

Three Realms 271

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

Chapter 271: A Good Opportunity to Extort Someone

Jiang Chen completely ignored whatever deal Zhou Yi and Iron Dazhi were striking beneath him. His only thought now was to send both of them on their way.

His arrows were about to be loosed with that thought.

A soft call sounded in the air at this moment, "Jiang Chen, hold!"

This voice rumbled and spread through the air like an enormous drum or great bell.

Hmm?

Jiang Chen's ears twitched as the God's Eye looked into the distance, he saw a green light shoot out of the empty air and the Lesser Dragon appeared, carrying Ye Chonglou.

If it'd been anyone else, even the king of the Skyl Laurel Kingdom, Jiang Chen wouldn't have even creased his brow when landing a killing blow.

Ye Chonglou was the only exception.

Jiang Chen could deny face to anyone within the kingdom, but he had to show the old tutor some face.

He clasped his fingers on the bowstring and he didn't fire the arrows, but he didn't put the arrows away either.

The Swordbird army beneath him also held their positions and didn't relax their guard.

"Lordmaster, what are you doing here?" Jiang Chen hadn't known that the old tutor had hurried from the sect. He thought that the old man had come from his manor.

The old tutor smiled wryly, "I heard from sources within the sect that the Iron family secretly sent people to the capital to cause some trouble when I wasn't here. I guessed that they might be coming for you and so I hastened back. I hadn't thought..."

The old tutor was also greatly shocked. He'd hurried back because he'd been afraid that something would happen to Jiang Chen.

What hadn't occurred to him was that nothing would be wrong with Jiang Chen, he wasn't even in any danger.

The ones that were actually in danger was the so-called genius of the sect, Iron Dazhi!

The old tutor almost didn't believe his eyes when he saw the scene playing out in front of him.

He knew that Jiang Chen was strong and possessed great potential. But once he truly saw Jiang Chen's methods, he realized that he'd still underestimated this young man.

Even though he'd given this young man high praise before, it was still an underestimation in the end.

An earth spirit realm genius at the fifth level, a fourth level spirit realm, and a bunch of spirit realm disciples had been forced into desperate circumstances in front of the Jiang manor doors and they could be annihilated at any time!

If he hadn't seen this with his own eyes, the old tutor would've never believed it.

However, seeing was believing.

He suppressed the great waves of shock in his heart and he arrived at the top of the formation. His gaze was remote as he looked at Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi, trapped like animals within the formation.

Zhou Yi's face was bitter as he called out weakly, "Lordmaster Ye..."

"Tsk tsk. And here I thought you sect disciples all had your eyes on the top of your heads and thought nothing of an old man like me. You know of me?"

Zhou Yi knew that the old tutor was being contrary and he said with an even uglier expression, "The honored tutor's great reputation is known within and outside the sect like thunder piercing our ears."

"Is that so?" The old tutor snorted slightly. "Thunder piercing your ears? I think not! This old man has once said that I view Jiang Chen as a nephew. Whoever moves against him is acting against me. I'll bet you didn't pay any heed to those words at all and treated them like breeze past your ears?"

"We wouldn't dare... wouldn't dare at all!" Zhou Yi laughed dryly. "We've come to investigate the death of the head of the Northern Palace. We didn't think that a conflict would arise to this point."

"So that means I'm faulting you unnecessarily?" The old tutor's tone grew cold.

"No no, when it comes down to it, we were in the wrong as well. We were too impulsive and we didn't communicate properly with Jiang Chen." One had to lower their heads when they were beneath someone else's roof.

"Coward!" Ye Chonglou's eyes suddenly widened as he hectored, "How could the vaunted Precious Tree Sect have produced such a coward as you? Do you think I'm senile?! Speaking lies with your eyes wide open? Investigating the death of the Northern Palace head? What a righteous excuse. Don't think that I don't know that you made use of the gap in which I visited the sect to come to the capital. You just hadn't thought that your training was inferior to Jiang Chen's and you smashed your foot with your own rock."

Zhou Yi was speechless.

He knew that if he argued any further now, he would only be irritating Ye Chonglou.

He'd been afraid of Ye Chonglou's appearing before, but now, he faintly felt that perhaps the tutor's appearance wasn't a bad thing.

They'd been afraid before because they felt that they were sure to win and so, they wanted to make it a quick battle, avoiding Ye Chonglou's attentions.

Now that Ye Chonglou had appeared, he felt that there may be a trace of hope in an otherwise hopeless situation instead.

If Ye Chonglou hadn't told Jiang Chen to stay his hand just now, that arrow would've flown and then he and Iron Dazhi would already be dead corpses at the scene.

"Lordmaster, these bastards have no respect for anyone! If we don't take them down a notch, they'll become even more arrogant!"

Jiang Chen's body shot over, the killing intent on his face was completely unabated.

Zhou Yi shivered. He truly was afraid of Jiang Chen at this moment. He was even more afraid that the old tutor would wash his hands of this matter and he would encourage Jiang Chen to destroy them.

"Jiang Chen, it's easy enough to kill them, but there are too many characters like them in the sects. You wouldn't be able to kill all of them."

Ye Chonglou suddenly used his consciousness to carry his words to Jiang Chen, "And now that the great selection is nigh, you'd make the esteemed elder Iron Long of the Precious Tree Sect take action himself if you killed them. I'm not afraid of him, but if you kill his grandson, he will undoubtedly use all the power available to him to suppress you. He may even lay various traps for you in the great selection, making it impossible for you to guard against him!"

