What was worse, the vines soon regenerated. The strange scene suddenly reminded Shi Qinglue of something.

Could it be... Jiang Chen's counterattack?

Realization dawned belatedly. Her heart sank.

"Haha, Miss Shi, you're indeed skilled in poison."

"Why don't you surrender to me like your great-uncle Shi Xuan?"

"Miss Shi..."

In the blink of an eye, the vines seemed to have become Jiang Chen's duplicates. Every one of them was smirking.

Shi Qinglu shook her head. This must be a hallucination! She closed her eyes firmly and opened them again after a moment. All around her were Jiang Chen's projections, and their numbers were still growing. She was already surrounded by tens of thousands of Jiang Chens.

They all looked at her with mocking smiles.

"You're just illusions! Disperse!" Shi Qinglu exclaimed. She wasn't going to go down easily.

Her blade was quick and sharp.

Every time she slashed at a projection, it'd burst like a bubble but would quickly re-emerge. There were no words to describe what was happening.

"You've been poisoned, Jiang Chen," exclaimed Shi Qinglu. "How dare you play such a trick on me? Do you have a death wish?!"

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Chapter 2002: A Terrified Poison Consort

Shi Qinglu didn't give an inch with her response, but her confidence wavered.

It was strange. In theory, even if Jiang Chen had been hit by only one of her thirty-six formations, he should've collapsed by now. No matter how powerful he was, over time, the poison would've spread through his body and weakened him to the point of being a defanged tiger.

A man inflicted with potent poison shouldn't be capable of what he was doing.

The strange vines possessed not only great physical strength, but also the ability to create illusions, which confused Shi Qinglu's understanding of things.

As the top young genius of Flora Sacred Land, she was above average in all aspects, including her level of consciousness. However, not even she was able to see through the illusions of the vines, proving how exceptional Jiang Chen's technique was.

It didn't seem to be deployed by a poisoned man.

Preoccupied by a tangled mess of thoughts, Shi Qinglu quickly recovered from her shock. After all, she was one of the finest cultivators among the youths. Geniuses at her level had more than a few trump cards.

Her expression hardened and a strangely-shaped talisman manifested in her hand.

"Heaven falls and earth crumbles," she chanted. "All spirits meet their doom and nothing living finds succor..."

The talisman activated and formed a vortex around her, flaring outward at an amazing speed. A terrifying force of corrosion that was impossible to resist spread throughout the area.

Whatever vegetation it hit, be it bushes, trees, and vines, immediately wilted into dried husks at supernatural speed.

Surprised by the corrosive force, Jiang Chen hurriedly pulled his Lotus back. He could tell the corrosion was not to be underestimated. It was powerful enough to destroy his treasure.

If he'd reacted even a little slower, the corrosion would've spread through the Lotus and ruined its core. Not even Jiang Chen would be able to restore it then.

Shi Qinglu did live up to her reputation as the poison consort alright! The talisman was at least at demigod level.

He could also tell that the talisman was most destructive to plants. It worked on other living beings too, but not as well. And it had no effect on treasures.

Jiang Chen came out of hiding and looked at Shi Qinglu from outside the area of corrosion, a half smile tugging his lips.

Surprise and disbelief flashed through Shi Qinglu's eyes. She didn't expect Jiang Chen not be harmed at all!

How can this be?! He couldn't have rescued Wu You without losing a hair! All thirty-six of my formations have been triggered. No one should be quick enough to avoid them all! Even if he has anti-poison items on him, he couldn't have resisted every type I threw in there!

Considering Jiang Chen's reputation, she'd made use of her best techniques when setting up the formations, using every trick she knew. Moreover, she'd incorporated many powerful treasures she'd inherited from Flora.

In other words, she was in top form.

Under the circumstances, she'd set up the best poison formations she was capable of. In her eyes, it was using a spear to kill a fly. It was more than what a threat like Jiang Chen warranted.

Never in her wildest imagination had she anticipated her target walking away from all that unscathed!

He'd turned her world upside down.

She considered Jiang Chen with inquisitive eyes, trying to figure out what had happened.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly. "Miss Shi, I've not only won the challenge according to our deal, but also rescued Wu You. What are you going to do now?"

Frustration, confusion, and defiance flickered through Shi Qinglu's face, but she didn't argue the facts. She had to admit that him had gone above and beyond their bet. Still, she wasn't going to admit defeat.

"You've rescued him, but you haven't saved him. Do you know what poisons he's inflicted with? Can you cure him?"

Jiang Chen smiled slightly. "Very few poisons in the world can enter my eyes. None of the obscure poisons you set up managed to get me, did they?"

His response hit Shi Qinglu where it hurt the most. He was saying none of her poisons worked on him!

Shi Qinglu huffed and insisted, "It's impressive that you've persisted until now, Jiang Chen, but it doesn't mean none of my poisons will work on you!"

Jiang Chen knew she hadn't given up yet. Instead of explaining himself, he summoned his golden bell.

Shi Qinglu tensed. She'd heard that Hu Lei had been beaten by a bell during his fight with Jiang Chen.

"There's one thing you're right about, Miss Shi. I haven't had the time to check what poisons Wu You has been hit with. However..."

Shi Qinglu knitted her slender brows together. "What?"

"Once I take you down, I can just check what poisons you have on you. Besides, you'll tell me everything I want once I capture you!" His expression dropped and he made a hand seal. The golden bell rammed at Shi Qinglu with a low rumble.

Shi Qinglu knew how powerful the golden bell was, but she believed she was better than Hu Lei. Therefore, she was surprised, but not afraid.

Nonetheless, if she let Jiang Chen manipulate the bell and passively defended against it, it'd put her at a disadvantage and she might end up like Hu Lei.

This was her territory. She had to take the initiative.

With a wave of her sleeves, she spun like a top at high speed. Her colorful clothes fluttered in the air like dancing butterflies.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Colorful strands of silk shot out, intertwining in the air and obscuring the sky. The fabric ensconced the entire area in an instant.

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Chapter 2003: Rainbow Silk Formation

The strands of silk blotted out the sky. It encompassed half of the firmament, wrapping the golden bell firmly within. A bewitching smile appeared upon Shi Qinglu's face.

"You're within my Rainbow Silk Formation now, Jiang Chen. It doesn't matter what you can do. You're already on my chopping block. I can do whatever I like to you!" She giggled, her eyes glittering with natural charm.

