

Three Realms 2101

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

Chapter 2101: Deception Wears Thin

Most of what An Kasyapa said was true. The touch of embellishment painted a terrifying picture.

The blue-haired man looked at An Kasyapa with a grim expression. "It's strange, fellow daoist. Shouldn't the elites of the ten sacred lands be together? If they've been distracted by you, who were the cultivators who defended Eternal? Where did they come from?"

An Kasyapa feigned surprise, "Hasn't Master Lightford told you?"

"Tell us what?" Conflicted looks blossomed over the faces of both the blue-haired man and his companion. They really hadn't heard much of anything, being where they were.

It was true that Lightford played favorites. Yuxian and Panyuan, the ones sent to Radiance, were his loyal supporters. Lightford thus had imparted more details about what'd happened in Eternal.

The two divine cultivators stationed at the Void Sacred Land weren't as close to Lightford, at least, they weren't confidantes. Therefore, Lightford was always slightly reserved with them. He only told them to defend the sacred land with their lives and wait for the army to come.

The differential treatment made An Kasyapa's attempt to drive a wedge between them even more effective.

"You really don't know." An Kasyapa rubbed his nose. "Lightford and his two enforcers suffered a terrible defeat in Eternal. The sacred land have two divine sacred beasts on their side. An Kasyapa, the powerful divine master, was there as well. There was also a genius called Jiang Chen, who could rival a divine cultivator."

The blue-haired man started. "Two divine sacred beasts? And An Kasyapa? What the..."

They couldn't help but shudder. They knew how strong An Kasyapa was. The old man could take on two of them on his own.

In addition, a divine spirit creature, even one who had just ascended to divinity, could easily overpower a human cultivator at the same level.

Even by the most conservative estimation, the two divine sacred beasts could rival at least three divine human cultivators.

In total, their enemies possessed at least the power of five divine cultivators. If what their peer said about Jiang Chen was true, they'd essentially be facing six divine cultivators.

That didn't bode well for them. It was no wonder that the cultivators and two enforcers sent to attack Eternal were killed, and even Lightford driven away.

If the divine cultivators, the enforcers, and Lightford had attacked at the same time, they wouldn't have lost. However, they had gone at three different times. Of course they'd failed!

An Kasyapa continued to push, "Even we know all of the details. Were you truly in the dark?"

“We were.” The blue-haired man smiled wryly. They all served Lightford, but the differential treatment due to Lightford’s wariness of them was clear.

The blue-haired man was quite upset. His companion’s expression darkened as well, displeasure clear in his eyes.

“He shouldn’t have kept that from you,” An Kasyapa pressed. “If those people depart from Eternal to attack you while you aren’t prepared... it won’t end well for you.”

The blue-haired man looked at An Kasyapa cautiously and said in a low voice, “Fellow daoist, we don’t know about all this even when we have a transmitting formation here. How do you know so much when you’ve been leading the ten sacred lands on a merry chase?”

An Kasyapa huffed. “Because we’re smarter than you are. I don’t want to leave my survival to Master Lightford. After all, we aren’t his most trusted confidantes. We simply took his side due to circumstance.”

He’d finally hit a nerve. A myriad of expression flashed through the blue-haired man’s face. In the end, he said faintly, “Alright, it doesn’t make a difference for us to know later than you do. It’s not too late yet!”

His companion was clearly still upset. “Don’t try to fool yourself, Brother Lan. Lightford trusts neither of us. We’re nothing but pawns in his eyes. Even if we’ve risk our lives fighting the ten sacred lands, even if he does end up conquering Myriad Abyss Island, the sacred lands will be under the control of his confidantes. We’ll get nothing.”

That was what bothered them the most.

All of their hard work would end up benefiting only other people. How could they not be upset? They had no doubt that they wouldn’t get any of the ten sacred lands. There were barely enough sacred lands for Lightford’s trusted men. It’d never be their turn.

Best case scenario was that they’d be rewarded with a second or third tier faction, giving them a place to settle down at.

In Myriad Abyss, however, the second and third tier factions were nothing compared to the ten sacred lands. There was a world of difference!

The blue-haired man responded coolly, “It’s too early to consider that. We can’t just abandon this post, can we? Or are you honestly suggesting that we betray Master Lightford?”

Despite his anger, the companion fell silent when reminded about the reality they were facing. Neither of them dared betray Lightford, at least not at the moment.

Meanwhile, An Kasyapa and Yu Gong had gone ahead of them, discreetly blocking the way back to the sacred land.

The blue-haired man was observant enough to notice. He came to a halt and levelled An Kasyapa with a piercing gaze. “It seems that you haven’t come just to join up with us.”

His companion stared at An Kasyapa and Yu Gong with a scowl as well.

An Kasyapa cackled. "Do you think I wanted to waste my time talking to you? You're not returning to the Void Sacred Land, gentlemen."

The blue-haired man raged, "What do you mean? Have you betrayed Master Lightford already? No wonder you've been trying to turn us!"

An Kasyapa laughed. "Betray? I never pledged my loyalty to him. How is this a betrayal?"

He spoke in his own voice now. With a flourish of his sleeve, he took down the disguise.

"You!" The blue-haired man gaped at Kasyapa. He'd recognize the divine master anyway.

"An Kasyapa!" his companion cried out in recognition.

An Kasyapa's expression darkened. "That's right. It's me. However, what I told you is nothing but the truth. We've already attacked Radiance and Sunrise. Yuxian and Panyuan refused to listen to reason, and they paid the price with their lives. You two seem smarter. Although you've yielded to Lightford, you haven't yet committed too many atrocities. There's a chance for you to redeem yourselves."

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 2102: To Yield

If Yu Gong hadn't informed him that these two were on lukewarm terms with Lightford, Jiang Chen wouldn't have entertained the thought of winning their allegiance.

After all, he had dealt with Panyuan and Yuxian swiftly and decisively. The four gods at Radiance and Sunrise hadn't been offered the opportunity to choose either.

These two, on the other hand, were given a chance at redemption because of what Yu Gong knew of them.

The blue-haired man cursed his misfortune. An Kasyapa's meaning was clear. There were two divine sacred beasts as well as Jiang Chen waiting in the wings...

Were they at the Void Sacred Land already?

Was he and his comrade cornered rats already?

"Daoist An, I've always heard of your disagreements with Master Lightford. Must you go to such extreme lengths? Why do you forsake our common suffering in the Boundless Prison in favor of helping the sacred lands?" The blue-haired man didn't much like Lightford, but he did identify with the time they'd spent together in the Boundless Prison.

In his mind, Myriad Abyss's ten sacred lands were supposed to be their natural enemies.