Jiang Chen's brow arched as he responded in the same way, "If I don't kill Iron Dazhi, the Iron family will still not let me off the hook. That Iron Dazhi possess a scorpion's mindset. It would be letting the tiger return to the mountain if I let him go."

"Haha, Jiang Chen, Iron Dazhi and Iron Cai will certainly make trouble for you if you let him go, but at least Iron Long won't be alarmed. Iron Can and Iron Dazhi have limited power, and they won't have much authority if they try to set traps for you in the great selection."

The old tutor privately persuaded him, "Of course, the rise of a genius shouldn't be hampered by any sort of suppression. You should kill when you should, this is the true meaning of martial dao. However, this old man feels that it would be a prime opportunity if you didn't kill them."

"Opportunity?" Jiang Chen started.

"Yes, opportunity. The best opportunity to extort a good sum from the Iron family!" The old tutor revealed a trace of a sly smile.

Extort?

Jiang Chen's thoughts raced as he immediately understood the old tutor's meaning.

A trace of a smile also appeared at Jiang Chen's lips at that moment. Extorting them! That was a good suggestion.

He had been fretting over the sources of his spirit medicine ingredients lately.

Although Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi were earth spirit realm practitioners, with Jiang Chen's current level of training, he didn't need to fear their revenge at all in any situations.

He could kill them whenever he wanted to.

If they dared take revenge during the great selection, Jiang Chen had a lot of methods a-plenty to destroy them.

If he killed them now, he'd be satisfied alright, but apart from furiously obtaining revenge, there didn't seem to be any other gains to this.

Jiang Chen was a practical man. He was indeed tempted when he heard the lordmaster's suggestion.

That's right, why not make use of this opportunity to thoroughly extort the Iron family?

These guys were in his hands, he had more than enough ability to barter with the Iron family with the old tutor at his back. Not to mention, he had sixteen law enforcement disciples on the ground beneath him.

All of them had been injured, but they weren't not dead.

Since they were still alive, he could ransom all of them.

"Jiang Chen, Iron Long is the first of the esteemed elders, and the Iron family is one of the two largest families in the sect. Their history is illustrious and their foundations are rich, they'll have a lot of treasure. Don't be too polite, ask for a king's ransom. You hold their people hostage and so it's the Iron family who will be anxious. You're also in the right this time. Don't let them go if the family doesn't agree to your terms. The sect head will also have an excuse to make trouble for the Iron family if this travels up the chain to him."

The old tutor detailed out the plan of attack in their surreptitious conversation.

Jiang Chen knew a little bit about the internal schemes of the sect, and he knew that the inside of the sect wasn't quite as unified as it seemed. The two great families, the Xie and the Iron family, had always been covertly and openly fighting each other, controlling almost all of the sect's resources.

As one of the two great families, the Iron family possessed rich resources and he'd surely be able to extort a great deal out of them.

"Honored tutor, what place does this Iron Dazhi occupy in Iron Long's heart?" Jiang Chen asked.

"The direct grandson with extraordinary potential, what do you think his place is? He's being cultivated on the level of a Iron family's true disciple!"

A personal disciple was already quite something.

If one was a true disciple, then he would be raised as the heir apparent. Even though there could be more than one, when one made it as a true disciple, he would be one of the most valued pawns.

Jiang Chen knew what to do when he heard these words.

"Alright." Jiang Chen nodded and called out. "Iron Dazhi, if it wasn't for the lordmaster's benevolent heart today, you'd be hard pressed to escape certain death!"

Iron Dazhi's face was ashen. He never thought that he'd suffer such great humiliation today. He hadn't died not because those from the sect had come to rescue him, it was because Ye Chonglou had begged for mercy on his behalf!

One had to know that Ye Chonglou was one of the Iron family's most hated characters!

Snorting, Iron Dazhi laughed coldly in his heart. Ye Chonglou is still afraid of my grandfather, Iron Long. Otherwise, why would he have begged for mercy on my behalf?

He's afraid of getting caught and blamed for this!

Iron Dazhi smiled coldly when his thoughts travelled here, "Jiang Chen, don't you put on the ugly face of a victor. It's not yet determined who's a victor!"

This fellow was absolutely a cooked duck, a sharp tongue was the only thing tough about him now. He wanted to talk tough after seeing Jiang Chen's attitude seeming to soften and regain his pride.

Zhou Yi's face changed when he heard those words. Iron Dazhi you dumb f*ck! Why are you trying to regain face at a time like this?

Indeed, Jiang Chen's face grew cold and he started laughing coldly. "Not yet determined? Since that is the case, let's keep fighting until one of us is the only one alive!"

Zhou Yi hastened to call out, "Jiang Chen, we've already said that this is a misunderstanding. Let's not continue fighting?"

Iron Dazhi may have a tough lip, but he wasn't an idiot. When he saw that Jiang Chen's attitude hadn't actually seemed to soften, he didn't dare speak those useless tough words anymore.

"Misunderstanding?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Zhou Yi, do you think that you can happily gloss things over with just the use of 'misunderstanding'?"

"Then, what do you want to do?" Zhou Yi's heart sank. Did Jiang Chen want to keep on fighting?

"You can evade death, but you'll have to suffer in the future! I'm not a merciless person, but to release you unscathed today, what of my reputation then? You can leave, but you have to pay your ransom!"