Jiang Chen braced himself. This Poison Consort wasn't just adept at poisons. She was also quite proficient at beguiling others.

That isn't going to work on me though!

He snickered internally. Shi Qinglu was gravely underestimating his composure.

The girl's slender body trembled. Her clothes fluttered in the wind like a butterfly's wings. The prettiest things in nature also tended to be the deadliest.

In this moment, Shi Qinglu perfectly embodied this saying.

Jiang Chen's eyes were clear as crystal as he examined Shi Qinglu pensively. He wanted to see what she had up her proverbial sleeves.

Shi Qinglu giggled once more. Suddenly, smoke of every color imaginable rose around the Rainbow Silk Formation, filling the air with their noisome vapors.

Jiang Chen gave them a cursory probe. He instantly recognized the varicolored smoke as toxic miasma – some of the most famous types in the world, in fact. Mixing them together formed even more new complex and deadly poisons.

The miasma would not necessarily kill instantly, but they would invade a cultivator's body through their every pore. Sometimes, they could even invade a consciousness.

When the victim noticed the poisoning, it would already be too late.

The flourishes of Shi Qinglu's garments produced a number of afterimages. At a glance, it looked like there were seven or eight of her dancing in the wind.

The clothing that covered her body, on the other hand, seemed to drift away into the ether as time passed.

In no time at all, much of her skin was laid bare. Her snowy, elongated thighs were as inviting and smooth as white jade. Beneath her immaculate neck, ample assets were put on flattering display.

Shi Qinglu's eyes were filled with a seductive hunger, one that would cause any man's heart to race. The airborne fumes enveloped her in a mysterious atmosphere, calling to her audience's very soul.

Jiang Chen shut his eyes for a moment, then reopened them with a smile.

"Miss Shi, you are indeed a charming flower from the Flora Sacred Land. However... how many have picked the thorny rose before me, I wonder?"

What?!

Shi Qinglu's expression frosted over. How many...?

The interjection was contrary to everything she'd built up here. His words were an utterly unpleasant scribble upon a great work of art.

"How dare you!" She gritted her pristine teeth, her eyes filled with fire.

"I must admit, Miss Shi, that your Rainbow Silk Formation is rather intriguing. This smoke of yours, on the other hand... I really don't see a world in which it can do anything to me. Your performance has fallen on blind eyes and deaf ears, I'm afraid."

This follow-up was more devastating than any attack. Shi Qinglu froze in complete incredulity.

When her Rainbow Silk Formation restricted an opponent's movements, even a ninth level empyrean cultivator would fall to the toxins in her miasma. Jiang Chen definitely wasn't that strong!

As soon as there was the slightest gap in her opponent's mental defenses, the poisonous vapors would consume him like a storm of ravenous curses. Any sap unlucky enough to be beset by them would lose his sense of self and become entirely helpless, at which point she could do with him as she wished.

Usually, she didn't go to such lengths to produce the alluring facade.

She'd been concerned that Jiang Chen would still be able to endure the miasma. She'd only added the extraneous performance because of this, intending to ensnare him without his noticing it.

His mockery was the last thing she'd expected.

Shi Qinglu had always enjoyed a superior position when it came to her interactions with others. Some worshiped her as a goddess; others feared her like deadly nightshade.

Regardless, she was always, always the one coming out ahead, the one with the initiative.

And yet, she felt wholly impotent before this young man. He was like an unscalable mountain that she couldn't traverse.

Was he really unbeatable?

Shi Qinglu became somewhat depressed. What had just transpired was an enormous letdown. She had thought the Rainbow Silk Formation foolproof in bringing her victory, but Jiang Chen would have none of it.

What was up with him, anyway?

She found him completely inexplicable. Having seen more than her fair share of geniuses, she was acutely aware that they all had their flaws and weaknesses. But this Jiang Chen seemed to have no weak points whatsoever. Her exertions had yielded no fruit.

His heart was as impenetrable as a boulder. The same was true for his body, apparently.

What was she supposed to do?

Shi Qinglu still wasn't going to give up yet.

“Maybe you have a constitution that grants you poison immunity, Jiang Chen. I suppose my poisons won’t work on you. Still, I can take you on without them just fine! I hope your martial cultivation is as good as your poison resistance!”

A flicker of her body restored her multicolored clothes. She stormed up to him in the next instant in a burst of cold light.

Jiang Chen chuckled. “Your poisons are useless, but your cultivation is even moreso.”

He was a master of melee combat. A flick of his fingers produced a blast of golden light. The manifestation of his Heavenly Chalice Sword Formation emitted countless sword auras that ripped her strands of rainbow silk apart like ferocious tigers. Their colorful fragments drifted about in the air like a swarm of butterflies.

“What?!” Shi Qinglu couldn’t believe her eyes.

Her Rainbow Silk Formation, her pride and joy, had been destroyed with a single move!

She didn’t have time to react to the sudden descent of the golden bell overhead. An auric blaze drained her strength, rendering her unable to move.

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Chapter 2004: Utter Defeat

When it came to martial cultivation, Shi Qinglu was actually very capable. Yes, Lu Mingye might be slightly superior in that aspect, but the scope of his edge was very limited.

Her venomous expertise considerably increased her actual fighting ability, allowing her to surpass him in practical performance.

Though she and Lu Mingye were called the Flora Sacred Land’s twin treasures, Shi Qinglu didn’t particularly accept being ranked with her peer. She believed herself much more excellent than him.

This was why she had avoided participating in competitions with others of her generation. She had sights set on much loftier matters and goals.

She’d come to this grand competition because of two reasons: one, she wanted to avenge her great-uncle Shi Xuan’s defeat at Jiang Chen’s hands. Two, Flora’s executives had put a lot of pressure on her to participate, promising great rewards.

Shi Qinglu had only one objective in this competition – taking first place. She didn’t think anyone else could possibly match her among her fellow competitors, much less give her trouble.

Yes, Jiang Chen’s name was renowned throughout the realm, but certainly at least half of his fame was owed to propaganda. How strong could a young genius be, really?

Trading blows with the young genius in question had overturned her assumptions. Jiang Chen was strong to an almost unbelievable degree.

