

Three Realms 2341

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

Chapter 2341: The Progress Of The Bloodline Assimilation

What was she going to do next?

Gone was Han Shuang's usual straightforward candor. Instead, she stared assessingly at Jiang Chen, as if trying to divine his intentions.

"What about you, gentlemen?" she asked with a soft sigh.

"You're the sectmistress, you do the honors." Jiang Chen smiled calmly.

"Hmph!"

Is he toying with me? But she immediately regained her usual fiery temper, making a grand exit like a gust of wind. "Let's talk about it another time. You should go to bed early."

So that's how she wants to play it.

Jiang Chen followed her departing figure with a grin, then turned to Jiang Huan.

The latter was a picture of innocence. "Why are you looking at me for? I made myself scarce and never piped up while you two flirted away. I've been a model third wheel."

Jiang Chen snorted. "Whatever, there's no one else here, so you can drop the act."

Jiang Huan grinned mischievously, his face taking on its usual cleverness.

"Young lord, there's more to her than meets the eye. Just like us, she's hiding her strength. She's definitely up to something, but it probably has little to do with us. At a guess, it must be related to the Heavenly Crimson Lake."

Jiang Chen murmured, "There's no conflict of interest between us in that case. Should we turn a blind eye and stay out of her business?"

Jiang Huan considered his suggestion, but the younger man quickly changed his mind and shook his head. "No, we can't. If she causes too big a ruckus, she might alert the godking's people and get Fiendstar expelled. We'd have to kiss the conference goodbye then."

"You're right. We still need to keep an eye on this crazy woman, it seems. We'll stop her before she compromises our plans," Jiang Huan agreed.

Jiang Chen sized up the older man and grinned. "Hehe, uncle, you're playing the part of an unabashed rogue anyway, so why don't you sacrifice your body and try her out? Maybe she'll fall for your handsome face."

Jiang Huan rubbed his nose. "Young lord, your servant is a decrepit old codger, but you're in your prime. Aren't you more suitable? Plus, that hot pepper's clearly got a thing for you. She wouldn't spare a glance at an old fart like me, but she keeps finding excuses to chat you up. Hehe, love's definitely in the air!"

Master and servant lightheartedly poked fun at each other.

Any talk of seduction was a simple joke, but they really had to keep an eye on a woman like Han Shuang. Her mischief might turn the lake upside down and spoil their plans.

Whatever she was scheming, they couldn't let her loose before the godking conference. What came after that was none of their concern.

The conference was impossible to attend without an invitation, so they needed a legitimate pretext. No matter the extent of the young lord's powers, he couldn't possibly force his way in. Even a fool could envision the defenses at such an event.

After a successful competition, Fiendstar launched a large construction project at Heavenly Crimson Lake. After all, they'd been granted the right to establish their base there for ten thousand years.

For cultivators, it wasn't an especially long time in the grand scheme of things, but it was significant enough to justify their efforts.

The environment around the lake was truly superior in every aspect. Establishing a sect there had remarkable benefits for cultivation.

The five winners carved up the area into zones of influence vast enough that none of them could complain. For them, the Heavenly Crimson Lake was sacred land through and through.

But Jiang Chen cared little for these trifles. He immersed himself in cultivation like before. He simply took advantage of the situation and traded Fiendstar's former territory for the lake's shores.

As for Jiang Huan, he was indifferent to whatever merits the place might hold. He vanished completely after the competition's end, so much so Jiang Chen himself rarely kept in contact with the man.

Still, he sometimes dropped by once or twice a year, always bringing back strange news with him. A riot surfacing in such and such fief, or an attack elsewhere on so and so, or perhaps the murder of a great figure in this or that territory.

In short, strange events cropped up one after another.

Jiang Chen knew full well Jiang Huang was alluding to incidents he'd caused himself. The old man was creating chaos to push Taiyuan Plane to the brink.

Not the most honorable method, but one couldn't always take the high road in times of need.

Jiang Huan's sacrifices and endeavours made the young lord even more determined to cultivate, and to cultivate some more.

By now, his body had begun to become one with the bloodlines of the sacred beasts. Once the assimilation was complete, he'd attain the peak of the godking realm in a single bound.

To that end, he holed up in his room every single day, calling upon the four sacred beasts to assist him.

The beasts had willingly gifted him with their bloodlines. Therefore, their continued assistance was invaluable in simplifying and hastening the process.

Added to the Four Symbols True Spirit Painting, Jiang Chen gained new insights by the day.

In fact, the sacred beasts grew stronger by the same occasion, the tacit connection between the four of them strengthened further.

All four of them were now at ninth level divine realm.

If they could reach the half step godking by the time he became a bonafide godking, their combined might would become a terrifying headache in combat. By then, their coordination and joint formation would reach an entirely different dimension.

They'd possess the genuine power of plane creation, each of their moves imbued with the mysteries of the universe. Even an honest to goodness godking might not be their match.

In fact, they might be able to overwhelm a party of several godkings!

"Young lord, the assimilation's already close to seventy percent. You have more than fifty years left, so the remaining thirty percent shouldn't be an issue," the Vermilion Bird proclaimed with a smile.

The young lord nodded. "I can't wait to find out how spectacular the end result will be. Come what may, I'm truly blessed to have the four of you as my companions!"

"Heh, we're the lucky ones. Even with our bloodlines, we wouldn't be where we're at now if we hadn't met you." Indeed, not even sacred beasts were omnipotent!

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Chapter 2342: The Divine Beasts' Temptation

For cultivators, great achievements weren't born from innate gifts alone.

The heavenly planes were chock full of talented geniuses endowed with exceptional bloodlines, but few ultimately reached the pinnacle of the martial world.

Why?

The climb was steep and slippery. No one was guaranteed a taste of the fruits atop the mountain.

The world of cultivation was a cruel, ruthless place, the road to success strewn with skeletons.

True, the sacred beasts' pedigrees did provide them with tremendous advantages, but they wouldn't have enjoyed as smooth a ride without the young lord.

For example, the Vermilion Bird wouldn't have been reborn to begin with, to say nothing of reaching the divine realm.

As for Long Xiaoxuan, his odds of victory against the Walkabout Sect's elder had been about fifty-fifty before running into Jiang Chen.

The White Astral Tiger might be lording it over the heavenly planes nowadays, but the sacred beast might not even have awakened his consciousness back then.

And the Black Tortoise lived like a recluse on his island, eating, sleeping and waiting for death. He'd sooner or later have become a slave after the demons' invasion. Reach the top? What a joke!

But Jiang Chen had crossed their paths and given them hope, ushering them into a brand new world. For one thing, their potential wouldn't have grown this far without the Amaranth Clouddew Fruit.