"Ransom?" Zhou Yi started. "Jiang Chen, what do you mean by that?"

"You don't understand?" Jiang Chen's face chilled. "I don't care if you really don't understand or you're pretending not to understand. I'll say it one more time. Cough up the ransom if you want to leave. If the items aren't here within 24 hours, I'll start killing one person every fifteen minutes until they're all dead!"

To kill one person every fifteen minutes means that all 18 of them would be dead in four hours!

Zhou Yi panicked. Even the overweeningly arrogant Iron Dazhi's face darkened with horror.

Chapter 272: The Iron Family Panics

Deep within the Precious Tree Sect, Iron Can almost leapt up in anger and fear when he learned that Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi were being held at the Jiang manor.

He'd been the one who'd learned that Ye Chonglou was coming to the sect this time and had privately authorized Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi to go destroy Jiang Chen.

Who would've thought that they'd fail?!

And, the entire group of eighteen with two earth spirit realm practitioners had all fallen, without even the help of Ye Chonglou!

This news petrified Iron Can. He was well aware of Iron Dazhi's strength.

His nephew's potential on the world of martial dao was much, much higher than his. To put it frankly, Iron Dazhi's level of training would surpass his in another three years.

Therefore, he'd been greatly confident when Iron Dazhi took the field himself.

However, reality had once again slapped Iron Can in the face. Iron Dazhi had been taken and was held by Jiang Chen!

He'd even sent messengers telling Iron Can to bring ransom, or they'd be killed after 24 hours.

He'd start killing one every 15 minutes until none were left.

Iron Can almost spat out a mouthful of blood when he heard these words.

How long had it been since he'd last been threatened? When had anyone dared use such an attitude to talk to him, Iron Can?! Who had dared openly declare themselves enemies of the Iron family?

There were none within the sect, never mind a mere mundane kingdom.

But today, he'd just so run into one!

"Jiang Chen!!" A violent light shone in Iron Can's eyes as teeth cracked in his clenched jaw. He wanted to lead a thousand strong army right now to charge into the capital, raze the Jiang manor to the ground and slaughter anything that moved within.

However, reason told him that although this kind of thinking was pleasing, it was impossible to execute.

The head of the Precious Tree Sect, Xie Tianshu, would've surely received word of this, not to mention Ye Chonglou backing up Jiang Chen.

There was no reason for sect disciples to travel to an ordinary kingdom and harass its nobles, or surround their manor.

This was forbidden even for sect disciples.

Sect disciples could bluff and bluster or throw their weight around, but they had to observe the basic rules of conduct.

Of course, there were many instances in which they ignored the rules.

But that was under circumstances that no one would take them to task for.

Now, the sect head could bring trouble down on his head at any moment. Iron Can wouldn't be able to fabricate an excuse in their defense even if that old man Ye Chonglou came around asking questions.

Ye Chonglou was in the right with this matter. If it blew up in their faces, it was enough to make the Iron family limp away with a severe lack of face.

If the lawsuit was taken up with the sect head, Xie Tianshu would be sure to add fuel to the flames and pin the Iron family with a severe crime.

The worst thing was, he had authorized Iron Dazhi to head towards the capital and had privately deployed 16 law enforcement disciples!

This had originally been a private operation, and wouldn't have been a big deal had no one pursued it.

But once it blew up, this transformed into a thorny problem.

Putting aside the fact that he, Iron Can, had no right to deploy the law enforcement disciples, even if he did, he couldn't make them take action without a warrant.

Not only had he done the forbidden, but he'd lost them within the Jiang manor.

If he didn't save them all, the hall of law enforcement elder absolutely wouldn't let him have an easy time. He'd probably thoroughly offend this elder to the death.

The hall of law enforcement represented the laws of a sect, the discipline and its order.

Breaking the hall's laws was to disrupt the sect's order.

It was enough to completely tank his prospects if this matter grew any bigger.

Iron Can's mind was in a wild disarray, as chaotic as a slurry of porridge.

He had never thought that Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi would be captured in the Jiang manor, and had thought even less that Jiang Chen would try to openly swindle him.

The prisoners would die if he didn't bring the ransom.

This was Jiang Chen's final message to him.

Iron Can had no doubt that Jiang Chen would actually do so. The latter hadn't even creased his brow when killing someone.

Regarding the deaths of Lu Wuji and Yang Zhao, even Liu Chengfeng of the Northern Palace — Iron Can firmly believed even now that it was all at Jiang Chen's hands.

He was deeply conflicted as he knew that 12 hours wasn't a lot of time. He could no longer hesitate.

He grit his teeth; at this point, he could only call upon his thick face to find his esteemed elder father, Iron Long.

Iron Long had obviously just come back from a senior executive meeting as his face bore traces of weariness. When he saw his son's dispirited and distracted expression, he knew that his dear old son had caused trouble again.

Iron Long had already been a bit irritated on account of the meeting, and his exasperation only grew when he saw his son, "Speak, what is it this time?"

Iron Can wasn't afraid of anything in the heavens or earth, but he feared his old man.

“Father... I’m sorry, I didn’t take good care of the kid Dazhi.” Iron Can had obviously gotten a good handle on his father’s character. He knew the more pitifully he portrayed himself, the more his father’s heart would soften.

“Dazhi? What happened to him?” Iron Long’s face changed when he heard these words.