But when she realized this fact, she wasn't in a much better situation than the Hu Lei whom she'd looked down upon.

Reportedly, he had been imprisoned by a golden bell – the very same instrument that now hovered over her own head. Its golden rays embodied a mystical power that prevented her from leaving.

As the bell loomed closer and closer, the last remnants of her pride disintegrated.

Shi Qinglu knew she had lost.

Her poison formation and all its associated traps had been ineffective against Jiang Chen. An opponent like him seemed invincible to the point of causing his enemies despair.

Aside from the forefather and the demigod primes in Flora, no one else had caused such feelings in Shi Qinglu before.

When the bell closed over her, the fight was as good as over.

Shi Qinglu felt the weight of a mountain bearing down upon her body.

"Miss Shi, I'm a civilized man. I'm giving you one last chance. What poison has Wu You been stricken with? Where is the antidote?" Jiang Chen didn't like to make women suffer.

Yes, Shi Qinglu was technically his enemy, but nonetheless, he liked to be chivalrous if he could.

Shi Qinglu ground her teeth together. "Let me go first."

Jiang Chen smiled serenely. "If I did and you ran off, I'd have a hard time catching you again. Isn't this your territory?"

Saying this, he sidled towards her. "If you don't want to give the antidote up of your own volition, then I'll just have to search you. If I touch any unfortunate places in the process, you'll have to excuse the intrusion."

Shi Qinglu paled. "Jiang Chen," she yelped, "don't you dare touch me! Your rudeness will be revisited by the Flora Sacred Land tenfold!"

Jiang Chen chuckled. "What happened to your lascivious display from earlier, in the Rainbow Silk Formation? Am I supposed to be convinced of your purity and chastity?"

He intentionally jeered and motioned threateningly with his fingers, seeming very much like a genuine lecher.

Shi Qinglu's face became as white as a sheet. "I'm warning you, Jiang Chen, I have several hundred types of strange poison on me. They're exotic and deadly, and any one of them can kill you a hundred times over. If you touch me, you'll definitely die."

Jiang Chen laughed. "If you really had these potent poisons, why did you fall into my hands in the first place?"

"I took pity on your cultivation earlier," Shi Qinglu replied stubbornly. "If you're a proper gentleman, Jiang Chen, then free me and we'll fight again."

She was evidently quite anxious about any violation of her personal space and modesty.

Jiang Chen suddenly became rather serious. "If that's the case, give me the antidote. Honestly, I'm not interested in you."

"You..."

Women were strange creatures.

If Jiang Chen had run his hands all over her, Shi Qinglu would no doubt be furious enough to fight him to the death.

But outright expressing a lack of attraction was also enough to anger her. Countless young geniuses sought her favor and approval. And yet, this dastardly Jiang Chen had plainly expressed that he didn't care about her beauty whatsoever!

Liar!

That was Shi Qinglu's instinctive response.

But another look at the cool look in his eyes pierced her heart viciously, causing her dignity and self-esteem to rapidly deflate.

The nonchalance in his eyes wasn't feigned. He really was capable of ignoring her wiles, and was doing so. Shi Qinglu's fear turned into an inexplicable sense of disappointment.

She had lost in yet another way to this famous genius, a truth that really and thoroughly crushed her confidence.

Throughout this affair, Jiang Chen remained as indifferently composed as he always was.

In a daze, Shi Qinglu pulled the antidote out with a blank look.

"Here." Her voice was a bit hoarse. She took out a storage ring as well. "These are my orbs. You won, so they're yours. Take them."

She tossed the ring and toward him with apparent recklessness.

Jiang Chen caught the ring with a deft hand. As he was about to open it, he detected something out of the corner of his eye. He surged with golden light, focusing it out of his Evil Golden Eye to stop something in midair.

Two thin silver needles were visible in the air, frozen by the brilliant rays that had come out of his eyes.

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Chapter 2005: Conquering a Siren

"You're a very good actress, Miss Shi." Jiang Chen eyed Shi Qinglu with a half-smile.

If his consciousness hadn't alerted him to danger immediately, he might've been tricked by her prior actions and expressions.

Shi Qinglu had pretended to admit total defeat, straightforwardly surrendering the antidote and her orbs in utter despair.

Ordinary logic implied that what she was doing was very rational given her circumstances.

Jiang Chen had thought the same, but the chain seal in his consciousness rippled as soon as he touched the storage ring. He was instantly wary of a sneak attack, which allowed him to discover the silver needles just in the nick of time.

Shi Qinglu was a thorny opponent indeed. Any other genius in the ten sacred lands would have fallen to at least one of her attacks.

There were no orbs to be found in the storage ring!

Jiang Chen frowned, his voice becoming chillier by the minute. "Miss Shi, you're being rather insincere. You squander the opportunities I give you. I see my sympathy is misplaced here."

Shi Qinglu's heart fell when she heard the harshness in his voice.

"What... what do you want to do?" She could maintain her confident aura no longer. Right now, she was a helpless girl with a real fear of what was about to come. No one would be able to help her against whatever fate had in store.

Would she be able to do anything about it after they got off the island? Get Flora to reason with Eternal?

If she described what had happened to others, she wouldn't have any room to argue. Quite the opposite: it'd be tremendously embarrassing.

"What am I going to do?" Jiang Chen cackled. "I'm going to strip you and search for what I want myself. I was a fool to believe you'd cooperate."

Shi Qinglu felt her wits leave her. The skin she'd showed in the Rainbow Silk Formation earlier had been entirely illusory. She hadn't actually done any of that.

Others called her the Poison Consort, yes, and she cultivated a seduction method, but she cared much more about her innocence than most would realize.

To be stripped naked under these circumstances would be a life-long blot upon her conscience.

"Jiang Chen, you... if you touch even one of my hairs, I'll hound you all my life! Even in the afterlife, I'll hunt you down for whatever you plan to do!" The nasty retort seemed almost anemic given the context.

Jiang Chen walked closer, training his cold glare upon Shi Qinglu. "I gave you a chance, but you threw it away. Clearly, you're a glutton for punishment."

Saying this, he raised his hand to deliver a resounding slap against his captive's rear.

Thwack!

There was a layer of clothing between his palm and her skin, but the impact was quite loud nevertheless. There was no ability or technique behind it; Jiang Chen delivered a slap that a parent might have used to discipline an unruly child.