An Kasyapa snickered. "You know only of the Boundless Prison. I, on the other hand, can see that we all reside upon Divine Abyss Continent and, in a larger sense, our present plane. The Boundless Prison was only a temporary sojourn upon our cultivation path, albeit one with a lengthier stay. At the end of the day, I'm a cultivator of this land. From our world's perspective, allowing Lightford's ambition to proliferate is the opposite of good."

“Why makes you say that? You think Old Lightford can’t rule as well as the ten sacred lands can?” the blue-haired man tried to argue.

“Old Lightford is a cruel and vicious man. He seeks only to maximize self gain. He won’t consider the well-being of the common man. He might make a good factional leader, but an entire plane? Obviously not.”

Though An Kasyapa was just as capricious and volatile in his own ways—he wouldn’t have slain the entirety of House Yan in a fit of rage otherwise—he was no fool when it came to the grand scheme of things.

“I don’t think those hypocrites from the sacred lands can do any better. According to what I know, they’re hardly unified even right now.” The blue-haired man maintained his position.

“I have no interest in the sacred lands, because I know someone that I can wholeheartedly support.”

“Who?” The blue-haired man intoned in a low voice.

“Jiang Chen, the young lord of the Eternal Sacred Land,” An Kasyapa shot back coolly.

“Ridiculous! No matter how talented a young man is, what can he do with such limited time? Great change is about to sweep across Divine Abyss at any moment. What can he possibly hope to affect?” The blue-haired man sneered.

“Heh, you shouldn’t underestimate the boundless possibility of youth. The young man you question was responsible for taking down both of Lightford’s enforcers as well as repelling the man himself. More recently, he’s managed to retake Sunrise and Radiance as well. Do you not see the effect he’s had on the bigger picture?” An Kasyapa delivered a graceful retort.

The blue-haired man was at a loss for words. Yes, Jiang Chen had indeed affected the situation here on Myriad Abyss Island.

Before Master Lightford’s attack on the ten sacred lands, everyone had paid attention solely to the sacred lands’ divine forefathers. Though Jiang Chen had possessed a reputation at the time, most had considered him a non-threatening young man with considerable potential.

However, it was precisely this youth who had formed a strike force sufficient to alter the tide of a grander struggle.

The atmosphere was very tense.

Suddenly, a golden beam flashed across the void and revealed Jiang Chen’s figure in the clouds. His eyes glared rays at the blue-haired man.

“Whether you want to fight or surrender, decide now.” He hadn’t the time to waste on idle chatter. Every second counted; he wanted to set up a trap before Old Lightford could arrive.

The blue-haired man shivered when struck by Jiang Chen’s Evil Golden Eye, as if a restriction had fallen upon his soul.

“Is... is this the fabled Jiang Chen, young lord of the Eternal Sacred Land?” he murmured.

“Who else do you take him for?” An Kasyapa laughed without much humor.

The blue-haired man sighed. “A young hero, I see. Never mind, never mind. I only have a single question to ask.”

“Go ahead,” Jiang Chen replied coolly.

“When you attain the authority to rule, will Myriad Abyss be yours or the people’s?” The blue-haired man looked steadily at Jiang Chen, his inquiry unwavering.

Jiang Chen roared with laughter. “The world has always belonged to its people. How could I own the entirety of Myriad Abyss? If a man treats the realm as his own property, he will not be far from demise. Moreover, our vision shouldn’t be limited be neither Myriad Abyss nor Divine Abyss.”

Even An Kasyapa was astonished at what the young man was saying. Huang’er’s grandfather had thought that he knew Jiang Chen reasonably well, but that no longer seemed to be the case.

This young man’s aspirations were greater than Divine Abyss Continent could contain. Were his eyes trained upon the untouchably distant heavenly planes?

Jiang Chen’s meaningful smile stunned all who beheld it. No one could put his finger on why, but his words gave off an indubitable feeling. It was as if he carried a natural authority with him.

“Alright,” the blue-haired man sighed softly. “I, Lan Tianhao, surrender.”

“I, Xu Yigu, also surrender,” his comrade echoed.

Jiang Chen nodded smoothly. “Remember, you’re surrendering for the sake of all life upon Divine Abyss. If you betray those that you must serve, I will mete out judgment upon you on their behalf.”

Both men felt their hearts tremble. The young man before them wasn’t a god himself, but his words and actions exerted more pressure than a god would have.

Perhaps it was the Vermilion Bird and Black Tortoise by his side that contributed to this effect. Less likely, it might have been the youth’s own aura or the gravity of the situation that had brought them to their knees.

Regardless, the two gods had formally and genuinely become their allies.

Jiang Chen’s men immediately regained control over the Void Sacred Land, then familiarized themselves with and re-established the defense systems in place.

In no time at all, scouts from outside reported that the ten sacred lands’ main force had arrived.

He immediately sent a group to receive them. The Void forefather and his own subordinates were touched by the gesture as well as what they had seen and heard upon their return.

As a close ally of the Flora Sacred Land, Void had once harbored a grudge against Jiang Chen. Now, that couldn’t be further from the truth.

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

Chapter 2103: United in Concerted Effor

There were no surprises about why they were so emotional. Aside from Abyssal and Nirvana, the sacred lands were uniformly conflicted about what had transpired.

The main force had only managed to recover those two locations during this period of time. Their third target had been Radiance, and their fifth, Void.

It would've been impossible for them to recover even half of the sacred lands in practice, since Lightford was on the march as well.

Thus, Jiang Chen's salvation of Void was something that the faction's members were genuinely grateful for. The same was true for those from Sunrise and Radiance.

Those who had been left to protect those two lands had already relayed their stories to their respective forefathers. Reuniting with their once-lost peers proved to be a tearful moment.

Jiang Chen had pulled a serendipitous conclusion out of despair.

The Eternal young lord cupped his fist modestly. "Honorable seniors, I only made the choices most appropriate to the bigger picture."

He was being entirely honest. The four sacred lands under Lightford's control had been passed over out of anticipated futility.

What he'd been able to do instead was to visit the ones that Lightford hadn't yet gotten to. Thankfully, he had managed to arrive at them earlier despite starting out later, slaying or converting six gods total in the process.

This was a significant blow to Lightford's numbers. The old man definitely had fewer than ten gods at his disposal now.

Jiang Chen surmised that out of the four sacred lands' garrisons under Lightford's command, there were only eight gods in total. Even if the two gods that had fled from Sandplain could join him in the end, that made only ten.

As time passed, the possibility of that was becoming ever lower. Divine Kasyapa and Yu Gong's disguises would have been long unmasked otherwise.

The Eternal forefather was in a rather good mood. Jiang Chen's actions cemented Eternal's status as leader of the alliance.