So the weight of the young lord in their lives far outstripped what little help they provided back. He was their benefactor. They were merely repaying their debts, nothing more.

Traveling through the planes had broadened their horizons. They'd seen outstanding talents fade into oblivion on many a greater world, perhaps dead before making a name for themselves.

The beasts had always felt beholden to Jiang Chen, but more than anything, they saw him as family.

In this fashion, life continued day after day.

The Four Symbols True Spirit Painting hung in the room as man and beasts cultivated together to further the young lord's cognizance of his new bloodlines and perfect the assimilation. The assistance of the four sacred beasts halved the effort required.

As the blood in their veins resonated with the young lord, their cultivation also grew.

"My friends, your ancestors were always too proud to work together toward greater goals. Your lineages have always been at daggers drawn against each other. The four of you can be heralded as trailblazers. In fact, when you work as one, you could also create a plane of your own," Jiang Chen mentioned with a chuckle.

The beasts' breathes caught in their throats.

"Young lord, you mean that, just like you, we can one day rule over our own plane?" As the youngest one, the White Astral Tiger's excitement got the better of him first.

"Correct." Jiang Chen nodded with conviction.

However, there was a catch. Without him by their side, could they continue to cooperate in good faith without jealousy?

With their current strength, it was entirely possible on paper, although the process would be fraught with difficulty. The essential issue was whether they could harmonize their hearts and minds.

Without Jiang Chen as a chaperone, their friendship seemed unlikely to extend into the future, eliminating all possibilities about establishing their own realm.

The most senior and experienced of the lot, the Vermillion Bird shook his head after much deliberation.

"Let's not waste our time chasing after such a mirage. The pride ingrained in our very bones is a hurdle too tall to overcome. We all follow the young lord, but without him, would we be able to continue in the same fraternal vein?"

The divine bird cut straight to the heart of the matter.

They all paused for a moment, then smiled wryly, but the White Astral Tiger insisted, "You guys are overthinking it. Why couldn't we? I'll never be selfish, I swear."

"Heh, Little White, who'd be the alpha of our world? Who would sit in the throne of the celestial emperor?" asked the Vermillion Bird.

“Why don’t you do it? You’re the most senior,” the tiger mumbled.

“I’m fine with that, but are all of you so eager to serve as my minions? You, a noble White Astral Tiger? Little Long, a majestic true dragon? Or the peerless Black Tortoise? Each of you has a claim to the throne. Our strength will be around the same by then, and we might come to blows. It’d be the end of our comradeship, I fear.”

The Black Tortoise nodded in complete agreement. He was convinced they’d no longer be able to share weals and woes if it were to happen.

Believing otherwise was to be delusional.

Power corrupted. They’d certainly hear its siren song, and their personalities would ultimately be twisted by their ambitions. They’d turn from bosom friends into bitter enemies.

“Let’s peacefully help young lord Chen instead. As long as he can create a new plane and become a celestial emperor, we’ll enjoy all the riches and fame we’ve ever dreamed of. Why go through the hassle ourselves?” Long Xiaoxuan suddenly proposed. “If you ask me, it’s safer and more reliable to follow him than to venture out on our own.”

“Haha, let’s do that then. I’m his most loyal supporter.” The White Astral Tiger giggled. His eagerness had been little more than the impulsiveness of youth. He was too simple-minded to crave power.

The Vermilion Bird nodded. “Indeed. We’re already blessed to have come this far. There’s no need for us to always lust for more. I don’t think it’s what fate has in store for us.”

“You’re right. It’ll also be a wonderful experience to help the young lord build a powerful plane.” The Black Tortoise had never been one for grand aspirations.

All four of them ended up coming round to this point of view.

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Chapter 2343: Han Shuang’s Visi

On the shores of Heavenly Crimson Lake, spirit energy was no issue for Jiang Chen, unlike a certain Han Shuang. The beautiful and usually spirited sectmistress had recently become increasingly mysterious.

Jiang Huan was away almost all year round, so the young lord had no choice but to personally keep tabs on her to prevent her from stepping out of bounds and attracting the godking’s wrath.

No matter her schemes, his own plans came first and foremost. Not even she could be allowed to disrupt them.

He wanted to spend the next six decades peacefully, right up to the start of the godking conference.

Anything unexpected might constitute a roadblock. He’d need to look for alternatives if he were to lose his right to attend the conference, which would entail unwelcome distractions detrimental to his ambitions.

Hence, busy or not, he kept an eye on her lest she should suddenly do something outrageous.

Of course, she was fully unaware she was the target of surveillance.

As to Elders Ge and Xu, their heads had swollen out of control after becoming one of the five greatest sects on Crimsonwaters. They'd sometimes strut around, creating trouble that the sect had to clean up afterward.

It was quite a headache for Han Shuang. Now and then, the urge to give these two fellows a good thrashing was almost impossible to resist.

Her repeated admonishments to stay low-key slowly started to take with the two elders, but their descendents, disciples, and womenfolk, drunk on their newfound fame, often stirred up trouble.

Having to deal with these issues once every few days was an immense distraction.

One day, she finally got ahold of Jiang Chen and cut right to the chase. "Elder Zhen Junior, I met a roadblock in my cultivation a few days ago and need to go into seclusion to resolve this issue. It might have long-lasting repercussions otherwise. You'll be in charge while I'm gone. Keep an eye on Elder Xu and Elder Ge. They've been causing me no end of trouble lately."

Jiang Chen responded woodenly, "How long will your seclusion last? A week, half a year? Kindly ask someone else if it's more than a month."

Trying to shirk your responsibilities and pass off the hot potato? I'm not stupid enough to buy into your story.

Han Shuang giggled, glamorous ripples in her eyes. "Elder Zhen Junior, you're a senior of our sect. I'm letting you take over the reins because I think you're ready for it. Don't you want to prove yourself should future opportunities arise? I might be in really high spirits one day, and find you particularly pleasing to the eyes. Who knows if I won't promote you to vice sect head by then?"

"Not interested. I'm content being an elder." Jiang Chen chuckled.

There's nothing to negotiate, no matter your wiles!

But Han Shuang wasn't flustered. She hadn't expected him to capitulate so easily. With a smile, she sashayed over to him, sat beside him, and softly rocked against his shoulder. Intentionally or not, her two soft hills rubbed against him.

"Elder Zhen Junior, you've joined us for quite some time already, haven't you? I've never asked you to do something against your will, so do you have the heart to tell me no this one time? I really have to go into seclusion. I'm not asking for the moon, it's nothing but day-to-day routines. Blame your uncle for being away. He'd have been my first pick." Her head almost brushed against his as she implored in a soft, velvety voice, like a sister coaxing her younger brother. Her breath smelled like orchids.