“Father, Dazhi grew enraged when he returned from training in the outside world and heard that our family had lost face thanks to Jiang Chen. He took Zhou Yi with him to create some trouble for Jiang Chen. I don’t know what the Jiang brat did to capture Dazhi and Zhou Yi. The brat’s arrogance knows no bounds; he’s trying to swindle money out of me. He says that if I don’t submit the ransom, he’ll start killing people one every 15 minutes after 12 hours. There were 18 in total during this trip, and he’ll start killing them until they’re all dead.”

“What?” A stern light shot out of Iron Long’s eyes. “He really said that?”

“Without a doubt.” Iron Can’s heart leapt with joy. He wanted to arouse his father’s emotions and also make his father hate Jiang Chen. If his father personally put in an appearance to take down Jiang Chen, then their success was guaranteed!

“Humph.” Iron Long thought of something and leveled an icy look at Iron Can. His voice also became frosty, “Why did Dazhi suddenly go to a mundane kingdom? Given that Ye Chonglou has already spoken, Dazhi’s arrogance might know no bounds in the folly of youth, but are you equally as brainless?”

“Iron Can, don’t try to play smart with your old man. Speak truthfully. Was it that you saw Ye Chonglou make a trip to the sect and wanted to take advantage of his absence?”

Iron Long’s gaze was harsh as he stared at Iron Can.

“I...” Iron Can quivered. He wanted to lie and get himself out of this, but his little tricks were completely useless beneath Iron Long’s sharp eyes.

“Sigh.” Iron Long let out a long sigh. “Iron Can, you truly disappoint your father. Are you really that flighty? Do you want so badly for your father to erupt in open hostilities with Ye Chonglou? Do you really want to push Ye Chonglou to the Xie family that badly? Jiang Chen, a mere ordinary genius like him, there are plenty of opportunities to take care of him in the future. Has his existence made you so crazed that you’re unable to sleep? With your little bit of shrewdness and your nonexistent patience, how will you inherit my legacy in the future? How will you continue to lead our Iron family in the future?”

Iron Long originally had two sons.

Iron Can was the younger one. He had an elder brother who was Iron Dazhi’s father.

However, Iron Long’s eldest son had died in an accident not too long after Iron Dazhi had been born.

Therefore, the Iron family only had Iron Can in this generation to take on the family mantle.

As for other branches of the family, although there were many others, how would Iron Long possible give his legacy onto another relative?

Iron Can was his only choice.

But, his performance had always been one of hopeless mediocrity, and he'd disappointed Iron Long time and time again.

It was because that he was so disappointed that Iron Long had secretly started training Iron Dazhi some more. He hoped that Iron Dazhi would grow up quickly and aid Iron Can, perhaps even directly hand over the reigns to Iron Dazhi in the future and have Iron Can act as the assistant.

But suddenly, Iron Can had run over to tell him that Iron Dazhi had been taken by others!

How would such news not make Iron Long fly into a rage?

If Iron Can hadn't been his own son, Iron Long probably would've slapped him to death at this point.

Iron Can also knew that he had thoroughly infuriated his father this time. His eyes darted to and fro, too scared to meet his father's eyes.

"So tell me, what do you intend to do?" Iron Long restrained the fury in his heart with effort.

Iron Can's tone was vicious and ruthless, a violent light shining bright out of his eyes. "I would like father to lend me some of your personal guards so I can carve my way into the Jiang manor and save everyone."

"Preposterous!" Iron Long slammed his hand on the table, so angry that his moustache flared towards the skies. "Do you think the situation isn't chaotic enough, you fool?"

"Do you think Ye Chonglou is a piece of decoration?"

"Do you think Xie Tianshu would allow you to act how you would?"

Regret, sheer regret that his offspring didn't measure up to his hopes! This Iron Can was far inferior to his fallen son.

To put things bluntly, if it wasn't for Iron Long propping everything up, Iron Can would be a complete and utter buffoon.

He still wanted to use force at a time like this?!

"Then... do we really let that dumb animal Jiang Chen con us? Father, since when did our Iron family fall to the depths in which an ordinary disciple can bully us?" Iron Can was unwilling to accept this. He truly couldn't accept bowing his head to Jiang Chen and paying ransom.

Iron Long burst out in loud curses, "Idiot fool! Do you still think our family is fighting with Jiang Chen now?"

If it wasn't for Ye Chonglou supporting Jiang Chen, and the fact that Xie Tianshu was their opponent within the sect, Iron Long wouldn't hesitate at all right now.

Whoever dared keep one of his descendents would be directly trampled.

But the current situation didn't tolerate him taking the slightest bit of force.

To still use force now meant that they were fully erupting in hostilities with Ye Chonglou and pushing the latter towards Xie Tianshu's camp.

He kept telling himself that he had to calm down. This wasn't the time to rage.

He controlled the fires of fury within his heart and sighed with dejection. "Go, see what Jiang Chen wants and give it to him!"

"Give it to him?!" Iron Can leapt up.

"Give it to him!!" Iron Long brought his hand crashing down on the table. "Iron Can, I'll warn you one last time. If you don't handle this matter well and make even more of a mess, then I will punish my blood relations even if you are my son! It will be like I had never sired an idiot like you!"

A fury that burned to the skies came crashing onto Iron Can, making him almost fall to the ground. He'd finally realized that he'd completely and thoroughly enraged his father this time!