Though they also stole his thunder somewhat, he saw no reason to mind that. Jiang Chen's talent and potential were so clear-cut already. There was no reason that he, a forefather, should fight for the limelight with a young genius.

No matter what, Jiang Chen and the Eternal Sacred Land were synonymous right now. This was an undeniable fact.

Ziju Min described vividly to the forefathers what had happened after they'd split near Sandplain. How Jiang Chen had returned to the Eternal Sacred Land and fought the invaders there, cutting down Lightford's gold and silver enforcers.

How, after that, he'd maneuvered against Lightford to the point of driving him off.

The entire story was a rather exciting one. The forefathers were uniformly speechless after hearing it, the scene taking on a peculiar air.

The silence stretched on with the audience struggling to digest what Ziju Min had related.

After a long while, the Eternal forefather laughed readily. "You've fought against Old Lightford then? How strong is he, exactly?"

"Mid divine realm, by my reckoning," Jiang Chen responded seriously. "No question about it. His abilities are unparalleled."

The revelation astounded every listener.

Mid divine realm meant at least fourth level! No cultivator in the ten sacred lands could match that.

The blood went out of everyone's faces. Their expressions collectively tensed. The quoted level presented a tremendous threat, both physically and psychologically.

Even when fighting alongside each other, a handful of forefathers couldn't guarantee victory over a mid divine realm cultivator. Lightford alone could hold up more than half of their force!

If he'd marshaled all his men at the outset and ordered a frontal assault, the ten sacred lands would've been completely helpless. The gods on the enemy side far surpassed those on the ten sacred lands'.

Thankfully, Old Lightford hadn't chosen to brute force a victory using raw numbers alone, instead choosing a more strategic approach at Sandplain.

The reason for doing so was clear enough. The old man hadn't wanted to whittle away too much of his own forces. Formations and poison were much more labor-saving methods of hamstringing the ten sacred lands.

At the same time though, this had afforded the sacred lands considerable ability to counterattack. To be more precise, it had afforded Jiang Chen that ability.

"Jiang Chen's fought Lightford once before, so he must know what the old man's capable of already. Now that we're gathered here, there's no better time for us to face off against his remaining armies once and for all. Only with him dead will Myriad Abyss have peace. Only with him gone will we be able to turn our attention to the offworld battlefield once more!"

"Yes, only death will resolve this deep-seated problem. No sacred land alone can stand against that old bastard. We ten sacred lands have allied with each other already. Now is the time to make good on it!"

The sacred lands' spirits were high.

The Eternal forefather nodded. "Good. Old Lightford is a public enemy of all the sacred lands. He's wronged each and every one of us in turn, taking away the lives of many of our best. Only his death will satisfy our need for vengeance. It's him or us!"

Jiang Chen swept his eyes across the divine forefathers' faces one by one. They were raring for a conclusive fight, one and all. Their anger had been fully roused.

They knew full well through personal experience that a living Lightford meant trouble for the sacred lands. None of them could stay selfish anymore.

All of them had fallen victim to Lightford's raids, regardless of whether or not they were currently recovered.

"My friends, this senior deserves majority credit for holding off Lightford from the Eternal Sacred Land." Jiang Chen glanced at Divine Kasyapa, smiling. "He is styled Divine Kasyapa and has been on bad terms with Lightford ever since their days in the Boundless Prison. His cultivation is only a hair below that old bastard's. Without his generous assistance, Eternal wouldn't have endured as long as it did, nor would we have been able to kill god after god. Indeed, we owe much to him in our recovery of Sunrise, Radiance, and Void as well."

The Eternal, Radiance, Sunrise, and Void forefathers all stepped forward soberly, offering him their heartfelt thanks.

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

Chapter 2104: Lightford Comes Up Empty

Divine Kasyapa was a self-assured man, but he could be diplomatic for Jiang Chen's sake.

Since it was Jiang Chen who'd introduced him to the forefathers, he refrained from putting on airs. He smiled faintly without faking humility. "I intervened because of Jiang Chen and my distaste for Lightford. It has nothing to do with you. If you really want to thank me, you can pay me back with something material."

Everyone started. They didn't expect Divine Kasyapa to be so blunt.

Eternal's forefather chuckled. "Once we kill the old devil, I promise we'll repay your kindness."

"That's right. We won't let you work for nothing." Void's forefather agreed without hesitation. He was the most pleased among the forefathers.

The alliance army was in his sacred land, which made Void the safest place at the moment.

Radiance's and Sunrise's forefathers weren't going to object either. They'd benefitted from Kasyapa's intervention as well.

Jiang Chen snorted. He knew Divine Kasyapa was joking, yet the forefathers were all taking it seriously.

He didn't point it out though. "That's a discussion for another day. Our priority is to figure out how we're going to deal with Lightford. If things go as I expect, his army should arrive at Void very soon. Do we wait for him to come, or do we set up an ambush? A plan needs to be formulated. Time's a wastin."

There was nothing more important than taking down Lightford.

Eternal's forefather looked at Jiang Chen expectantly. "Jiang Chen, how much power do you have on your side?"

Jiang Chen made a mental tally: Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu had just defected, Yu Gong, Divine Kasyapa, and the two sacred beasts. The six of them were as powerful as nine regular divine beings.

Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan could rival a god too. All of them together could match the combined power of the ten forefathers.

Jiang Chen smiled. "About the level of you and the other nine forefathers. Now that we've joined forces, our collective power has effectively doubled."

The ten forefathers couldn't be more stunned. Was Jiang Chen... exaggerating?

The young man didn't seem to be lying, and they didn't dare suspect him. After all, he'd succeeded in driving Lightford away.

"How about Lightford's side?" Eternal's forefather asked curiously.

"They shouldn't be our match. Moreover, their morale has hit rock bottom. Once they realize that Radiance, Sunrise, and Void have all been reclaimed by the sacred lands and that I've tricked them, they will be too furious to think clearly. Then, perhaps we'll be able to eliminate them once and for all."

Someone at Jiang Chen's age should be hotheaded, but what the forefathers saw in him was the kind of wisdom and level headedness that most young people didn't possess.

They'd all seen what Jiang Chen was capable of and weren't going to ignore his words.

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Airboats landed outside the Radiance Sacred Land.

One after another, a good number of cultivators emerged on the outskirts of the sacred land. One with a particularly intimidating and solemn presence was Lightford.

It was clear from his clouded face that he was in a bad mood. He'd been to four sacred lands after leaving Eternal and gathered his people. Now, he had a sizeable army under his command.

With him were eight divine cultivators. He knew he was now in a race of time with the ten sacred lands. One sacred land reclaimed by their elites was a loss of two less divine cultivators on his side. That was why he'd been trying his best to not waste any time.