But Jiang Chen remained deaf to her pleas.

In all honesty, anyone else would long have succumbed to such an offensive. However, clarity shone through his heart, determination unswayed.

Han Shuang fidgeted nervously when she saw she couldn't budge him.

"Elder Zhen Junior, what's with you?" She stood up and put her hands on her hips. If soft persuasion didn't work, she seemed ready to resort to a harder line.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Hehe, Sectmistress, I'm young, so don't scare me. What did you say your problem was? You can tell me. I do have some insight when it comes to cultivation, you know. Maybe I can figure it out for you, and then you won't have to seclude yourself anymore. How would our sect make giant strides towards becoming a peak faction without you at the helm?"

Seeing his face almost literally sparkle with sincerity, Han Shuang itched to slam a fist right into his nose. How could she fail to see the kid was putting up an act?

Both of them were dissembling, talking in circles without a clear winner. A little disheartened, she sat down huffily, glaring at the young lord as if ready to come to blows.

"Elder Zhen Junior, what do I have to do to make you help?" She finally opted to give peaceful negotiations another try.

"Sectmistress, don't look at me like that. People might think you want to eat me." Jiang Chen continued to tease, more and more amused.

"Little bastard, don't even go there. I'm your sectmistress and your elder sister! Even if you want me, I'm not that type!" Han Shuang rolled her eyes at him and said with a straight face, "But I'm open to other conditions."

Jiang Chen curled his lips. "But I thought it was the very thing you've been going for. Seems like I've misread your intentions, my lady."

Han Shuang's eyes softened as she blushed. "Little rascal, it seems you've had your eyes on me for a long time. It's your fault for usually behaving so uptight. To be honest, I also enjoy your company, but if you really want to be with me, you should formally propose. I'm not as easy as you think."

Jiang Chen froze. Was she being sincere, or was it another subterfuge?

Smiling, he stared meaningfully into her eyes.

"Sectmistress, I think we should get to know each other better," he suddenly said.

"How so?" Han Shuang still looked like a charming, gentle girl. "Are you coming on to me? I've been engaged once, but I'm essentially a maiden. This isn't a suitable subject this late at night, don't you think?"

Jiang Chen was finally certain she was still play-acting.

"Of course this one never would. I was alluding to your escapades to the lake. If you're hatching plans of grand supremacy, why don't you share them with me? Two heads are better than one."

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Chapter 2344: Mutual Wariness

The rosininess on Han Shuang's cheeks instantly vanished. A certain heaviness and vigilance set in instead. Her phoenix-shaped eyes narrowed to slits as she stared at the young man, trying to see right through him.

But no matter how incisive her glare, he remained entirely unruffled, his ironclad willpower immune to such intimidation tactics.

After a long moment, a drawn-out sigh finally escaped her lips.

“Elder Zhen Junior, are you genuinely willing to lay down your cards on the table? Tell me, why did you and your uncle join our sect? Don’t bore me with the same old excuses. We both know it’s a lie.”

After many twists and turns, they’d circled back to their previous conversation.

Jiang Chen sighed quietly. “Sectmistress Han, you left two nights ago for the lake’s forbidden grounds. That’s outside our jurisdiction. Would you care to explain?”

She replied with a frosty expression, “Did you tail me?”

That was quite unexpected. She’d indeed left in secret, but she’d made sure no one had been shadowed her. She’d always been confident in her ability to cover her tracks.

To think the young man had eluded her vigilance! Sudden doubts clouded her mind. An unprecedented hostility even arose from the depth of her heart.

But she quickly brushed it off. She was no stranger to silencing people by force, but she couldn’t find it in herself to lift a hand against him.

Furthermore, she wasn’t confident about her chances. Not when he’d shown he could follow her unseen.

Jiang Chen sensed the minute changes in her attitude. He’d thought they’d erupt in open hostility when he’d felt her murderous intent, but the bloodlust was gone as soon as it’d appeared.

“Tempted to shut me up for good?” He smiled, seeming unconcerned.

An astonished Han Shuang looked at him, a chill running down her back. Was he reading her like an open book? Did he have some sort of mind-reading ability?

“Heh, I know you’re not that heinous.” Jiang Chen smiled again. “Please believe me, I bear you no ill will.”

“Are you sure? Then why did you follow me?” she grumbled.

All of a sudden, she felt out of her depth. The conversation was getting away from her. Her opponent might be young, but he was truly a perverse genius.

In Fiendstar, she could easily toy with Elders Xu and Ge, but Zhen Shi was another story altogether. She’d never been able to get a read on the nephew or his uncle, while they’d slowly gotten her measure.

Are they plotting the same thing as me? She was a little disquieted by this possibility, but she soon dismissed this emotion. She couldn’t abandon her goal, no matter how impossible the obstacles she had to surmount.

She sighed deeply. “I bear no animosity towards you or your uncle. Perhaps, as you’ve said, we truly need to lay everything out in the open.”

"Heh, let me tell you what I think." Jiang Chen smiled calmly. "From what I've seen, your plan must be related to the Heavenly Crimson Lake. Am I wrong?"

"Let's say you aren't." Han Shuang nodded.

"That's more like it. My plan has nothing to do with the lake. Our goals aren't incompatible, so there's nothing preventing us from continuing our merry cooperation. Provided private operations don't undermine the other's plans, that is. What do you think?"

His stare made Han Shuang extremely uneasy, as if his eyes were roaming all over her exposed body. It made her skin crawl.

"What are you aiming for, if not the lake?" She probed, trying to land on her feet.

"Heh, in fact, we've already told you. We simply want to participate in the godking conference. You can drain all the water from the lake for all we care. But do consider. Snooping around the forbidden grounds might attract the godking's attention. You won't be the only one to suffer then. You'll drag down the whole sect with you. You're not particularly attached to Fiendstar, I know. It's nothing but a stepping stone for you. We're in the same boat in that regard, but as long as me and my uncle belong to the sect, we don't want to be tainted by scandal."

Jiang Chen laid down his terms in black and white. Her recklessness would implicate the sect sooner or later, and him by the same token.

Han Shuang stayed silent. She had to admit there was a certain logic to his argument.

But for her, the lake was the first, fundamental step on which her entire plan was built on. She couldn't give up on it. She had to forge ahead, or all her efforts would be in vain.

With a soft sigh, she said, "Elder Zhen, you do make sense. But the lake's too crucial for me. I can't give it up."

"Is there no room for discussion?" Jiang Chen looked intently at her.

"None," she replied categorically.