Chapter 273: A Great Extortion, Making Out Like a Bandit

Leaving in a bedraggled and dispirited state, Iron Can's mouth was full of bitterness. He finally understood that his father had always been rather dissatisfied with his performance.

It'd even reached the point where he wouldn't hesitate to take action against his own flesh and blood!

Iron Can's entire back was soaked through with sweat, and his head had beads of cold perspiration.

He'd always felt that as his father's only surviving son, he was the beloved son of the heavens and it was natural that he could do what he wanted within and outside of the sect.

And he's always done so as well.

Iron Long usually kept one eye shut with regards to all the random crap he committed and endured them usually.

But this time, he'd created one heck of a mess.

Particularly in involving Iron Dazhi as well, no wonder Iron Long had been enraged.

It was a good thing that Iron Dazhi hadn't died. If he had, Iron Can had no idea what his father would do to him.

Iron Can finally understood at this point that the place of a direct son like himself in his father's heart was less than that of a grandson, Iron Dazhi.

"Jiang Chen! It's all because of that filthy animal Jiang Chen!" Iron Can thought carefully and felt that Jiang Chen was the source of all of his troubles. If it hadn't been for Jiang Chen, why would so much annoying nonsense have occurred?

Iron Can's very gums itched with hate as his eyes spat fire. He wanted to tear Jiang Chen to pieces!

But, he also knew that no matter how much he hated Jiang Chen, he could only hold his nose this time and endure. Getting his revenge would have to wait until next time.

"It's all due to that old fart Ye Chonglou. If it wasn't for him supporting Jiang Chen, what ability would that brat have to swagger around with?" Iron Can was equally unfavorably disposed towards Ye Chonglou.

He hated them from the depths of his heart, but the circumstances were greater than the person. He had to make haste and travel to the capital for negotiations.

He knew that if he didn't take care of things as soon as possible and save the disciples, once the hall of law enforcement discovered that their disciples had gone missing, then another bit of trouble would appear out of nowhere as well.

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Jiang Chen was leisurely sitting in his garden within the Jiang manor at this time.

Iron Can was sitting across from him with a few of his confidantes.

These two groups would like nothing more than to kill each other, but they had to sit across from each other at this time.

Iron Can was naturally doing so out of resignation.

As for Jiang Chen, he was already thinking of what he would extort out of the Iron family.

"Jiang Chen, I admit that I underestimated you before. I've come on behalf of my father, Iron Long, to speak with you. If you take one step back on this matter, my father will absolutely remember your favor. If you wish to enter the sect in the future, my father can help you and even mentor you!"

"Your father's favor? Help me?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. Iron Can wasn't that stupid after all, he knew that using force wouldn't work, so was he trying persuasion instead? Except, these acting skills that wouldn't fool even a three year old were simply too clumsy.

If it'd been someone else here, Jiang Chen might've actually listened to him. But Iron Can possessed a narrow heart and was sure to take revenge for this slight in the future.

How could he possibly come to a compromise with such a character? How was it possible that they would forget past wrongs with a smile? This wasn't Iron Can's style at all.

He was just being forced by the circumstances and trying to use some small tricks.

If he handed the people over, Jiang Chen could promise that Iron Can would immediately turn viciously hostile.

Iron Can squeezed out a bit of a smile on his face with effort and tried his hardest to appear quite gentle.

"Yes, my father has always treasured talent, and there aren't many who are worthy of his aid. Jiang Chen, this is a chance for you to redeem yourself and an opportunity for you to rise above the masses. Do you know how many in the sixteen kingdoms fight for a chance to prove themselves in front of my father and seek to win his favor?"

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "So it sounds like I should be shocked and flattered by this honor, agree with gratitude, and then pretend to change from being your enemy to becoming your friend with enthusiasm just like that?"

Iron Can saw that there was no sincerity in Jiang Chen's supercilious smile at all, and knew that his words were being wasted.

"Jiang Chen!" Iron Can's face darkened. "Are you an obstinate mule who's hardened his heart to go against my Iron family? Have you thought about what you can gain in doing so? How much future will you have in the sect in the future after offending my family?"

Although these words sounded like threats, they did make a bit of sense.

If it was any other ordinary genius, they would've paused for consideration after hearing these words.

However, Jiang Chen was Jiang Chen. He had heard these kinds of words so often that calluses were beginning to form on his ears.

"Iron Can, I understand your sense of superiority. However, save your spit if you want to use the Iron family to threaten me."

Jiang Chen's tone was mocking as his expression suddenly chilled, his tone also dropping as well. "If the next words out of your mouth have nothing to do with the topic of ransom, then get the hell out! Negotiations are over and you can go back to prepare their funeral!"

"You..."

Iron Can had thought of many strategies on the way here and had finally decided upon this pretense of reconciliation to pull the wool over Jiang Chen's eyes and make him submit.

He'd discovered once again that he was too naive.

This Jiang Chen wasn't having anything he was saying and didn't have the slightest bit of reservations towards his Iron family!

He used all his strength to restrain his urge to explode. Iron Can knew that he had no right to erupt in anger now. If he gave up the negotiations now, Jiang Chen would likely kill the others immediately!

His face beet red with restraint, Iron Can held his breath for a long time before finally saying, "Name your price!"

Jiang Chen beamed, "This sounds more like it."

He then took out a scroll from his sleeve and placed it on the table, lightly pushing it over.