"That's the Radiance Sacred Land ahead of us, master," a divine cultivator said respectfully. "Should this subordinate tell Yuxian and Panyuan to welcome you?"

Lightford glowered darkly at the sacred land.

It didn't show on his face, but he had a bad feeling about the situation. With a hoarse voice, he asked, "Listen. Don't you think the sacred land is too quiet?"

That did remind everyone. Something wasn't right.

"True. It's impossible for them to not notice such a large group, or they really haven't been doing their jobs."

Lightford huffed. "Send two people to scout the area."

Two divine cultivators volunteered without hesitation. They returned not long after.

"It's bizarre, master! The sacred land is wide open. No one's inside! There's no signs of life at all and no valuables can be found!"

Lightford's expression grew even darker.

"No signs of life?"

"That's right. It looks ransacked. Nothing is left."

"Where are its members?" Lightford frowned. "Can those from Eternal have raided Radiance?"

"They wouldn't have killed Radiance's members, would they?" Someone posed the question.

"That's hard to say. Infighting isn't rare. The ten sacred lands aren't brothers. Even blood brothers kill each other sometimes!"

"Master Lightford, can Yuxian and Panyuan have run away with the sacred land's valuables?" One of the shrewdest cultivators suggested the possibility. That put a weight on everyone's mind. Would the pair be so bold?

"Yuxian and Panyuan are my confidantes," Lightford said coldly. "Don't suspect one of our own. They'd never betray me, and they won't make off with the treasure. They had plenty of opportunities to do so if they wanted to. They wouldn't wait until now."

Despite his frustration, he hadn't lost his ability to think.

"Then..." A man put on a look of apprehension. "Has the sacred land been hit already? Are we too late?"

That reminded Lightford of something. Sunrise had contacted him before. Had their enemies targeted Sunrise after dealing with Radiance?

"Come! Set out for Radiance at full speed. Quickly now!"

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

Chapter 2105: Abrupt Awakening

They rushed to the Sunrise Sacred Land with the greatest speed they could muster. What greeted them was no different from the situation in Radiance.

It was completely empty. Not even the mundane daily necessities had been left behind, let alone anything of value.

"Bastards!" Lightford raged.

He didn't care that the two sacred lands had been reclaimed. What troubled him was that the divine cultivators stationed here had disappeared as well.

He needed more of them. Things were looking worse and worse for him in this game of chess. It was an incredible frustration.

Upon reflection, he felt that he hadn't made any wrong moves. His plan at Sandplain was flawless and he'd dispatched his people well, taking over almost every one of the sacred lands.

However, things had gone wrong at Sandplain in a way that he couldn't have predicted. Even now, he still didn't understand how the powerful Prismatic Convergence Formation and the unstoppable mist had failed to trap the ten sacred lands' elites.

Moreover, how could they have all survived unscathed? It just didn't make any sense.

If it'd been ten of his subordinate divines trapped on the Sandplain Island instead, they wouldn't have been able to escape.

Despite his frustration, he had to face reality. One undesirable outcome had set a domino effect in motion. He was losing control of the situation.

"Is this the ten sacred lands' doing, master, or the work of those from Eternal?"

"It must be the ten sacred lands."

"Not necessarily. Those from Eternal are no simple foes, especially the old bastard An Kasyapa! He keeps popping up against our lord in every way!"

"Shut up!" snapped Lightford.

The group fell silent with a shudder.

"Prepare yourselves. We set out for the Void Sacred Land!" Lightford knew they had lost the initiative. If they didn't move fast, there would be nothing left of his people when they arrived.

"Master, why don't we contact our people through the formation and tell them to lay low?"

That did remind Lightford. He announced, "Pass down my orders. Have Void, Abyssal, and Nirvana be on their guard."

"Master, Abyssal and Nirvana are likely to have been reclaimed by the ten sacred lands," someone proposed in a low voice.

"Even so, we have to warn them," snapped Lightford. "Tell them to go into hiding and conserve their strength."

He regretted underestimating the ten sacred lands. If he'd told his divines to leave their posts and join him earlier, they wouldn't have been killed.

He'd thought at the time that the ten sacred lands were too important for him to just give up. What a fool he'd been!

A subordinate seemed to read his mood. "You have to put it behind you, milord," the man advised.

"Once those from Eternal target a sacred land, it wouldn't have changed anything for our people to leave. They would've been ambushed one way or another. After all, this is Myriad Abyss. It's our enemies' home turf. We'd been kept in the Boundless Prison for countless years. We aren't as familiar with the geography here."

That made Lightford feel a little better.

“You haven’t made the wrong decision, milord,” someone else spoke up. “It’s the right thing to do to have them defend the sacred lands by utilizing the existing defenses. It doesn’t seem like Radiance and Sunrise have been through an intense battle. Something isn’t right. Perhaps they weren’t defeated. Rather...”

“What?” Lightford’s voice turned frigid. “Do you still doubt their loyalty to me?”

“This subordinate wouldn’t dare. I’m simply suggesting that our enemies may have tricked Yuxian and Panyuan into trusting them.”

That’s right.

“The ten sacred lands are cunning. They must have used a dirty trick.”

“Master, Void responded!” someone shouted with excitement. “Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu still live! However, they seem to have discovered the enemies. They said that the two divine cultivators sent to Sandplain have requested sanctuary, claiming to be chased down by the ten sacred lands’ elites. Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu haven’t let them in yet.”

“Sandplain?” Lightford went over the list of people he’d sent. What a bizarre situation.

He’d sent six gods. Two died on the island. Two - Yuan Zijing and his companion - had returned. The other two, he hadn’t heard from.

“Did they tell you who made the request?” Lightford asked in a cold voice.

“Daoist Teng and Daoist Huang. They’ve been missing since. Didn’t expect them to appear in Void.”

A myriad of emotions flashed through Lightford’s dark gaze.

Suddenly, his eyes lit up with realization. He snapped, “Tell them to be wary of those two men! They’ve been missing for a long time. They would’ve shown up already if they wanted to. They wouldn’t wait until now. Something isn’t right. Either they’ve taken the ten sacred lands’ side, or they’re imposters!”

He was no fool. He could identify the strangeness after some deliberation.

“Agreed. They were gone for so long. They should’ve come back a long time ago if they wanted to. Why would they go to the Void Sacred Land? Perhaps they’re responsible for what happened to Radiance and Sunrise.”

“That must be it. Have the two bastards truly turned to the ten sacred lands’ side? If that’s the case, Void is in real danger...”

“Set course the Void Sacred Land!” Lightford announced solemnly. “We must take down either the ten sacred lands’ elites or Eternal’s members, and we have to do it quickly! We can’t allow them to join forces, or that will spell trouble.”