The young lord nodded in silence, considering his options for a moment before he offered, "Then how about letting me in on your plans? Perhaps we can figure a way out together?"

"Heh, do you think I'm that naive?" Han Shuan smiled coldly.

"You don't trust me?" Jiang Chen grinned, unruffled. "I've never shown any hostility toward you, Sectmistress. You know this as well as I."

"Perhaps not previously, but a man can change. Human intentions are hard to fathom, and a cultivator's heart is always tainted. In the Taiyuan Plane, it would be irresponsible of me to trust a complete stranger!" Han Shuang stuck to her convictions.

Jiang Chen pursed his lips. "Isn't that a vicious cycle? Are we supposed to live with our suspicions and keep getting in each other's way?"

This issue also vexed Han Shuang, so she responded irritably, "I might believe you if you tell me why you want to participate in the conference. How can we keep each other's secrets if we don't even know them to begin with?"

That was one way to do it, but the young lord's secret might scare the living daylights out of her.

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Chapter 2345: Haggling

Jiang Chen smiled in lieu of an answer.

"What's that for? Your smirk tells me that you aren't going to be honest with me. Forget it. I don't care if my plan interferes with yours. If you undermine my plan, I'll stop you from attending the godking conference."

Jiang Chen flashed her an unconcerned smile. "I can find other ways to attend the conference even without the Fiendstar Sect. If I expose you though, you'll never get access to the lake."

If he wanted to, he could very well seek out a lesser godking and butter them up. He would still have a chance to attend the conference then.

Nevertheless, that would be much riskier. He would be more likely to attract suspicion, and would seem like a fool for pulling such a rudimentary trick.

Han Shuang, though, had to consider the possibility.

She had to admit that Jiang Chen was right. She was at a disadvantage here. There were indeed other ways to attend the conference. Her plan, however, hinged on the Heavenly Crimson Lake. In fact, the lake was the most crucial part, without which the rest of her plan would fall apart.

They were at a standstill.

"I'll make you an offer, Sectmistress Han," Jiang Chen said, breaking the silence. "Hear me out before you come to any decisions."

Han Shuang flipped her silky hair and stared at Jiang Chen. "Go on."

"I'm genuinely offering my help solely because I don't want you alerting the godking's people and interfering with my plan," Jiang Chen said deliberately. "However, you have to tell me what I can do for you."

"You still want me to tell you my secrets, don't you? When all is said and done, you're just tricking me into talking!"

Jiang Chen smiled. "I swear to the heavens that no matter what you're after, I won't do anything to undermine you, and I'll keep your secrets! If I go back on my oath, may the heavens smite me. Is that good enough for you?"

A heavenly oath was an insurance as good as any.

Han Shuang's expression relaxed in an instant. She considered Jiang Chen carefully, obviously bewildered by his action. The man offered to help her for nothing in return and had even sworn an oath!

The fact that he'd made such compromises in order to offer her his help meant that he was planning something big as well. Otherwise, there was no reason to go to such trouble.

Han Shuang smiled. "This seat has underestimated the strength of your conviction, Elder Zhen. You've made concession after concession. You're after something just as big, aren't you? Am I wrong to make such an assumption?"

"You're not wrong," Jiang Chen said calmly. "What I'm after is equally important to me."

"Why don't we clear the air and share our plans? Perhaps we'll come up with a win-win solution." Han Shuang was much more relaxed once she knew Jiang Chen didn't mean her any harm.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "My plan would be considered outrageous by most. I worry that you might faint with fright if I tell you about it."

"Oh?" Han Shuang chuckled. "What a coincidence. The same is true of my plan. Many may faint if they hear about it too. We're both doing something equally outrageous, aren't we?"

Jiang Chen paused. He'd underestimated the sect head.

It was certainly interesting to butt heads with someone like her. He could tell that Han Shuang held no ill intentions against him, despite having her own agenda.

As long as their plans didn't interfere with one another, they could make things work.

Han Shuang crossed her legs and looked at Jiang Chen with a lazy look. "I think you've made a good point, Elder Zhen. I can swear to keep your plan a secret as well. Whatever you're planning, we'll give each other room to execute our respective plans. When the situation calls for it, we may even work together."

There was a reason that the woman had become the sect head of the Fiendstar Sect and gained a foothold in such a short amount of time.

Jiang Chen considered the viability of a collaboration instead of immediately turning her down.

If Han Shuang turned out to be an unreliable ally, his final plan would be to capture her or even take her out. He could then find an excuse to take over the Fiendstar Sect.

He was sure that he'd be able to do that much without implicating himself. He'd still be able to attend the godking conference then.

Jiang Chen smiled leisurely. "Alright, why don't you go first? Once I make sure you haven't lied about your plan, I'll consider letting you in on mine."

"Why should I go first?" Han Shuang pouted unhappily.

"Ladies first," Jiang Chen responded with a smile.

"Then I should be the first to listen to your plan, not the first to talk." Han Shuang could be unreasonable as well.

Jiang Chen knocked on the table with his knuckle and cracked a strange smile. "Although you've considered almost everything, Sectmistress Han, there's one important thing you've neglected."

Han Shuang paused. "What?"

"Have you considered the situation you're in?" Jiang Chen grinned. "You're in my residence. There are a thousand ways for me to take you out and take over as the sect head. You aren't going to force this subordinate's hand, are you?"

Han Shuang's expression turned steely for a brief moment before she put on a bright smile. "Now that you've reminded me, aren't you afraid that I'll just kill you? My sect has a spot here now. I can get rid of you now that you've served your purpose."

"The same is true for you," Jiang Chen said coolly. "This subordinate stands a better chance of taking you out than the other way around."

"Hmph! You're much too confident. Your uncle isn't here. I can summon Elders Ge and Xu to help me take you out. Will you be as confident then?"

Jiang Chen snorted. "You're really bad at threatening people, Sectmistress. Listen to yourself. Are you really trying to intimidate me by bringing up those two clowns?"

Elders Ge and Xu?

They were as threatening as flies in Jiang Chen's eyes.

"I don't know where your confidence comes from, Elder Zhen, but do you think you and your uncle are the only ones who have been hiding their true power?" Han Shuang asked solemnly. "Do you take me for easy prey?"

Jiang Chen smiled lazily. "We know you've been hiding your power, Sectmistress, but let me give you a friendly reminder: Even if you're a ninth level god, you'll still lose this fight. Do you believe me?"

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Chapter 2346: Han Shuang Capitulates

Even a ninth level god would lose?

The threat rang unpleasantly in Han Shuang's ears. Kid, way to trumpet your own horn. What are you, a godking? Are ninth level gods a joke to you?