Shi Qinglu froze as soon as his hand connected with her.

“Ah!” she screamed. “Jiang Chen, I’m going to kill you!”

“Maybe in your next life,” Jiang Chen retorted coldly. “I don’t see much chance for you in this one.”

Shi Qinglu gnashed her teeth as she glared daggers at Jiang Chen. Suddenly, her expression changed completely. She giggled, her eyes filled with captivating light.

Jiang Chen frowned. “What’re you laughing at? Do you think laughing will help you hide your unease? Or do you perhaps believe that I won’t dare to strip you?”

“Oh, I don’t doubt that at all. No man is free from his desires. It’s just that every other man who’s wanted to take my clothes off has suffered horribly at my hands. They can only imagine how nice it would be to do so. Jiang Chen, I’ve got it.”

“What, exactly?” Jiang Chen replied with indifference.

“Oh, a lot of things.” Shi Qinglu giggled incessantly. “My master once told me that if you can’t defeat a man, you should leap into his arms. Jiang Chen, you’re the only man who I couldn’t beat. So, I’ve decided that I’ll be in your care in the future. Yan Qinghuang is your woman, is that true? She’s going to be in a lot of trouble!”

“Trouble?” Jiang Chen furrowed his brow.

“Yes. Even Yan Qinghuang can’t fend me off when I’ve chosen someone for myself. Don’t you think I’m much more of a woman than that frail little girl will ever be, hmm?” Shi Qinglu’s words were indescribably ambiguous.

“You certainly think highly of yourself,” Jiang Chen burst into laughter. “I see only a colorful viper dripping with venom. What woman are you talking about?”

These words were a slap to Shi Qinglu’s face.

She didn’t seem fazed at all, though. “Men are never honest with themselves,” she tittered. “Their hearts are drawn in, but they like to pretend they don’t care. I know! You’re playing hard to get.”

Jiang Chen couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

“You know, Jiang Chen, I admit I can’t beat you with either martial dao or poison. I lost. You’re the heir of the Eternal Sacred Land, aren’t you? The Flora Sacred Land will be mine in the future. If we join together, the future of Myriad Abyss will be ours. Don’t you think it’s a match made in heaven?” Shi Qinglu became more excited with every word.

If Jiang Chen didn’t know her better, he might have fallen for her ruse a second time.

“I don’t know what new trick you’re trying to pull, Shi Qinglu, but my patience has its limits. If you don’t tell me with your next sentence where the antidote and the orbs are, I’ll have to take drastic measures.” Jiang Chen gave his final warning.

“What kind of drastic measures, huh? Are you going to take me on the spot? Come, I won’t resist.” Shi Qinglu refused to sober up.

“Is that so?” Jiang Chen’s expression darkened. “Alright, I’ll strip you nude and hang you from the tallest tree. We can show all the geniuses passing by what the high-and-mighty Poison Consort looks like without her clothes.”

He didn’t like threatening women, but Shi Qinglu was an annoying exception.

Shi Qinglu swallowed back her prepared response. She knew Jiang Chen absolutely wasn’t joking.

The very prospect of the smelly men feasting their eyes on her vulnerable form caused her to shiver.

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Chapter 2006: A Sinister Poison Consort

Shi Qinglu was too intimidated to try any further tricks. She gave Jiang Chen the real antidote and all her orbs.

Jiang Chen inspected them and hefted with his hands. “My apologies, Miss Shi,” he pronounced with a smile. “I need you to come with me to make sure the antidote works.”

Shi Qinglu had never suffered such a terrible defeat before. All of her plans and trickery had come to nothing before Jiang Chen. The enormous setback made her lose all confidence.

The fact that Shi Qinglu was Jiang Chen’s captive shocked and terrified the contestants from Flora. Qin You and his posse, defeated by Jiang Chen twice, were especially nervous.

Fortunately, Jiang Chen didn’t give them a hard time.

Lu Mingye, who had considered Jiang Chen a target, looked at the young genius from afar. He didn’t dare draw any closer. After all, he wasn’t any stronger than Shi Qinglu. In fact, he was a weaker fighter than her, all things considered.

Seeing her end up Jiang Chen’s captive, Lu Mingye couldn’t muster the courage to challenge the Eternal genius again.

Jiang Chen quickly went back to Wu You and gave him the cure. Wu You came to in no time at all, and was both thrilled and ashamed when he saw Jiang Chen.

At the corner of his eye, he spotted Shi Qinglu with quite some bafflement.

The turn of events between captor and captive was rather embarrassing. She huffed at Wu You’s questioning glance. “And what are you looking at?”

Wu You was still confused. “What’s going on, senior brother Jiang Chen?”

Jiang Chen smiled. "Miss Shi has kindly offered to come with me and cure your poison."

He sounded perfectly earnest, but Wu You had his doubts. He knew what kind of a person the poison consort was.

She was a fiend with endless insidious tricks up her sleeves. Her heart was as venomous as a scorpion's. Why would she have so nicely offered to cure him?

Besides, this wasn't where he remembered being.

Wu You didn't show any other complications once cured. After careful inspection to make sure his teammate was alright, Jiang Chen smiled at Shi Qinglu. "Farewell, Miss Shi. Perhaps one day we'll meet each other again."

There were no mortal enemies in the ten sacred lands. Although Flora and Eternal had an antagonistic relationship, the two factions weren't aiming to destroy each other.

Moreover, the ten sacred lands would have to work together against the offworld invaders. Under the circumstances, even though Jiang Chen had defeated Shi Qinglu, there was no need for him to back her into a corner and make an enemy out of her.

His magnanimity gave her pause. She opened her mouth to say something, but Jiang Chen was already walking away with Wu You in tow.

Shi Qinglu was momentarily distracted. She stomped her foot and called out, "Hey!"

Jiang Chen chuckled and said without turning around, "If you want to know why I wasn't affected by your poison formations, Miss Shi, I'll tell you the next time we meet."

Shi Qinglu paused. She did indeed want to know that. Jiang Chen had read her like a book. She couldn't help the curiosity growing in her heart.

She hadn't been defeated so thoroughly by a young genius ever since she began cultivating.

What had happened today had upended her world and destroyed her confidence. It was a learning experience that would benefit her in the long run. She'd lost, but she wasn't as angry or depressed as she'd expected.