Lightford had a good grasp of the situation. If the two groups succeeded in joining forces, they would be able to overpower him and his people.

Before his experience in Eternal, Lightford hadn't considered the ten sacred lands an obstacle. He'd thought himself to be unstoppable. But after exchanging blows with the two sacred beasts, his confidence wavered.

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

Chapter 2106: Before the Dawn of Battle

In the Void Sacred Land, Jiang Chen and the gods on his side were gathered in a single place. The expression upon every person's face was heavy with sober gravity. The deciding battle against Lightford was nigh.

"Friends, Lightford's men have arrived at Sunrise already. His next goal will be Void. Whether we manage to ambush him or embroil ourselves in a skirmish is very important. If we successfully land a sneak attack, we will earn a decisive triumph. An all-out brawl is very undesirable. Any victory we win in that case will be pyrrhic at best. For the sake of Myriad Abyss's future, we must avoid that at any cost."

The price in the latter case was exorbitant. If they managed to kill Lightford and the other gods in the end, what then? Losing two-thirds or more of their own would render their achievement pointless.

Myriad Abyss couldn't afford such a terrible loss of power.

"I presume that Lightford is completely exasperated by this point," Jiang Chen noted. "He must have guessed by now that the two gods missing from Sandplain have either joined us or are us in disguise. What he doesn't know, however, is that daoists Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu have seen the light as well. We can use this fact to our advantage to lie in wait for him and launch a surprise attack."

"What kind of elaborate ruse can we possibly come up with in so short a time?" someone interjected. "How do we fool Lightford when we have no time?"

"If the old man could assert his dominance in the Boundless Prison, he's sure to be a wily fox. An ordinary ambush might not work on him."

"Not necessarily," disagreed An Jiashe. "Old Lightford is shrewd, but he has one weakness: he is intensely arrogant to the point of blindness. If we can use that fact to our advantage, our ploy may yet work."

"I agree," the Radiance forefather nodded. "We finally have the upper hand in terms of numbers. Even if we can't strike down Lightford himself, it will be good to eliminate a few of his cronies. Without sufficient support, he won't be able to make any significant further trouble."

"You're absolutely right. His lack of backup is his greatest affliction right now. Each man of his that we kill is one more that we don't have to deal with."

Jiang Chen smiled smoothly. "We must rip out the problem, root and stem. Lightford is too powerful to be allowed to live. If he escapes, even alone, he can make trouble for us down the line. He might not be able to rule, but he sure can destroy. Thus, we must ensure that he doesn't survive the next encounter with us. We can let everyone else escape and cut him down alone, if we have to make the choice."

It was ideal to stamp a problem out at its source.

Aside from Lightford, the others were only small fry. Once Lightford was out of the picture, his men would be as helpless as headless chickens.

It would be trivial to quash or turn them, either way. The crux of the problem lay with their leader.

“If that’s what you’re saying, Jiang Chen, you must have your own ideas already,” the Eternal forefather smiled. “Let us know what plan you have up your sleeve.”

“Yes, you’re the only one who’s fought against Old Lightford before. You thoroughly know what he’s capable of.”

None of the gods dared underestimate Jiang Chen any longer. They regarded the young man as their equal.

The younger cultivators were envious of his special treatment, but had to admit he was much more capable and incredible than all of them. Myriad Abyss relied upon his intervention to maintain its current stability. Without him, the ten sacred lands would be no more.

“At this point, any and all conspiracies have lost their sway. Force of arms will decide the day in the end.” Jiang Chen smiled a little, looking into the eyes of all those around him composedly. “I’m sure everyone is in agreement with this?”

Some consideration revealed that yes, this was indeed the case.

Intricate planning wasn’t going to be of much use any longer. Fighting was required at some point down the line in their near future.

“As usual, the two sacred beasts and I, as well as Divine Kasyapa, will be in charge of holding Lightford’s attention. The other divine seniors must focus your attentions on his divine servants. You’ll have the upper hand when it comes to numbers.

“Moreover, I will confuse and disorient them for a time using a formation. Since Lightford is around, I’m not sure how long it’ll hold, but you’ll have a window to take advantage of. You must seize the chance to strike and kill as many as you can in that time. Obviously, it would be best if you can slay them all, but even if you can’t, you should at least take out a fair number.

“Think about it, everyone. Does this plan sound reasonable to you? Are you able to play your part?” Jiang Chen rolled his words very slowly.

All the divine forefathers began to consider. After a few moments, one of them spoke up. “We’re preparing to catch them unawares. There are more of us than there are of them. Given both of these facts, it’d be pathetic if we couldn’t kill at least a few. Use all that you have available to you, my friends!”

“Absolutely. We shall do what we must and give it our all.”

“If Lightford brings eight gods, it’d make things much easier if you could get rid of three or four in our surprise attack. We’ll outnumber the ones left over two- or three-to-one,” Jiang Chen smiled. His eyes moved across Yu Gong’s face, then Lan Tianhao’s and Xu Yigu’s.

“Gentlemen, you three come from the Boundless Prison. Not long ago, you served Old Lightford. Tell me, will you be trustworthy in this coming battle?”

There was no reason to worry about Yu Gong. He had accepted Jiang Chen's seal over his consciousness. The young lord could kill him with a single thought.

Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu, on the other hand, were new recruits. Whether they were worth relying on was unknown at present.

Lan Tianhao was surprisingly resolute. "Though we obeyed orders to attack the Void Sacred Land, much of it was due to pressure from Lightford. Since he has no sense of righteousness and will only bring disaster to the continent, we are willing to pitch in alongside the sacred lands to exterminate this demon. If you cannot trust us, we are willing to temporarily surrender mastery over our own consciousnesses. However, you must return our freedom to us after the battle."

Xu Yigu nodded as well. "I've no problem with that."

Their sincerity was clear in the suggestion.

"Alright. As the leader of the sacred lands' allowance, I will deign to exert my consciousness over yours. As you said, your freedom will shortly be returned to you." The Eternal forefather took the initiative.

The overall direction decided, the group immediately began to discuss the details.

All of them knew that Myriad Abyss's fortune and survival hinged on this coming fight. Their lives too, hung in the balance.

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

Chapter 2107: The Enemy at the City Gates

Lightford's team arrived as quickly as possible to the Void Sacred Land.

Their airboats remained a healthy distance away from the sacred land proper, Lightford taking considerable precautions at this stage in his plans.

He knew the passivity of their current situation. If he wasn't careful, he might even turn a winning position into complete defeat.

His prior losses were a learning experience.

"Milord, it doesn't look like there was any fighting here." One god examined Void from the distance, his eyes narrowed thoughtfully.