She frowned, a little enraged. "Elder Zhen Junior, you look honest at first glance, but you're quite the braggart!"

"Haha, do you think I'm blowing hot air?"

"Aren't you?" retorted the annoyed Han Shuang.

"Why don't we bet on it?" Jiang Chen's smile was harmless, but it was a particularly irksome sight for Han Shuang.

"On what?" she asked, unwilling to back down.

"I bet you can't walk out of my residence." Jiang Chen smiled.

"Leave this place?" She looked around in contempt. "There's barely any defenses. This sectmistress can casually stroll outside."

The residence was a temporary one, so Jiang Chen hadn't arranged for too many mechanisms. He wanted to stay inconspicuous, after all.

In any case, defenses mattered little given his current strength and the presence of the four beasts. At their level, they could sense anybody in the vicinity.

Not to mention, the Goldbiter Rats had made the place their lair. Would-be trespassers would be in for a world of hurt.

"You have nothing to lose then, no?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

"Fine, why not! What's at stake? If I win, you'll spill whatever you're scheming, no lies or omissions allowed. Do you dare?" Han Shuang roared with a fierce scowl.

"Why wouldn't I? Let's spit on it!" Her fiery temper seemed to have infected the young lord. "What if you lose?"

"Same thing, I'll spill the beans. May the heavens strike me dead if I hide anything!" She sounded absolutely confident in her victory.

"Great!" The young lord slapped his thigh. "It's so decided, Sectmistress. No matter the outcome, the winner will keep quiet and protect the other's secrets. No betrayal, no interference, and absolutely no shoving a spoke in the other's wheel. That's my bottom line. Are you up to it?"

Those were the very conditions Han Shuang was about to suggest.

"Great, it's agreed! I was about to say the same thing." The young man had incited her instinctive competitiveness.

She brimmed with palpable self-assurance. She'd gone over her plan of action many times in her mind. There was nothing that could stop her from setting foot outside.

Perhaps Elder Zhen Junior was hiding his strength, but even if he were at the ninth level, her victory would still be unquestionable!

They agreed on the terms and swore an oath to honor their pledge.

Forestalling Jiang Chen, Han Shuang smiled wickedly. "Elder Zhen, you're the one to initiate the wager, so you'll have to own up when you lose."

Jiang Chen smiled. "Right back at you. Don't renege on your words."

"Cut the chitchat. When can we begin?" asked the sectmistress calmly.

"Right now." Jiang Chen sounded indifferent, as if he was merely a bystander.

The sectmistress cared little about whatever he was plotting. Her figure moved, instantly turning into an afterimage shooting outside. At the same time, an item appeared in her hand.

It was a treasure in the form of a flying shuttle. It specialized against restrictions and was called the Skybreaking Spindle. It could locate the weak spots in restrictions and find a gap for its owner to escape through.

Her confidence was based on the presence of this item, but she hadn't accounted for the possibility Jiang Chen wouldn't use restrictions at all. Instead, he resorted to the four sacred beasts' formation.

Currently, the beasts had deployed their domain around him. Frankly speaking, after assimilating their bloodlines, he himself could conjure a field rivaling theirs. When the two domains combined into one, even a godking would struggle to break free of its confines, to say nothing of Han Shuang.

The sectmistress quickly recognized the spatial distortion occurring all around her. The tiny residence was suddenly filled with the boundless emptiness of the universe. She found herself unable to move amidst this primordial chaos. She could no longer spot the exit. How was she supposed to leave?

But she refused to admit defeat. The Skybreaking Spindle flew out of her hand, trying to scout out a weakness. It morphed into a dim ball of light and circled the air a couple times, but a terrifying force soon snuffed it out, as if a giant hand had come out of nowhere and snatched it away.

Han Shuang turned ashen from shock. The shuttle was the treasure she was proudest of. To think it'd be so easily rendered useless!

This was simply a nightmare.

Without her treasure's guidance, her efforts proved futile. Her every gesture became increasingly strenuous as the restriction increased in power. Near the end, she couldn't even take a single step forward.

Jiang Chen's calm voice reached her ears. "Sectmistress, please forgive me this offense. Are you going to persist? Or should we sit down and have a nice chat?"

The voice made her mad and anxious at the same time.

"Kid, if you're that strong, why don't you simply kill me? Why leave a witness?"

She'd lashed out in anger, but the possibility was worrisome nonetheless. Elder Zhen Junior didn't seem the type to murder her in cold blood, but circumstances did make the man.

Jiang Chen sighed softly. "I have at least a hundred ways to make you disappear without a trace. Why would I go through all this hassle?"

She'd definitely have snorted in derision a few moments ago, but he'd now established his credentials. Though still stubborn, she couldn't help but admit it'd be a breeze for him to kill her.

"Ai. I've underestimated you, it seems. Fine, this is your win! Let me out, I yield!" She finally lowered her proud head.

The pressure around her lifted as soon as her voice fell. Elder Zhen Junior could control this power at will, it seemed.

It was a horrendous realization. Was he a monster? She glared at him with a mixture of annoyance, awkwardness, and powerlessness.

"Alright, what do you want to know? Just ask, I'll answer!" Although angry, she was a woman of her word. She knew no resistance would avail. She was clearly at his mercy.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 2347: Reminiscing The Celestial Emperor

Despite her capitulation, Jiang Chen didn't rub it in.

"Sectmistress, let me ask again. Why so fascinates you about the lake's forbidden grounds?" He went back to his original question.

Han Shuang stared calmly back. "Elder Zhen Junior, you've sworn not to share our conversation with a third party or divulge my secrets. You can't obstruct me in any shape or form, correct?"

"Indeed!" Jiang Chen nodded solemnly. "Don't worry, my word is my bond."

"What do you know about the Heavenly Crimson Lake?" asked the sectmistress quietly.

"Isn't it but a volcanic lake? Only, it's dense in fire elements, so it's beneficial for cultivation. Nothing else of note comes to mind." That was the extent of his knowledge.

"Heh, so you don't know all that much about it." Han Shuang smirked.

"Is there a secret I'm unaware of?" Jiang Chen inquired. It didn't seem all that possible, given the considerable information at his disposal. Wouldn't that imply the tidbit had been unknown even to his father back then?

Han Shuang nodded lightly. Though a little hesitant, she added, "Elder Zhen, do you remember when we talked about the endless dance of celestial emperors?"

Jiang Chen naturally recalled that discussion. It had taken place before the competition.

"I do. If memory serves correctly, you said you hoped for a strong celestial emperor to take over Taiyuan Plane. Is that what you're referring to?"

"Exactly," she emphasized with a heavy nod. "Elder Zhen Junior, how long did you stay in Taiyuan Plane before?"