"This is my price. Remember, no bartering allowed. I will kill someone if you attempt to bargain with me once, and I'll kill two if you talk back twice."

Jiang Chen leaned back comfortably after speaking and drummed his fingertips on the table.

This was completely the tempo of swindling him out of an enormous sum!

Iron Can picked up the list knowing full well that an astronomical sum would be on it, but blurted out, "You're... this is daylight robbery!"

“You’re right.” Jiang Chen wore a harmless smile on his face. “Isn’t robbery better than killing someone, hmm? Iron Can, stop dithering around. I’m saving you some face. If I was the one who’d failed this time, I’m sure I wouldn’t even have a full corpse by now. Therefore, my robbery is fully justified and a given.”

Jiang Chen’s tone was unhurried. Even during negotiations, he didn’t want to say any unnecessary words.

Iron Can’s hands gripped the list tightly, starting to tremble.

It wasn’t that the Iron family wasn’t able to afford such a list, but that this was asking for a lot, an absolutely enormous amount!

This ransom would severely dent the Iron family’s foundations!

Saint rank medicine ingredients were worth entire cities and treasures that were hard to come by in a hundred years.

One had to know that only original realm practitioners had the need to use saint rank medicines.

Although a spirit king would occasionally use saint rank medicines, but those opportunities were few and far in between.

Even a spirit king wouldn’t have that many stores of spirit medicines.

Even though the Iron family had an illustrious history and a rich foundation, they didn’t have that many saint rank medicines either.

Jiang Chen had asked for four times that amount in one go, and even specified the ones with attributes of fire and ice. This kind of request was particularly difficult.

The number of spirit rank medicines listed behind it from low to high ranks was an eye popping one.

It wasn’t that the Iron family didn’t possess this amount, but that this amount was truly frightening!

Even his personal property as a sect elder was far less than this , unless he dipped into the family clan vaults.

The value of these items were more than enough to trade for a sky spirit realm practitioner, not to mention these people!

The more he read, the more Iron Can trembled and panicked.

Jiang Chen was absolutely making out like a bandit.

Would an ordinary brat like him be able to digest these items?

Iron Can was infuriated, “It must be that old fart Ye Chonglou! Will that brat be able to use saint rank medicines, to say nothing of anything else? Is a small spirit realm practitioner worthy of possessing these medicines? This is definitely something that the shameless old fart Ye Chonglou had cooked up!”

Iron Can trembled in his rage, the muscles in his face twitching uncontrollably. That experience was like someone was trying to dig out his heart, liver, and kidneys.

He had had multiple urges to flip the table and leave, but reason won out in the end.

He knew that if he left, Iron Dazhi and the others would die as well.

Once Iron Dazhi was lost, then his end was at hand too.

“How about it Elder Iron? I’m a pretty virtuous guy huh? A thousand gold would be hard pressed to buy a life. I’m giving you a fair price now, I’m sure you can understand my friendly selflessness, hmm?”

Jiang Chen chuckled merrily.

Iron Can almost spewed out blood when he heard this.

“Jiang Chen, aren’t you afraid of dying from indigestion with this ridiculous price?” Iron Can said bitingly.

“Dying from indigestion? Wouldn’t that go along with your fondest desires? Elder Iron, you must hate me to death right now. Me dying would just so resolve one of your wishes. How about this, why don’t you double the price and try to stuff me to death, so that I would be deader than a doornail.”

“Shameless!” Iron Can had a belly full of rage and nowhere to vent it. He knew that the other was swindling him, but he was unable to negotiate.

Bartering once would result in one death!

Although Iron Can suspected that Jiang Chen was just threatening him, he didn’t have the courage to try.

He couldn’t afford to gamble.

Whether it was Iron Dazhi or Zhou Yi, or any of the 16 law enforcement disciples, he’d be unable to explain himself when he returned.

Jiang Chen smiled easily and stood up from the seat. He murmured as if to himself, “Time flies. It seems that 12 hours has already gone by. Do I really need to make preparations and go sharpen my knife?”

Iron Can finally couldn’t hold back any longer and spat out a mouthful of blood.

Chapter 274: Startling News About the Great Selection

A matter such as spewing blood was a great tragedy, but Iron Can spewing blood was actually quite comedic in Jiang Chen’s eyes.

Of course, spitting blood was one thing, but Iron Can didn’t dare tarry. Time waited for no one.

If he missed the remaining six hours, Jiang Chen would absolutely raise his blade and start killing.

One had to say, the Iron family fortunes were quite astonishing. Although Jiang Chen was demanding a flabbergasting sum, he still obtained all of them in six hours.

These items filled three secret rooms.

Jiang Chen was wreathed in smiles after he took an inventory. “Elder Iron is a forthright person alright. I hope there are more chances for friendly transactions like these in the future.”

In the future?

Killing intent overwhelmed everything else in Iron Can's eyes, next time? He wanted a next time?

"You've gotten what you wanted, why aren't you letting them go yet?" Iron Can asked in full rage.

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, "Let them go!"

Those in the back only let Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi go when they received Jiang Chen's instructions.

Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi both had exhausted expression on their faces and they were even more shamefaced when they saw Iron Can. Iron Dazhi in particular was covered with injuries and in quite a ghastly state with an ashen colored face.

Jiang Chen stood at the door and still wore that unhurried smile on his face, waving at Iron Dazhi, "Sir Iron Dazhi, come often in the future if you have nothing else to do."