Lightford's own eyes were as keen as an eagle's. They swept his surroundings, attempting to find any trace or clue. Alas, nothing looked remotely out of place.

"Weren't Teng and Huang supposed to be here? Why are they nowhere to be found? Milord, shall I go deliver a message? And get Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu out here while I'm at it?"

Lightford thought a moment, then nodded. "Sure. Two of you should go on ahead to check things out."

Their master's permission prompted two gods to soar toward Void upon beams of light, coming to a still a short distance outside the defensive formation.

“Daoist Lan Tianhao,” one of them proclaimed loudly, “I am Du Zhen. I am here to investigate on Master Lightford’s orders. Show yourselves immediately!”

There was an answer very shortly from inside.

Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu came to the edge of the formation, looking at their guests from afar. “Daoist Du,” the former cupped a fist. “How are you doing?”

Du Zhen scrutinized the two inside the formation searchingly. “Feelow daoists, didn’t you say that Daoists Teng and Huang were here? Why can’t I see them?”

Lan Tianhao’s tone was cool. “They called themselves Teng and Huang, yes, but I couldn’t confirm their identities. They couldn’t convince me that they were the real ones, so I remembered the master’s instructions and barred their entry. They’ve already left in a huff.”

“Already left?” Du Zhen’s eyes moved. “How long ago?” he pressed.

“Less than four hours,” Lan Tianhao replied after a moment.

“Hmph! Why didn’t you hold them here then?” Du Zhen was mildly displeased.

Xu Yigu glared back unhappily. “Daoist Du, it’s not your business what we do, is it? Didn’t Master Lightford assign you a task as well? Why are you here then? Are you slacking off yourselves?”

Du Zhen grew furious. “I’m here on Master Lightford’s orders. Why aren’t you out to receive him? Why are you questioning me?”

“Haha, don’t try to scare us with authority that doesn’t belong to you. Teng and Huang did the same earlier. They said they would report our insubordination to Master Lightford, but we’re only subordinate to the master himself. We’ll defend this place with our lives. Unless Master Lightford appears himself, no one can convince us to leave this place or let anyone in.”

Lan Tianhao was very resolute.

Du Zhen blinked, then burst into laughter. “Daoist Lan, do you not trust even me?”

“It’s not that. We heard that the sacred lands’ main force is coming to the Void Sacred Land next, so there’s a lot of pressure on us. We can’t determine whether you’re genuine. What if the sacred lands are trying to deceive us into leaving the formation and lure us into a trap?”

Du Zhen chuckled angrily, then remembered it wasn’t his place to rebuke their loyalty to the master’s commands. He nodded. “Ready yourselves. Master Lightford isn’t far from here and will arrive very soon.”

He wasn’t suspicious of anything awry. After informing his comrade of this, the duo returned to old Lightford and related what Du Zhen had witnessed.

Lightford was somewhat hesitant. Mulling things over didn’t reveal any obvious problems. “Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu weren’t exactly the most loyal to me in the Boundless Prison,” he mused, “so their devotion here is surprising. I wonder if there’s a ruse?”

Du Zhen remained silent. His job was done, and he saw no reason why he should interfere in the judgment. Lightford could decide for himself.

“Tell me, what do the rest of you think?” Lightford turned to the peanut gallery.

“Sir, I doubt that those two would defect. They came out from the Boundless Prison just like us. Surely it’s better for them to side with you rather than their jailers?”

“Yes, if they had let in Daoist Du easily, that would be much fishier. If even Daoist Du wasn’t allowed in without you there, Master Lightford, it shows exactly how seriously they’re taking your word.”

Lightford nodded a little, thinking this explanation reasonable.

“Let’s all go take a look, then. Don’t let down your guard. Look alive and stay alert!” the old man wanted to see things for himself. Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu wouldn’t be able to fool him.

He and his eight gods headed toward the edge of the formation.

“Lan Tianhao, Xu Yigu. Master Lightford is here in the flesh. Why aren’t you out to receive him now?” Du Zhen’s voice echoed forth once more.

A light appeared near their retinue, as if a portal was opening. Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu emerged from it.

“Greetings to Master Lightford.” They saluted Lightford with cupped fists as soon as they appeared. A few followers of their own trailed them.

Lightford scanned Lan Tianhao and his men warily to see what they were up to. The fact that they were all demigods and empyrean cultivators relieved him.

If Lan Tianhao had brought only these weaklings, he couldn’t possibly be bamboozling him. They were all gods, and these demigods and empyrean cultivators were no match. Plus, there were only a handful of these add-ons in any case.

Lightford pierced Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu with his razor-sharp gaze, seeming to pierce straight through their bodies into their souls.

“You two have proved your devotion, I see. I didn’t expect you to hold strong after Radiance and Sunrise had both fallen. Not bad, not bad.” The old man’s tone was meaningful.

The two gods he addressed murmured humble rejoinders.

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

Chapter 2108: Open Hostilities

Though Lightford praised them on the surface, the wariness in his heart was hardly lessened. Their words and actions held no obvious problems, but he remained ill at ease for some reason.

He couldn't confirm whether this originated from paranoia or correct instinct.

“Master Lightford, fellow comrades. You came from Radiance and Sunrise, yes? The daoists garrisoned there must have fallen to misfortune, then.” Lan Tianhao’s voice was rather somber.

“Tell me all about Teng and Huang. What did they do after coming here?” Lightford asked suddenly.
“Don’t withhold anything from me.”

Lan Tianhao repeated what he had said before, adding something extra. “When Daoist Teng departed, he gave us a so-called present for us to pass on to you, sir.”

“Why’s that? Couldn’t they have waited for me to come, then decide whether to leave or not?”

“They’re deeply remorseful about the defeat they suffered at Sandplain. It looked so genuine that we became conflicted. We should have let them in, but your orders, sir... we didn’t want to risk it.”

“Hmph, are they capable of remorse? If so, why didn’t they join me earlier? Right, what gift did they leave for me?” Lightford asked.

“Present it to the lord.” Lan Tianhao waved a hand. A cultivator stepped forward from behind him, bringing something to where Lightford and his underlings were.

Lightford’s expression darkened. He glared fiercely at the approaching cultivator, his eyes burning with a desire to see through him.

“Raise your head and look at me,” demanded the old man.

The cultivator seemed to shy away in embarrassment. He glanced at Lightford, but didn’t seem courageous enough to look into the old man’s eyes.

“I order you to open your eyes wide and look at me. Don’t avert your gaze!” Lightford’s tone was remote and oppressive.

The cultivator trembled, panic flashing through his eyes. He struggled to bring his eyes up to Lightford, who squinted with a nagging discomfort. The cultivator was only empyrean realm, and quite innocent, but Lightford felt disquieted nevertheless.