It seemed irrelevant to the topic at hand, yet the young lord didn't rush her. Instead, he answered thoughtfully, "Not all that long. I've been wandering on foreign soil for most of my life."

"And why did you stay away? Isn't it because Taiyuan is too much of a mess?" she continued

Jiang Chen smiled. "You can put it that way. A new celestial emperor's always popping out of nowhere, so who knows what tomorrow will bring?"

Han Shuang eased off a little, carefully gauging him as she slowly spoke. "It seems we're of one mind on this matter. I'm sure most cultivators on Taiyuan Plane share our opinion."

"Hm?"

"We all hope to find stability, to see a strong emperor rule for a long time. It's the only way to restore order and reestablish the law. We urgently need peace and justice, but you can see the current situation as clearly as me.

"Sects like White Drake run amok with no fear of consequences, but it's nothing compared to the unrest in the other regions. It's a dog eat dog world out there. Far from the utopia the legends speak of, we're living in a waking nightmare. Such a world will be abandoned sooner or later by the supreme dao!"

Han Shuang was so distraught that she'd sprung to her feet.

"You're right on the money, Sectmistress, but what does it have to do with a trivial lake?"

"A lot!" Han Shuang almost shouted.

"Ah? Why can't I see it? Please do share." Jiang Chen chuckled.

"Let's put that aside for now and go back to the Taiyuan Plane. There are currently a mere fifty-something godkings in existence, compared to more than a hundred and eight before the collapse of order. After hundreds of millennia, Taiyuan's chaos is starting to take its toll on the fabric of its being. More than half its strength has been eroded away, and this disaster is still ongoing!"

She was beside herself with anger. "I wasn't born during the initial coup, but I've studied that piece of history. After someone deliberately toppled Celestial Emperor Taiyuan's reign, the plane's been on a continuous decline. Today, we're staring right into the abyss of its destruction."

Her reasoning was sound enough, but these matters seemed far too distant from someone of her status and cultivation.

"Sectmistress, what are you trying to say?" His sharp eyes bore into her.

"My point is, no following eras can compare to Celestial Emperor Taiyuan's reign. Then why don't we simply go back? Why not reinstate him? He's the only godking acknowledged by creation, the only one the people can adhere to.

"In the past, the godkings thought he'd transgressed the will of the heavens by refining the Sun Moon Pill and tampering with the preordained cycle of life and death. That's why, instigated by someone, they all called for his destitution and imprisonment. The result? Even with him gone, Taiyuan continues to deteriorate. It's proof he's not the one bringing misfortune to our world. Rather, it's the knave acting behind the scenes!"

Throwing caution to the wind, Han Shuang's angry tirade seemed neverending.

This sectmistress turns out to be my father's staunch supporter? How unexpected.

Jiang Chen smiled gently. "Celestial Emperor Taiyuan is a figure from an age long gone. It's quite a surprise to see people still yearning for his return to this day."

"Elder Zhen Junior, do you think I'm the only one to think so? Wrong! You can ask around. Out of ten people, at least seven or eight will admit that his era was Taiyuan's golden age. Whether or not they've witnessed it in person, every cultivator pines for that glorious past. Taiyuan was at its most powerful and prosperous back then!"

As she'd said, it was an irrefutable truth that Taiyuan had been weakening step by step after the celestial emperor's removal.

"What? Elder Zhen Junior, do you disagree?" Eyes blazing, the little spitfire seemed ready to fight to the death if he dared say yes.

Jiang Chen sighed. "I don't. But, my dear lady, other than grumbling about it, what can people like us do?"

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

Chapter 2348: Frightful to the Ear

Han Shuang laughed coldly.

"What, should we all turn a blind eye just because there are those more powerful than us? Taiyuan would be doomed beyond redemption then. No, each of us is responsible for the fate of our world!"

"And you think you can turn the situation around, Sectmistress? The celestial emperor must be in a tight spot. How is he going to stage a return? Are you going to make it happen? If memory serves, some godkings have questioned his deposition in the past. You're not the first to suggest his return. But what became of them? They've all disappeared without a trace. The villain has an obvious stranglehold on Taiyuan and won't tolerate dissenting voices!" Jiang Chen played devil's advocate to sound out her intentions.

"Hmph! Are we supposed to stay afraid of them forever? Should we lie down and wait for death? They can hide as deeply as they want, but they've got to expose themselves before Taiyuan Plane's irredeemable plunge into the abyss."

The more she spoke, the more baffled the young lord became. That sort of drive wouldn't have been out of place in a godking, but her diatribe seemed a little odd coming from one so young.

Rather than rushing to answer, he took the time to recover his bearings.

Is she trying to pull the wool over my eyes?

But he immediately discarded this possibility. It didn't hold upon closer examination. She shouldn't be aware of his identity, for one.

So he took a deep breath and slowly responded, "Sectmistress, you favor Celestial Emperor Taiyuan's return. Do I follow so far?"

"Yes," Han Shuang admitted surprisingly fast.

"But don't you realize how improbable it is? First of all, do you know where he's imprisoned? Second, is his strength still there? Third, can you save him? Fourth, even if you can, will the godkings offer their unswerving support?"

"Hmph, everyone knows he's locked in the Divine Prison of Eternity. That's basic knowledge.

“Second, it’s not so easy to deprive a celestial emperor of his strength. You can seal him, but you can’t kill him outright, because he possesses the creation token and is protected by the universe. Unless the supreme dao takes the symbol back, no godking can kill him!

“Third, freeing him will be difficult, but there are many kindred spirits working toward that goal, even if you’re not aware of them.

“Fourth, it’s obvious everyone would rather have Celestial Emperor Taiyuan back, rather than live in this constant atmosphere of terror and oppression imposed by the mastermind!

“Furthermore, His Majesty surely knows our culprit’s identity and will expose them given the opportunity.”

“Does he now?” Jiang Chen asked, taken aback.

“Of course.” Han Shuang nodded with conviction.

“Then why hasn’t he been silenced yet?” Jiang Chen frowned.

“I already told you. It’s impossible, as long as he’s acknowledged by the supreme dao. Plus, the Divine Prison of Eternity isn’t a place you can enter at will. An assassination attempt would expose the culprit’s identity.”

It was a well-made point the young lord hadn’t thought of.

He stayed silent for a long moment, then looked at the sectmistress. “In that case, what’s the relation between the Heavenly Crimson Lake and his rescue?”