That bastard may seem fierce, but he knows when to draw the line. Shi Qinglu wasn't blind to Jiang Chen's restraint. She sighed to herself. I could do a lot worse if I was to lose to someone. There must be something about him that makes him invincible to my poisons. I wouldn't have lost so easily otherwise!

Her gaze snapped to the fringe of the forest. Qin You and his companions stuck their heads out to peek at her, timid and afraid.

"Get the hell over here," Shi Qinglu called out impatiently.

They obediently did as she said. "Senior sister."

Shi Qinglu threw them a glance. "Don't provoke Jiang Chen again in the future."

Qin You and the others didn't object. They ducked their heads meekly. It was more than obvious that Jiang Chen wasn't someone they could offend. Even senior sister Shi Qinglu had been defeated. Taunting Jiang Chen would be outright courting trouble.

A sarcastic voice sounded from the fringes of the forest, "Qinglu, you're knocking Flora down by putting others on a pedestal."

It was Lu Mingye. He walked out with elegant steps like the perfect gentleman.

Shi Qinglu side-eyed him. "Jiang Chen isn't too far out, Lu Mingye. You can easily catch up with him! Don't tell me you didn't see him leave. If you're so brave, why didn't you attack him then? Do you think I'm blind? Weren't you hiding in the woods just now, too afraid to show yourself? Do you think Jiang Chen didn't see you?"

Lu Mingye's posturing was infuriating. Shi Qinglu had indeed lost to Jiang Chen, but Lu Mingye was in no place to judge her.

His face went white.

"Hmph, you can talk all you want, but you embarrassed our sacred land," mocked Lu Mingye.

The others didn't dare say anything as the two top geniuses clashed. They silently retreated from the woods, keeping their distance from the brewing storm.

Surprisingly, Shi Qinglu didn't fly into a rage. A strange smile tugged at her lips as her gaze settled on Lu Mingye.

He flashed a haughty smile. "Have I said something wrong?"

"No." Shi Qinglu's bizarre smile deepened. "But you've done something wrong."

Lu Mingye's frowned ever more ferociously. "What is it?"

"You shouldn't have set foot into my territory. Since you're here, I'll take what I've lost from you!" Shi Qinglu's smile grew beguiling.

Lu Mingye tensed. It finally dawned on him that she was going to rob him of his orbs. He whipped his head all around and only then realized that he really had entered her territory.

Damn it!

His form flickered as he tried to leave, but before he could react, long strands of silk of all colors closed in on him from all directions.

The Rainbow Silk Formation!

It might not be good enough to trap Jiang Chen, but it was more than enough to take Lu Mingye down.

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

Chapter 2007: An Enormous Increase in Orbs

Jiang Chen wasn't interested in interfering in the Flora Sacred Land's internal affairs. He'd done what he came to do.

Wu You was safe and Jiang Chen had obtained a large number of trial orbs from the poison consort in the process. Now, he had nearly a hundred of them.

There were only six hundred of them on the island, which meant Jiang Chen had close to a sixth of them. Only three or four days had passed out of the fourteen allotted.

If he could pick up orbs at this pace, he would be able to acquire over half of the orbs by the end.

Of course, the orbs were more widely distributed for now. Towards the end, he would end up getting much fewer of them.

Jiang Chen understood this perfectly well.

In no time at all, Jiang Chen and Wu You returned to where Gan Ning was.

The young genius who'd stayed behind was completely calm. He hadn't run into much trouble by following Jiang Chen's instructions to stay nearby. He was able to retreat into the formation from any opponent he couldn't deal with. His complete safety meant he was able to find another orb at his leisure.

Wu You wasn't sure what to feel after his rescue. Gan Ning tried to cheer him up. "Brother Wu, losing to the poison consort is nothing to be ashamed of. Don't be too hard on yourself."

"How many orbs did Shi Qinglu take from you, Wu You?" Jiang Chen asked with a smile.

Wu You coughed. "Embarrassingly, I only managed to find one during the first two days."

Jiang Chen generously took five out of his own stash. "Take these to tide you over for now. When we find orbs later, you two take them first."

Wu You blinked. He was already very grateful to Jiang Chen for saving him; getting orbs on top of that was a surprise he'd never dreamed of.

His first thought was to refuse.

Gan Ning laughed. "Brother Wu, senior brother Jiang Chen is incredibly generous. You should take the orbs. We're on his team anyway, so our orb count will be added to his in the end. Considering how far senior brother Jiang Chen has come already, our team might get first place in this competition!"

Wu You was overjoyed when he heard this as well. His prior suffering was rather ordinary considering the kind of trial this was. He had lost fair and square.

Now that Jiang Chen was at his side, Wu You felt as secure as Gan Ning. He no longer feared for his safety during his waking hours.

Though the dynamic duo behind Jiang Chen weren't particularly strong, they were at least average. They were of some use as sidekicks. Running errands, for example, or looking for orbs on the ground. Jiang Chen didn't need to resort to doing that himself.

Of course, whatever orbs they could find were theirs. Jiang Chen wasn't interested in them. His orbs would come from others.

There were sure to be more fools running right into his hands in the coming days.

As expected, he encountered a team in each of the four days that came next. Often, he faced off against multiple teams collaborating with one another.

Jiang Chen wasn't going to wait for them to take the offensive. He took the initiative by knocking them out before they could do anything, confiscating their orbs in the process.

On the tenth day, Jiang Chen had almost two hundred orbs. Gan Ning and Wu You, for their parts, had about twenty each.

In other words, more than a third of the orbs were in Jiang Chen and his teammates' hands.

Jiang Chen's name spread far and wide on the island. Some called him a bandit, while others gave him the moniker 'Plaguelord'.

Either nickname showed how much the others dreaded being in his path. Many who had formerly considered ambushing him now cowered at the sight of him. They were naturally scared that they'd lose their hard-earned orbs. However, their worries were excessive in some cases.

Jiang Chen was very principled. Those who didn't intend to harm him were skipped past. He didn't actively rob every passerby.

Those that he did take from were only targeted for their hostility.

In the last few days, Jiang Chen noticed that he had far fewer business that came knocking. Anyone that saw him ran far, far away, and absolutely nobody aimed to attack him anymore.

He wasn't quite sure what the correct reaction to this was. Should he laugh or cry?