“Stop right there,” Du Zhen called out. “Let me examine it. Master Lightford can receive it if it is found worthy.”

There was no guarantee about a lack of trickery here.

“Daoist Du, what do you mean by this?” declared Xu Yigu angrily. “Are you saying that that we’d lie to Master Lightford?”

“Better safe than sorry.” Du Zhen grinned rudely. Now that Lightford was here to back him up, he had no qualms about crudity.

The cultivator with the gift suddenly calmed. He grinned back at the approaching Du Zhen, throwing the treasure in his hands into the air. There was a blaze of golden light, filling the air all around.

Not good!

Agitation flickered across everyone’s minds. As the closest, Du Zhen felt the most unsafe of all.

The light took away the senses of those who perceived it. In particular, it was so blinding that they couldn’t open their eyes.

“Careful!” Lightford called out. “Form up and don’t panic!”

He was an experienced leader, and knew that fleeing right now was a wholly inappropriate course of action to take. Doing so would only put them in greater danger.

However, Du Zhen shrieked as soon as he finished speaking. He continued to do so intensely and regularly, though his volume slowly faded to nothingness in only a few instants.

“Du Zhen?” Lightford shouted.

He received no response.

“The rest of you, don’t overreact. Stay close to me. There is no cause for fear. I will protect you!”

Lightford knew that if the group was dispersed, his men would be eliminated one by one. Only by staying together could they preserve their group and formation.

The other seven gods inched toward Lightford without hesitation. “Lan Tianhao, Xu Yigu, you two bastards betrayed Master Lightford!” one of them cursed. “You deserve to die!”

Lan Tianhao’s response was carried over on the wind.

“Excuse our insolence, Master Lightford. The way you invited us to join you wasn’t exactly courteous in the first place. Today, we are only submitting our letters of resignation. Rather than betrayal, our paths never aligned in the first place!”

Evidently, Lan Tianhao and Xu Yigu cared about their own reputations. They didn't like being called traitors.

“Why are you reeling off such inane things?” Lightford spat hatefully. “What has the ten sacred lands promised you? What can they possibly give you? If I ruled over Myriad Abyss, I could give you a whole sacred land all for yourselves. Them? They wouldn’t give you a single island, much less a sacred land! Fools!”

“If I may be blunt, Master Lightford,” chuckled Lan Tianhao. “My friend and I never saw any possibility of you giving us a sacred land. You’re bargaining now because too many of your most loyal subordinates have died. You’re only saying this to encourage us to risk our lives for you. Alas, what you promised isn’t important to either of us.”

“Hmph. If wealth and authority aren’t important to you, what are you cultivating for?” Someone on Lightford’s side mocked.

“You lot are used to being lapdogs. How would you know what we long for?” Xu Yigu scoffed. “We want respect and freedom. Master Lightford, from the day you came out of the Boundless Prison, have you showed any genuine respect for any of your fellow divine daoists? You only order us around like slaves, expecting us to kneel and simper like pets. Is the word ‘respect’ even in your dictionary, much less ‘freedom’?”

This was an accusation that hit rather close to home.

Lightford’s anger flared up immediately. Xu Yigu’s words were very provocative.

If the seven gods that remained to him left him because of this, he would be a general without any soldiers.

Furious, he bellowed, "For you two clowns to betray me is one thing, why are you making so many sanctimonious excuses?! I will use my strength to teach you a valuable lesson. You will see exactly how stupid turning your backs on me is!"

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

Chapter 2109: Fish in a Barrel

But with how much time and effort Jiang Chen and the others had put into preparations, they weren't going to let Lightford regain the upper hand.

Jiang Chen spoke up from the shadows, interrupting Lightford's angry spiel. "This battle will determine Myriad Abyss's future. What are you all waiting for?"

Lightford's heart sank as he recognized the voice. He said hoarsely, "Kid, it's you!"

What answered him wasn't Jiang Chen's voice, but fierce attacks from all directions.

"Be careful!" Lightford boomed. As soon as he said that, he sensed the two sacred beasts he'd fought in Eternal.

The Vermilion Bird and the Black Tortoise attacked at almost the same time. Unbridled torrents of flame and Black Tortoise Festering Gas separated Lightford from the others.

All went according to their plan.

Lightford was powerful, but even he couldn't keep an eye on the others while the two spirit creatures were after him.

Moreover, An Kasyapa had been watching, ready to lend the sacred beasts a helping hand at anytime. If Lightford tried to rescue his people, Kasyapa would undoubtedly join the fight.

Jiang Chen's leadership played an important role here.

Meanwhile, Eternal's forefather led a dozen divine cultivators in an unstoppable charge against the seven gods Lightford had brought with him.

Everyone knew this was a battle for their survival. No one was to spare any effort. The battlefield turned into a veritable thunderstorm of fire and fury.

The seven cultivators were no easy prey, but had no time to react given that they'd been caught by surprise. They were already beyond hope when they realized that Lightford couldn't spare the effort to help them.

The sacred lands were two to three times as powerful as Lightford's people, and they had the initiative. The outcome of the battle was decided before it even began.

Three of Lightford's people were knocked unconscious. The remaining four tried to resist despite being cornered. However, losing three companions compounded their plight.

Resistance was futile. In no time, they were as if candles in the wind. They could be snuffed out anytime!

“Resist on pain of death! Surrender, and we let you live.” Jiang Chen exclaimed. “Do you really want to keep fighting?”

That was the final straw that broke their will.

“I and willing to surrender.”

“I, too.”

One by one, they dropped their weapons without hesitation and raised their hands in the air. They knew their enemies could kill them in the span of a single breath. If they didn’t surrender now, they would undeniably die.

There was no other way out.

Since they’d surrendered, Jiang Chen didn’t hesitate and plucked them out of the fray. Those who had lost consciousness were retrieved as well.

That left Lightford fighting on his own. A strange mood permeated the air.

Lightford’s life hadn’t been threatened yet, so he’d been keeping an eye on his people. When he saw his subordinates taken care of so easily, he belatedly realized that he’d played into the enemies’ hands every step of the way.

His chest tightened and he could taste blood in his throat. “You traitors! Cowards!” he shouted, his face flushed red. “Do you really think the ten sacred lands will let you live after you surrender? Idiots!”

Well and truly enraged now, he still believed he should be the master of Myriad Abyss. Nothing should’ve been able to stop him. How the scene had unfolded was a grave insult to him.

Jiang Chen watched Lightford with a cool look. They’d cornered the old man. He might be as strong as a mid divine cultivator, but that wouldn’t change anything. Jiang Chen had more than twenty gods on his side.

They could fight Lightford head-on even when he was at his peak, let alone when on his own, surrounded and trapped. Not even Lightford would be able to escape.