Han Shuang softly said, “You’re finally touching upon the crux of the matter.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Divine Prison of Eternity is its own separate world. It’s formed by the elements of nature and bears the principles of the heavenly planes. To enter, one has to undo a seal. But the celestial emperor’s seal is reportedly jointly managed by seven godkings. A veto from a single one of them makes entry impossible. But there’s a more drastic method. We can destroy the prison’s foundations! Then the celestial emperor will be able to escape!”

“The prison’s foundations?” Jiang Chen repeated, stupefied.

“Correct!” Han Shuang nodded. “The five elements constitute the prison’s origins. As it happens, there are five lesser worlds at the edge of Taiyuan Plane. Crimsonwaters is one of them, and it serves as one of the prison’s foundations.”

“Five lesser worlds?” This revelation shook Jiang Chen. He wasn’t entirely convinced yet, but this didn’t sound like total fabrication.

“Sectmistress, is this pure speculation? Or is there evidence?” A critical difference lay therein.

“Nonsense, of course there is! Elder Zhen Junior, I swear I speak the absolute truth. There’s no need for you to doubt me.” Han Shuang firmly assured.

“Heh, Sectmistress, not that I’m calling you into question, but how did you come to learn this kind of classified information?” He finally voiced his doubts.

Han Shuang replied, “Of course I have my sources. I also have the backing of titled godkings. Don’t ask me who they are, my lips are sealed.”

Shaken, Jiang Chen replied, “Godkings moving behind the scenes? Do you lot know the price of failure?”

“Of course! Just like for the celestial emperor’s other supporters, it’ll be the end of the road for every conspirator, from the godkings down to the small fry.”

“Aren’t you afraid?” Jiang Chen asked somberly.

“We wouldn’t have joined up if we were. Everyone’s aware of the risks involved. Not to mention, we’ll all perish with Taiyuan Plane at this rate. Life won’t be rosy for anyone. We’re not simply fighting for our world, but also for ourselves!”

Her eyes were crystalline clear. Instead of her usual bold and fierce temper, she simply looked ready to die for her cause.

Jiang Chen was moved beyond words. If true, this revelation would be of utmost importance.

“Five lesser words, five origin points. That entails at least five groups on the ground. Too many are involved. The plan will crash and burn at the first mistake from a single one of you,” he said with a sigh.

“You’re right. That’s why we’ve made precise calculations beforehand in order to maximize our chances. We trust in our success, because Taiyuan Plane’s karma isn’t depleted yet. It means Celestial Emperor Taiyuan’s fortunes aren’t over yet!”

Jiang Chen fell silent. He couldn’t help but admire her. Behind the facade of a strong, lively woman, she hid a resolve of steel.

Whether she’d be ultimately crowned with success or not, her audacity in the face of adversity deserved all the admiration in the world.

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

Chapter 2349: A Common Goal

There was a strange tension in the air.

Han Shuang’s heart pounded. She’d been forced to open up about her secrets. The only thing she could do now was to wait for Elder Zhen’s response.

She’d be doomed if Elder Zhen had something to do with the villain responsible for the chaos, and so would her plans. Fortunately, the godkings pulling the strings would remain in the dark. Her demise would disrupt the overall plan, but the others would be safe.

Finally, Jiang Chen laughed and applauded. “This subordinate would like to express my deepest respects, Sectmistress. Whether your plan succeeds or not, you’ve won my admiration. Don’t worry. I’ll do all I can to help you. It’ll indeed be a wondrous feat for you to rescue Celestial Emperor Taiyuan.”

Han Shuang’s face lit up. “Are you telling me the truth, Elder Zhen?”

"I told you that I wanted a capable celestial emperor to rule over Taiyuan," Jiang Chen responded solemnly. "Based on what you've said, Celestial Emperor Taiyuan is indeed the most suitable candidate."

"That's right. I said that roughly eighty percent of the public nurses the same belief. They've been simply too scared to take a stand under the circumstances."

Jiang Chen nodded. "Are the prison foundations hidden within the forbidden grounds of the Heavenly Crimson Lake?"

"Yes, one's at the bottom of the lake, where a volcano lies buried. Within the volcano is a spirit vein, one of the five connected to the Divine Prison of Eternity. We don't have to destroy all five of them. Destroying just three will compromise the prison's structure. Five, and His Majesty will be able to stroll right out."

"That's right. One spirit vein destroyed will impact the prison. Two will undermine its foundations. Three will damage its structure. Four will destroy eighty percent of the architecture. Five will collapse it all."

"I didn't expect you to be so knowledgeable!" Han Shuang's face lit up.

"Are you confident that you'll be able to enter the volcano, Sectmistress?"

"Of course. The godkings in charge have been preparing for tens of thousands of years, picking the right people and laying the groundwork. I'm the one chosen to deal with the spirit vein in Heavenly Crimson Lake!" Han Shuang burst with pride. She clearly felt it a great honor to be entrusted with this mission.

"The fact that there are godkings behind the scenes makes the plan more viable. They must have gifted you with godking-level treasures, which should make it easy for you to destroy the spirit vein."

"However, it won't be as easy to sneak into the volcano from the Heavenly Crimson Lake."

"Hmph, we've considered that as well. Don't worry. The only problem is how I'm going to enter the forbidden grounds without alerting anyone. You know how heavy the godking's guard is on the place? Even I have trouble sneaking in."

That was what frustrated her the most.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "I told you I can help. It may be difficult for you, but not for me."

"Oh?" Han Shuang's eyes lit up with curiosity.

Jiang Chen didn't respond immediately. "When do you plan to sneak in, Sectmistress?"

"During the godking conference. That's when defenses will be the weakest since Godking Crimsonwaters won't be around."

"Haha, that's not the full story, is it?" Jiang Chen smiled. "It's also the best time for you to rescue Celestial Emperor Taiyuan and make his presence known. The godkings behind the rescue plan will be there to support the Celestial Emperor, won't they?"

Han Shuang rolled her eyes. "Aren't you clever. I can't hide anything from you, can I?"

"This is undeniably a fine plan. However, there's no guarantee that it'll work. I worry that after His Majesty is rescued, the number of godkings who are brave enough to take a stand will still be limited."

"You underestimate their wisdom. Most godkings support the Celestial Emperor. They simply dare not show their support openly, but his return will give them the confidence to do so. I'm sure plenty of them will take a stand then."

"Are you sure?"

"I am. We know Taiyuan Plane and how the godkings think. They hate the current climate more than anyone. Their numbers drop continuously, coupled with an overall decline in the plane. If nothing is done, doom will be the only thing written in our future. The godkings will either die or become wandering ghosts. That's not something anyone would want, is it?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "The world was a better place when Celestial Emperor Taiyuan sat on the throne."