Regardless, Wu You and Gan Ning felt immensely proud. As fellow geniuses of Eternal, they'd never enjoyed the feeling of being feared.

Yes, they were taking advantage of their teammate's frightening reputation, but the sensation was much the same.

On the twelfth day, Jiang Chen instructed Wu You and Gan Ning as to their final plans. "Friends, the number of orbs we have should easily win us first place. I'm guessing the entire island knows about us already, so I doubt anyone will be blind enough to come at us over the next few days. Take the last three days to find whatever orbs you can - the ones that haven't been dug up yet."

"Everyone is circling around you, senior brother," Wu You nodded. "If even the poison consort's lost, who's dumb enough to come?"

"I think all the orbs have been found already. I just wonder how they've been distributed."

A set of hurried footsteps could be heard mid-conversation.

"Huh?" Wu You was taken aback. "I guess I was wrong. Is that an intruder I hear?"

He glanced into the distance, but the newcomer was a familiar face. It was Sir Wei Yong, fourth of the Five Great Gentlemen.

This Wei Yong was on the same team as Sui Chen, in more ways than one. Because of this, he rarely interacted with Jiang Chen. Why would he, given the indirect antipathy?

Wei Yong was on pretty good terms with Wu You though.

“Why are you alone, Wei You?” Wu You looked at his anxious acquaintance confusedly.

“It’s a long story, Brother Wu. I came to ask for help.” Wei Yong was a bit embarrassed. He turned with pleading hesitation toward Jiang Chen.

Wu You didn’t immediately reply. Senior brother Jiang Chen was the leader of his team, after all.

Though Wei Yong didn’t ordinarily show Jiang Chen much respect, he was very different in this hour of need. “Senior brother Jiang Chen,” he addressed, “your junior brother greets you.”

The Five Great Gentlemen were all older than Jiang Chen in terms of age. Wei Yong would never call himself a junior, and the fact he was doing so now meant that he’d encountered some serious trouble he couldn’t handle.

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

Chapter 2008: The Venerated Holy Girls

Though Jiang Chen didn’t much like Sui Chen’s moral character, he couldn’t simply let a peer to languish. The same went for this Wei Yong.

Peers were supposed to help each other, regardless of their flaws.

“Aren’t you on Sui Chen’s team, Wei Yong? Why are you by yourself?” he asked coolly and straightforwardly.

A hint of difficulty appeared on Wei Yong’s face. “Sui Chen is in big trouble,” he smiled wryly. “I heard you were nearby, senior brother Jiang Chen, so I fled without paying heed to the consequences to come ask you for help.”

“This is only a trial. Even if he’s in some trouble, his life is hardly in danger. What can possibly warrant all this?” Jiang Chen chuckled with deliberate laziness.

“Ah, senior brother, there’s something you don’t know!” Wei Yong replied hurriedly. “Our team was stopped by another. They asked us to hand over our orbs.”

“So, did you hand them over?” Jiang Chen inquired with a smile.

“No! What right do they have to take the orbs we worked for? Plus...” Wei Yong trailed off.

“Keep going,” Jiang Chen waved.

“Senior brother, this affects you as well. Many sacred lands seem to have come to an unspoken agreement to oppose Eternal. They want to create some competition for us, you see. The more orbs they have, the harder it’ll be for you to take first place.”

Jiang Chen laughed without reservation.

Harder for him to take first place? He knew that he had enough orbs to all but guarantee victory. Unless all the other orbs were in one team’s hands, first place was as good as his.

And was that possibility even remotely realistic? Not at all.

There were sixty geniuses in twenty teams. No genius of a sacred land would be content to be the background for any other.

Everyone wanted to show off in this international competition. It was one thing if they couldn’t keep their orbs from being taken by another, but the best geniuses were far too proud to just freely hand theirs over.

This was a simple fact of human nature. Jiang Chen was absolutely sure of this.

Wei Yong’s words were intentionally provocative, aimed to drag Jiang Chen to his aid.

Wu You could see Wei Yong’s ulterior motives at play as well.

“We’re not fools, Wei Yong,” he frowned. “Keep your scheming to yourself. You think they can stop us from winning? In your dreams!”

“I’m curious, though,” Gan Ning laughed. “Sui Chen isn’t exactly weak. In the ten sacred lands, only a few can decisively win against him, right?”

That number that could be counted on two hands.

Wei Yong knew the jig was up. “Excuse my impudence,” he said with some embarrassment. “Sui Chen is caught by the holy girls of Radiance and Sunrise: Yao Guang and Si Tong.”

“I assume Sui Chen thought too highly of his looks, eh? He tried flirting with them?” Gan Ning’s tone was rather prickly.

“No, no, it wasn’t like that!” Wei Tong argued hastily. “Senior brother Sui Chen just wanted to say hello, but they suddenly turned on him...”

“Those two sacred lands were once a single faction. They separated at some point, but they’re extremely well-connected still. Yao Guang and Si Tong are like sisters to one another. If Sui Chen made a pass at one of them, that’ll make them both angry,” sneered Gan Ning. “He can deal with his womanizing problems himself. Senior brother Jiang Chen won’t be able to help him with that.”

Wei Yong was ghastly afraid that Jiang Chen would give him the cold shoulder because of what Gan Ning had said. “Senior brother Jiang Chen,” he begged, “the two holy girls are adamant that they’ll keep senior brother Sui Chen locked up until the trial ends. All of our orbs are with him! Imagine how many the holy girls will have if they get them from him?”

Jiang Chen shrugged with nonchalance.

How many orbs could Radiance and Sunrise possibly have, even if all of their geniuses added theirs together?

His team had over two hundred orbs right now. It was impossible to find another that could claim to have more. However, regardless of Sui Chen's character, they were peers.

If Jiang Chen refused to assist now, he would have a hard time later answering to the first prime. It was expected to lend a helping hand to one's peers in their time of need.

"Come on then. Lead the way. I'll go take a look. But if the two holy girls really won't release him, I'm not sure there's anything I can do otherwise." Jiang Chen uttered an appropriate disclaimer beforehand.

"Oh, no. If you come, senior brother, the two holy girls are sure to release Sui Chen. If even the poison consort can't defeat you, how can anyone else possibly imagine otherwise?"

Clearly, Shi Qinglu was more renowned in the ten sacred lands than the two holy girls.