“Reaching mid divine realm is your biggest success in life, Lightford,” mocked An Kasyapa. “Your worst failure lies in your overconfidence in your power and your underestimation of others. I knew you’d fail. You’re paying the price for your own foolishness!”

Adding insult to injury was his forte. He’d always had an antagonistic relationship with Lightford and wouldn’t pass over the chance to kick an old enemy when down.

“What gives you the right to mock me, An Kasyapa?” Lightford growled. “You’re wasting your talents by running around as the ten sacred lands’ dog. Don’t tell me they had nothing to do with your imprisonment!”

An Kasyapa smiled faintly. “Do you really think that will sway me? I was also responsible for my own imprisonment. Besides, that experience made me who I am today. It was merely a stop in my pursuit of

martial dao. I was born and raised in Myriad Abyss. I won't allow you to make a mess out of my homeland. I may not be a good man, but I will never stoop so low as to throw the world into chaos."

"Bullshit, bullshit! Don't try to make yourself look good, An Kasyapa. I know what kind of a person you are! You're a coward! Hahaha, I never leave a grudge unresolved. I'll return after this defeat! You're all responsible. I've memorized all your faces. One day, I'll make you pay this back tenfold!"

Jiang Chen scoffed. "How naive of you to think you can still escape."

His goal had always been clear. He would destroy Lightford once and for all. The old man mustn't be allowed to run rampant in this world.

"It's our duty to rid the world of this evil, everyone," commanded Eternal's forefather. "Get in position and do not waver. We'll send this fiend to hell today!"

"Kill him!"

With a sneer, An Kasyapa joined the fray. He'd fought Lightford with the two sacred beasts before. He would show no hesitation now.

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

Chapter 2110: The Mystery Is Resolved

Lightford's strength exceeded expectations. Even after years of imprisonment in the Boundless Prison, his background, identity, and degree of power were still unknown.

Increasing numbers of gods joined the fight. It didn't take long before half of them were all attacking Lightford.

The other half formed a circle around him under Jiang Chen's command in case Lightford made a run for it. Never had an army this powerful worked in concert before.

Yet Lightford proved himself to still be a mighty foe. Even the relentless attacks failed to faze him.

Jiang Chen frowned as he watched the battle from afar.

Lightford seemed to have become stronger to meet his enemies' offensive. Even when surrounded by so many gods, he hadn't given an inch. Although he was unable to go on the attack, his defenses remained strong.

They weren't going to break through anytime soon.

He was enveloped in a layer of faint, violet mist, giving him an air of mystery and eeriness. The mist seemed to have a strengthening effect, enhancing his defenses.

"Strange. His power is still rising." Jiang Chen was an expert in martial dao. The change didn't escape his eyes; it was tremendously baffling.

An unreadable look flashed through his eyes as he watched Lightford. He'd thought he'd gotten a good grasp on the enemy's strength back in Eternal. Now though, Lightford had become at least fifty percent more powerful.

There was a limit to how powerful a mid divine cultivator could be. It didn't make sense for Lightford to be pulling back in the last fight.

After all, that battle had been crucial for him. There was no reason for him to flee simply because he didn't want to show his true strength.

However, Jiang Chen was sure he hadn't misjudged Lightford's strength. It left him with many questions.

Teamwork between the sacred lands weren't the most efficient, either. They hadn't yet formed a united front and their attacks were unorganized.

"You're powerful as individuals, but you have to work as a team," Jiang Chen commented thoughtfully. "Such unorganized attacks aren't going to threaten him."

"Hahaha, I didn't expect a young man like you to be able to order these old gods around," Lightford remarked in an unreadable tone. "So I've underestimated you."

He was able to speak even when he was fighting, which showed that he hadn't reached his limits yet and had the effort to spare. That was an insult to the cultivators attacking him.

Doubt flashed through Jiang Chen's mind. Something really was off with Lightford. He shouldn't be having such an easy time with so many people attacking him. What was wrong here? Why had Lightford grown so much stronger?

Perplexed speculations filled the Eternal young lord's mind.

Eternal's forefather whipped to Jiang Chen's side like a gust of wind and whispered lowly, "This man's moves are impossible to predict, Jiang Chen."

Jiang Chen nodded wordlessly. What was it about the Boundless Prison that had created such a formidable cultivator?

"It's not going to be easy to defeat him," the forefather said with a sigh.

"We have to take him down, or the ten sacred lands and Myriad Abyss at large will never know peace." Jiang Chen's tone was determined. He stared at Lightford and the strange purple mist around him, utilizing his God's Eye to the fullest so as not to miss any details.

The Vermilion Bird approached Jiang Chen in a flash of red.

"Have you noticed, young lord Chen?" the bird said in a grave tone.

"What?" Jiang Chen asked without thinking.

"There's demonic energy hidden within him," the bird said solemnly.

Jiang Chen's face tightened. "Demonic energy?"

"That's right. He's been hiding his volatile demonic energy with the violet mist, but I fought demons in the ancient time. I know their presence signatures first hand. There's something unorthodox about Lightford."

Realization dawned on Jiang Chen. Could Lightford be a remnant of the demons?

He turned to Eternal's forefather. "Venerated Forefather, were there any demons in Myriad Abyss in the ancient times? Did the Boundless Prison keep any?"

Lightford paused, unsure. "The Boundless Prison has been around since the ancient times. I've always known the prison as an ancient inheritance. Countless unredeemable, untamable villains and violent spirits of different generations are kept there. Lightford isn't someone of our generation. At least, I never heard of him when growing up."

"Which means Lightford was imprisoned before your time," Jiang Chen responded lowly.

The forefather nodded. "That should be the case."

"That's cause for suspicion," the Vermilion Bird mumbled, looking at Jiang Chen with a blazing look. "Young lord Chen, if Lightford is a demon, we mustn't let him escape. All demons must be eradicated!"

The bird had been through the turbulent ancient time where demons ran rampant. It was ingrained in its nature to be wary of them. Thus, not even it could remain calm when it came to demons.

Killing intent flashed through Jiang Chen's eyes. He finally realized why Lightford's power had increased seemingly with no explanation.

Lightford must have awakened his demonic energy, which allowed him to tap into the hidden potential of his body, making him stronger. That was one of demons' methods of fighting.

What made demons difficult to deal with were the myriad of strange tricks they had at their disposal. It was almost impossible to defend against all of them.

"If he's a demon, we can't allow him to live," Jiang Chen said seriously. "If he's left to his own devices, he'll disrupt the order of the entire Divine Abyss Continent. If he acts against us from within, the entire continent may even collapse!"

The Vermilion Bird and Eternal's forefather nodded with a grave expression.