Iron Dazhi almost spat blood in anger as well.

It was obvious that Jiang Chen wanted to wrangle some more items from them again.

Iron Can decided to tear off the mask of politeness now that his people were freed. He grimaced, "Jiang Chen, don't think that this is the end of the matter. You'll need to be able to digest all of it from my Iron family well!"

Although Iron Can had taken his father's admonishment to heart and he was holding up beneath the humiliation, he'd already started drafting in his heart how to take revenge on Jiang Chen!

"Jiang Chen, if you dare participate in the great selection, my Iron family will ensure that you die an awful, horrifying death!" Killing intent surged to the skies within Iron Can's heart.

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The three generations of the Iron family were gathered in the internals of the Iron family.

There were only four people in the secret chamber.

Iron Long, Iron Can, and Iron Dazhi were present, with Zhou Yi serving them on the side.

Iron Long's expression froze after listening to Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi's descriptions, seeming to be considering something. He sighed after quite a while.

"Spirit rank creatures are something that's difficult for even the sect master tamers to train. Not only can Jiang Chen compel them to fight, but he can train them to set up formations! To think that such a perverse person comes from a mundane kingdom? This is unbelievable!" Iron Long's tone was full of emotion.

"Father, hasn't that damned old fart Ye Chonglou always been vested in raising and training spirit creatures? He probably taught all of it to Jiang Chen? That brat is most likely just one of the old fart's secret pawns, what do you think?" Iron Can fancied himself clever and started his analysis.

"Impossible!" Iron Long shook his head decisively. "I'm more than familiar with Ye Chonglou's abilities. Although he is quite gifted in raising spirit creatures, he doesn't have the skills to compel spirit creatures to set up formations. Jiang Chen most likely has had other fortuitous encounters!"

“Fortuitous encounters?” Iron Can didn’t quite believe it. “He’s just a minor character from the Eastern Kingdom, what kind of fortuitous encounters would he possibly have in a barbaric backwater like the Eastern Kingdom?”

Iron Dazhi also nodded, “The Eastern Kingdom is a mere third rate kingdom and it practically useless in the sixteen kingdom alliance. What kind change in fortunes could Jiang Chen possibly have had there? Grandpa, in my view, Jiang Chen could very well be a pawn that Ye Chonglou has cultivated in secret.”

“But, however... ” Iron Long sighed lightly. “Dazhi, your potential is wonderful, but your mentality can be improved upon. The great selection is a chance for you. As for how the final results are, that depends on your making.”

“Opportunity?” Iron Can seized upon the word. “Father, is there something behind this time’s great selection?”

Iron Dazhi also looked at Iron Long with an earnest and fervent gaze.

“Humph. When you were off creating a mess in the Skylaurel Kingdom, I, Xie Tianshu, and Ye Chonglou were summoned by sect forefather Qianye for a discussion. The four sects are hosting the great selection together this time. The scale of this time’s selection is much higher than any in history. Each of the sects will choose their four elite disciples this time to form the strongest 16 of the four sects.”

“Strongest 16?” Iron Can blinked. “What special treatment will they have after being selected?”

“These 16 people will receive the forefathers’ special training! They will receive the core resources and most valuable knowledge of the sects.”

“What?” Iron Dazhi was greatly astonished. “Receive the forefathers’ special training!?”

“That’s correct. That special training isn’t theoretical, it was true, hands on training! It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that they would become the forefathers’ true disciples. The goal is to expedite their ascension into an origin realm practitioner!”

Iron Long’s tone was also full of admiration and yearning when his words stopped at this point.

The origin realm! He had lived so many years, but he was still a step outside the door to the origin realm, but he had no hope of setting foot inside it in this lifetime.

To Iron Long, the origin realm was practically the greatest regret of his life.

Therefore, he wanted to place this hope on his grandson.

“Dazhi, you may be able to make it into the top ten of the Precious Tree Sect genius disciples, but it would be quite difficult for you to vault into the top 4. Therefore, I’m going to give you special training over the next couple of days! I will strive my hardest for you to be ranked amongst the top 4 in the final competition.”

“Grandpa, although the sect has many geniuses, I’m confident that I will be assured of making it as one of the top 4 if I can enter the peak of the earth spirit realm at the sixth level.” Iron Dazhi was greatly self assured.

“Right, there are only three at the sixth level spirit realm in the young geniuses of the sect. If you can break through to the sixth level spirit realm, and go armed with some of the Iron family’s trump cards, there will be no problem for you to make it into the top four.”

Iron Long had obviously come to this meeting with a plan. “The special training I’m giving you this time is also focusing on breaking through to the sixth level spirit realm. Add to that some family clan secret arts and some heirloom treasures, I would be truly disappointed if you don’t rank within the top 4 with these resources, Dazhi.”

The secret arts of the family and heirloom treasures. That kind of treatment made even Iron Can a bit jealousy and a hint of envy rose in his heart.

He had so wanted these things when he was young, but his father Iron Long had placed the bulk of his attentions on raising his eldest son. As the younger son, Iron Can’s potential and mentality were all much less than his big brother’s.

When his big brother, Iron Yong, had accidentally passed away in an accident, Iron Can was also slightly happy apart from being a bit sad. He felt that with the absence of his brother, the heritage of the family would finally land on him.

However, he’d discovered today that he’d once again been too naive.

His father had bypassed him to cultivate the next generation, his dead brother Iron Yong’s son!