"Senior brother," Gan Ning advised, "you can present yourself and your case. However, those from Radiance and Sunrise are generally quite aloof. We should be as courteous as possible in our words and actions. These two holy girls are highly ranked among the sixteen beauties and are rather unapproachable because of it."

More golden hairpins?

Jiang Chen knew that this was going to be just as hard as rescuing Wu You.

With Wu You's situation, he had had a definite idea to defeat the poison consort and save the former from her clutches.

In comparison, these two holy girls had only temporarily arrested Sui Chen. Sui Chen was also just Jiang Chen's peer and not a teammate.

Jiang Chen could help him – or, he could say that it was none of his business.

If he did want to intervene, the two holy girls from two different sacred lands would surely band together against him. Since he was alone, he wouldn't be able to guarantee victory without using one of his strongest trump cards.

Moreover, because Eternal desired to lead the alliance, angering Radiance and Sunrise at this juncture was disadvantageous to its ambitions.

The more he thought about it, the stupider this Sui Chen seemed. Rather than contributing, he was a liability to his faction.

Jiang Chen came to a decision. As long as the two holy girls were remotely reasonable, he would maintain as much cordiality as possible.

"Senior brother," Wu You transmitted, "this affair is quite odd. We're heading there to rescue Sui Chen, but we must be wary of the possibility that he's the bait to a trap."

Having suffered very recently, Wu You was now extraordinarily cautious.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 2009: Flute and Zither Due

Jiang Chen had to admit that Wu You's concerns weren't unfounded. The human heart was unpredictable. Anything was possible under the circumstances.

Perhaps Wei Yong had been deceived. Perhaps it was a trap meant for Jiang Chen.

After all, the sheer amount of orbs he had in his possession would put Sui Chen to shame. If the holy girls could capture Sui Chen, why would they let the less powerful Wei Yong slip away?

It was highly suspicious all around. If Jiang Chen had to guess, he'd say there was absolutely a trap waiting for him.

Nonetheless, he wasn't too worried. He'd taken Wu You's reminder into consideration, but he knew enough about traps and schemes to deal with them.

Wei Yong soon brought them to the mouth of a deep valley that cut through a circle of mountains. The difficult terrain isolated the quiet valley.

"Where are we going?" asked Gan Ning with a frown.

Wei Yong smiled wryly. "Into the valley. We're getting close."

Gan Ning threw all pretense out the window and asked bluntly, "Wei Yong, you aren't working with outsiders to set us up, are you?"

"Heavens, I'd never!" Wei Yong jumped to attention to defend himself. "If I've told you a single lie, may heaven smite me!" Humiliated by the accusation, he swore a serious oath.

"Enough, those of us from the same faction shouldn't second guess each other," Jiang Chen said calmly. "It's possible that the holy girls have kept you in the dark so that you'd do their bidding."

Wei Yong stilled. He'd failed to consider that possibility in the heat of the moment.

"Senior brother is right," Gan Ning said. "Perhaps they're using you to set up senior brother Jiang Chen. How many orbs do you and your teammates have? Why would they need to target you like this? Besides, it doesn't make sense for you to escape while Sui Chen was detained."

Wei Yong froze. Were they right? Was Jiang Chen the real target, not them? How pathetic would he be if that were the case?

"Alright, it's too early to make any judgements." Jiang Chen didn't want to jump to hasty conclusions.

Inside the valley, they navigated through a few narrow paths and reached an open space.

A man considered them coolly on the outskirts, stopping them from proceeding further.

"Who goes there?" The cultivator wore a pure white robe with the symbol of the Radiance Sacred Land sewn into the fabric. His grace was superior.

“We’re from the Eternal Sacred Land,” Wei Yong declared with borrowed confidence. “Senior brother Sui Chen was captured by your party for simply greeting the two holy girls. For what reason did that occur? Senior brother Jiang Chen has personally come to ask for him back. Hurry and let Sui Chen go right this moment!”

“Jiang Chen?” The cultivator considered Jiang Chen, his attention piqued. “You’re the genius who defeated both Poison Consort Shi Qinglu and Hu Lei?”

“That would be me,” Jiang Chen replied nonchalantly.

“You don’t look all that different or powerful. Why would both Hu Lei and Shi Qinglu fail to defeat you? Have the rumors been exaggerated?” The cultivator dressed in white muttered seemingly to himself, but maybe to Jiang Chen as well.

Jiang Chen snorted. Geniuses from the ten sacred lands were indeed strange and prideful. People should be intimidated by him after his defeat of Shi Qinglu, but the man didn’t look at all wary.

“Brother, Sui Chen is my peer. Why are the two holy girls holding him? Can you let him go for my sake? If he’s done anything to offend you, we’ll naturally make amends to you.”

Jiang Chen was exceedingly polite. Unlike the poison consort, it was better to try the diplomatic approach with the two holy girls first.

“Bring them in, Ah Xiou,” a crisp and inviting voice sounded from the depths of the valley.

“Understood,” said the man in white. He rolled his eyes at Jiang Chen. “Come with me.”

They quickly arrived at an exquisite bamboo wood with a thatched cottage beside it.

Inside, a woman dressed in white was playing a zither, while another dressed in orange played a flute, the sound faint and meandering. Their music was pure and serene, washing over the listeners like the spring breeze and calming their minds.

Jiang Chen enjoyed the wonderful performance from afar, a smile tugging at his lips.

Their duet continued for a quarter of an hour. The sound of their melodies lingered long in the air after they were done.

Jiang Chen clapped and chuckled. “Such a duet was veritable dulcet tones from heaven. The two holy girls possess skills most impressive.”

The woman dressed in white placed her hands on the zither. With a pluck, one of the strings shot toward Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen raised his hand with a faint smile, trapping the string with a ray of golden light. “Isn’t it a shame to take a string off of such a fine zither?”

“It’s Jiang Chen, isn’t it?” asked the woman dressed in white. Her voice was colder, more aloof. She wasn’t the one who had called them in. That must have been the holy girl dressed in orange.

The two women were polar opposites. One radiated a cold brilliance like the silver moon. The other shone like the rising sun. When they played together though, their personalities melded into their music

and complemented each other like puzzle pieces, creating a unique rhythm. They were exceptional musicians.