"That's right. Celestial Emperor Taiyuan was always a wise leader. The only mistake he ever made is refining the Sun Moon Pill. Even that was an act out of his love for his son, and he's willing to hold himself accountable for it. He's miles better than whoever is responsible for his fall!"

Han Shuang struck a chord in Jiang Chen's heart. "Well said! Celestial Emperor Taiyuan is the man I respect the most in my entire life. I'll be the first to support his return to power!"

His enthusiasm pleased Han Shuang.

"Then it seems our goals are in line, Elder Zhen."

Jiang Chen nodded with a smile. "Indeed, what we want are exactly the same!"

"Exactly the same? Are you going to the godking conference in order to rescue His Majesty?" Han Shuang blinked curiously.

It suddenly dawned on her how powerful the young elder must be. There must be a good reason for a mysterious figure like him to join the Fiendstar Sect.

Jiang Chen smiled. "Allow me to keep that a secret at the moment, but I can tell you that we share a common goal, and we're working toward the same thing. Let us execute our plans respectively, and our paths will end up crossing!"

Han Shuang nodded without hesitation. "Alright, I'll stop asking. I did lose the bet. Now I realize you're more powerful than I am, Elder Zhen. The domain you've created to trap me must be at godking level. Are you... a godking senior?"

Jiang Chen shook his head and answered slowly, "I'll become one sooner or later. Although I'm not yet one, I don't fear any regular godkings."

He wasn't exaggerating. With the four sacred beasts at his side, an average godking wouldn't be much of a problem.

With the progress he'd made in assimilating bloodlines, his cultivation had reached astounding heights, making him a half-step godking. He would cross the threshold soon.

Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

Chapter 2350: A Godking's Suspicions

Han Shuang's disclosure was an immense relief for Jiang Chen. Not only would she not jeopardize his own plans, her operations might be hugely beneficial for him instead. It was more than he'd bargained for, especially if her efforts could come to fruition.

Talk about opportune timing!

He no longer needed to worry about his father's rescue. He could leave that to her group while he tackled the rest. At the appointed time, he'd settle the score at the godking conference together with his father.

He felt a sudden surge of confidence. Behind Han Shuang's arrangements, there were godkings pulling the strings.

It would seem that many looked fondly on Taiyuan's days of glory and strove to secretly improve their lot!

Once his father was freed, he wouldn't lack for popular support. With the masses behind him, the impossible would be possible.

Why had he been overthrown back in the day? Because his subjects had turned their backs on him after refining the Sun Moon Pill. They felt he'd gone against heaven's will.

A little incitement had been all the push needed to convince them such an outrage against the heavens couldn't go unpunished. Propaganda spiralled out of control and ultimately gave birth to the mayhem of today.

One man alone couldn't fight against the tide. That sort of momentum was impossible to stop.

But the dynamics had changed since then. Celestial Emperor Taiyuan had been punished for a long, long time. Had his realm taken a turn for the better? No, far from it.

Perceptive people had begun to wonder whether they'd erred. Perhaps the coup had been a giant misunderstanding or even mistake.

The tide of public opinion slowly changed its tune.

Many moons later, everyone could easily weigh the greater world's current misery against its past self. Without question, they were now at least ten times worse off in every aspect.

Strength, environment, general security, and fortunes... the contrast was painfully obvious.

Everything was relative. A side by side comparison made it all the more obvious which was better and which was worse.

In comparison, Celestial Emperor Taiyuan's reign had simply been heaven on earth!

In hindsight, what were his shortcomings? Refining the Sun Moon Pill? So that might have been a little questionable, what else?

Though he had his own convictions and own approach to things, no one could deny he'd developed the plane's strength and wealth. The awe he inspired extended all the way to nearby territories, dissuading visits from planar raiders. No neighboring celestial emperor dared trifle with him.

As a result, the voices favoring him became increasingly loud.

It was the sort of era that had spawned Han Shuang and her compatriots, driving them to change their destinies with their own hands.

Armed with Jiang Chen's promise, the sectmistress abided by her oath and stopped nosing around the lake's forbidden grounds.

Why would she, when he'd assured her he'd divert attention away from her and help her easily sneak inside the lake's secret realm?

She didn't know what secret method Elder Zhen Junior was hiding, but this unfathomably deep man would certainly make good on his promise.

One day, she came to tell him, "Elder Zhen Junior, I think Godking Crimsonwaters is keeping an eye on me."

For the young lord, the news was a bolt from the blue.

"How so?" he asked, a little perturbed.

"He sent for me today and asked many questions. I think he was testing me."

"What did you tell him?"

"Nothing, I kept up my pretense. But I have the nagging feeling I might have slipped somewhere."

"People say he's a fair ruler who wants to do right by his subjects. Even if he's noticed something, shouldn't he continue to look the other way? Unless he's related to the villain, or is the villain himself."

"That seems improbable," replied Han Shuang.

"Well, how many godkings know about the secret of the five foundations?"

"To be honest, His Majesty Taiyuan used to be the only one. Then he once mentioned it to a godking on purpose. That's why this senior is trying to engineer his rescue. No one else should be aware of it," Han Shuang asserted with utter confidence.

The celestial emperor surely would've picked a trustworthy figure to confide in. Such an existence was bound to be formidable.

After all, not even his own son had been privy to the information. The emperor had kept it under wraps, only clueing in those he'd absolutely needed to. The less in the know, the safer his secrets.

The meticulousness of his arrangements was truly exquisite.

Jiang Chen murmured, "Well, if only one godking is in the know, there's no need to be overly cautious. Lord Crimsonwaters might suspect you of plotting something, but he won't know the specifics."

His advice alleviated Han Shuang's fears. As an impartial bystander, he had a broader and more level-headed perspective.

"You're right, my anxiety is groundless. It's fortunate I kept my wits about me and wasn't thrown too much off my game."

Jiang Chen smiled. "But you should be careful nonetheless. Don't go near the lake unless it's necessary. I told you, I'll get you into the secret realm. Trust me, I can do it. There will be no complications."

Seeing his sincerity and his gravitas, the sectmistress agreed with a nod. "I'll believe you this once. For the next few decades, I'll lie low and stick to cultivation."

A voice outside suddenly interrupted them.

"Is Fiendstar's Elder Zhen Junior present? You're hereby summoned by Lord Crimsonwaters. Please report to the godking mansion as soon as possible!"

Jiang Chen and Han Shuang looked at one another, a little aghast.

A summons?

Han Shuang grimaced, but the young lord remained unflappable. "It's fine. I'll go, it's a good opportunity to see where he stands!"

At his current level, he wasn't afraid of the godking. In fact, with the assistance of the four sacred beasts, he might have the upper hand in strength, so he ventured fearlessly into the belly of the beast.