Even someone with as much worldly experience as Jiang Chen had to admit the performance was perfect. He'd rarely heard a performance as good as this even in his past life.

"I am Jiang Chen. It is an honor to meet you." Jiang Chen greeted them with dignity.

The woman dressed in white scoffed. "You go around these days villainously robbing people with no restraint. Why are you putting on a genteel act now?"

Jiang Chen chuckled despite himself.

He hadn't expected that would be the image he was projecting. He had been robbing people? He could swear on his life that he'd never once taken the initiative to rob someone.

Nonetheless, he didn't make it a habit to explain himself. He hadn't done anything wrong. There was no need for him to defend himself to the two holy girls.

There would always be those who misunderstood you.

Jiang Chen's noncommittal smile frustrated the holy girl dressed in white. "Sister Si Tong, this isn't a good man. He may do more harm than good to Myriad Abyss if he's allowed to grow into his own."

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

Chapter 2010: The Hearts of the Holy Girls

Those words crossed a line.

Gan Ning had had enough. He shoved aside his reservations and exclaimed, "Honored Holy Girls, I'm much below your rank and shouldn't interrupt your conversation, but one has to speak honestly and responsibly with the gods as their witness.

"Senior brother Jiang Chen never actively targeted anyone. Those who lost their orbs to him attacked us first. They simply got a taste of their medicine. How is that us robbing innocent people? They made the first move. Should we have surrendered our orbs to them without resisting?"

It was clear from his agitated tone that he was furious. If the two women weren't holy girls, he would've cussed them out already.

"You must have misunderstood," Wu You agreed. "Anything goes under the rules of the competition, but senior brother Jiang Chen has held true to his principles and never committed anything unethical for the orbs. Every orb he possesses, he got fair and square. Their previous owners were far from innocent."

The holy girl in white was even more upset upon hearing them defending Jiang Chen.

"You're his sidekicks. Of course you'd speak up for him!"

Jiang Chen smiled and cupped his hands. "I'm not here to argue semantics. People will believe what they want to believe, and that's how rumors spread. I would never expect everyone to be fair and objective."

“You’re just saying that because your reputation is ruined beyond hope of recovery.”

“Haha, first of all, that’s not true. Second, most of the contestants would do anything to further their goals as well. Even if we’re part of their ranks, why are you singling us out with your critique?”

Jiang Chen didn’t give an inch. He wouldn’t tolerate anything just because the holy girls were superior to him in status. He was a man of principle.

The holy girl dressed in orange broke her silence. “Daoist Jiang Chen, I am Si Tong. This is my sister Holy Girl Yao Guang. She’s straightforward and blunt. Please forgive her if she’s offended you in any way.”

Holy Girl Si Tong had a vastly different personality from Yao Guang.

They were both stunningly beautiful, and their contrasting grace seemed even more exceptional when they were together. The sixteen golden hairpins, especially those who ranked among the top, did indeed live up to their reputations.

Jiang Chen smiled easily. “I don’t mind. I hear that Sui Chen was taken after greeting you. Could you share the reason for that?”

“We were keeping to ourselves and playing our instruments here. He knows absolutely nothing about music theory, but interrupted us and spouted off a ton nonsense, fancying himself a gentleman. Shouldn’t we have punished him for that?” Yao Guang spoke of Sui Chen with contempt.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. If that was the case, Sui Chen only had himself to blame. It was obvious that the young genius had wanted to catch the holy girls’ fancy, but had ended up interrupting their fun and captured for his impertinence.

He lacked charisma, manners, and knowledge of music. All of it combined had offended the two holy girls.

Jiang Chen cupped his hands. “You’ve given him the punishment he deserves. I believe you aren’t the unreasonable sort. Why don’t you release him and let bygones be bygones?”

“Release him?” Yao Guang huffed. “Why should we do that? Besides, we were trying to lure you here.”

Jiang Chen paused. The holy girl’s blunt honesty was surprising. He kept his guard up, knowing he was the real target.

“We know you have many orbs,” continued Yao Guang.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. He did, but what did that have to do with them? Were they trying to take the orbs from him?

He didn’t say anything in response, but his expression made it clear that he would not surrender his orbs.

“We know you’re good, Jiang Chen, and that even Poison Consort Shi Qinglu lost to you,” said Yao Guang. “So we don’t intend to fight you.”

“Then what would you like?” Jiang Chen asked coolly.

“A bet.”

“A bet?” Jiang Chen smiled. “I know nothing about you. A bet doesn’t seem appropriate.”

“You have to take it.” Yao Guang was determined.

“Oh?” Jiang Chen quirked his lips into a half smile. “I don’t think so. You can’t force me to take the bet if I don’t want to.”

“Daoist Jiang Chen,” Holy Girl Si Tong silenced Yao Guang. “There will be winners and losers in this competition. We know you have a lot of orbs. We have quite a few as well. Either one of us will take first place if we acquire the other’s orbs. There’s no doubt about that.”

Jiang Chen smiled. He would be first even without the holy girls’ orbs.

He shook his head. “I don’t care if your bet is fair or not. I don’t want your orbs and you’d be wise not to covet mine. Sui Chen may be from the same faction, but he’s not a good enough bargaining chip. We all know the rules. You can’t kill him. The worst thing you can do is to take away his orbs and put him at the bottom of the ranking. In truth, he put himself in this situation. It’ll serve him good to live with the consequences.”

However, Si Tong gave him a faint, confident smile.

“Daoist Jiang Chen, this is more of a test than a bet. Our respective sacred lands aren’t interested in leading Myriad Abyss. According to our analysis, the leader of the future alliance will either be Flora or Eternal. Our mission in this competition is to observe you, Shi Qinglu, and Lu Mingye. From you, we can deduce the future of your sacred lands.”

Si Tong hadn’t mentioned a word about the bet, but had taken all options away from Jiang Chen.

If he didn’t take the bet, he’d be considered lacking in personal charisma.

How could a mediocre genius led the Eternal Sacred Land? How would he make Eternal the leader of the alliance?

Si Tong was quite a master of the art of persuasion.

Jiang Chen sighed inwardly. He knew this was a trap, but he had to step right into it.

“What do you want to bet on?”

He wasn’t afraid of the two holy girls. Whether they wanted to bet on martial dao, pill dao, or other disciplines, he was confident in his ability of them all.