His father had even announced to his face that he was passing down the family treasures and secret arts to Iron Dazhi!

Iron Can’s heart felt as agonized as if it’d been bitten by a poisonous snake, it was impossible to say that he didn’t feel the slightest bit of envy!

However, he also knew that he had no right to be jealous. He had fallen short of his father’s expectations in too many areas.

If he still didn’t recognize the circumstances he was in now, then he may even be stripped of his right to be Iron Dazhi’s assistant and he would have all his power removed, becoming a figurehead elder.

Iron Long’s gaze slanted to the side a bit as he locked a stern gaze onto Iron Can’s face.

Iron Can couldn’t resist a frantic leap of his heart when his father pressured him with this look.

“Iron Can, what thoughts do you have regarding your father’s arrangements?” Iron Long’s tone was remote.

Iron Can took a deep breath in and answered honestly, “Father, I support your decision. It was all because your son was sub par when young and I missed the prime opportunity. Dazhi is a young genius and so we should naturally spend all our strength in raising him. I may be silly, but I still understand this logic.”

“Mm. It’s good that you understand. You have precious few advantages with your age. You’ll likely halt at the sky spirit realm in this life, with almost no chance of making it as a spirit king. Dazhi is different. He’s less than 30 years old and he already possesses such achievements. This bears witness to the

strength of his potential. If he can break through the sky spirit realm this time, he will have great potential to unearth in the future. Dazhi is the most immediate heir to my Iron family!”

The blood in Iron Dazhi’s body started boiling when he heard these words. This was the first time that he’d received direct verbal acceptance from his grandfather!

This meant that his role as the next head of the Iron family was officially confirmed!

Although Iron Can was jealous, he could only accept his lot in life now. He knew that he no longer had any advantages compared to Iron Dazhi.

Age in particular, was his fatal disadvantage.

“Dazhi, don’t be prideful either. Don’t ever forget that as a sect genius, you actually lost in a mundane kingdom. This is a blot on your life and it is inevitable that it will become an internal demon. I hope you can transmute humiliation into action and truly steady yourself, cutting off all that flighty nonsense and truly set foot onto the path of the genius. Although an ordinary kid like Jiang Chen may have had some lucky encounters, his foundation and potential are nowhere near yours. He has no advantages compared to you. You absolutely cannot let him become an obstacle on your path as a genius, do you understand?”

A shrewd light shot out of Iron Dazhi’s eyes as he seemed to contemplate something and understand something as well.

“I understand grandpa. Jiang Chen did humiliate me, but it was also due to a lack of finesse in my abilities and lack of a clear head. If I’d been slightly more clear headed and hadn’t been ensnared by his trap, I wouldn’t have turned out like this. I will absolutely use this as a warning to myself and remind myself constantly. I will personally kill Jiang Chen during the great selection and sweep away this internal demon!”

“Good, this is also my expectation for you.” Iron Long smiled faintly. He was still quite satisfied with Iron Dazhi’s abilities of comprehension.

“Alright, Dazhi, you’re a sect genius and thus, you don’t have to participate in the first round. I can make use of this time to thoroughly reforge you so that you can emerge from the masses with an absolutely stunning demeanor in the second round!”

Iron Long’s tone was filled with confidence and hope.

He didn’t mention the losses that the family had suffered in paying the ransom this time. Iron Long was well aware that the less he mentioned it, the more this would become Iron Dazhi’s motivation!

Striving forward bravely after experiencing humiliation was a mandatory experience that geniuses had to weather.

Chapter 275: Giving Pointers to Lordmaster Ye Chonglou

Jiang Chen admired the mountains of spirit medicine in his manor and tsked in amazement. “It’s said that the sects are so rich that they have wealth flowing out of their ears, and it looks like those rumors weren’t unfounded. As one of the two great families of the Precious Tree Sect, the Iron family boasts of

astounding wealth. Most likely, these items are just a hair off their legs? It looks like I was still too kind and my price was too low.”

Jiang Chen finally understood now why Ye Chonglou had told him not to kill Iron Dazhi.

A defeated opponent like Iron Dazhi could be killed at anytime.

But even Ye Chonglou would find it hard to rapidly collect so many spirit medicines!

“It’s always been said that the Myriad Treasures Palace is rich and possesses extreme wealth, but it doesn’t hold a candle to the sect. In the end, the Palace is just an outer site. As bountiful as their treasures appear to be, it’s still nothing compared to that of a heavyweight within the sect.”

Jiang Chen knew that he had struck gold this time.

He couldn’t even store all these items in his storage ring.

Of course, Jiang Chen wouldn’t possibly swallow it all himself. Even if it were empty pleasantries, he still had to make a gesture or two. He selected two saint rank medicines and delivered it to the old tutor.

Jiang Chen knew that although the old tutor hadn’t gone to any effort in taking down Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi, the Iron family wouldn’t have negotiated with him at all even if hadn’t been for the old tutor, not to mention docilely giving him the ransom.

Therefore, Jiang Chen’s extortion had still made use of the old tutor’s influence.

Thus, it was a natural course of action to share his gains with the old tutor.

However, when Jiang Chen delivered these items to the old tutor, the old tutor smiled and waved him off. “Jiang Chen, this old man won’t take these medicines from you. You caught them, I only gave you a suggestion and can’t share in the glory.”

“Lordmaster, this is a token of my appreciation, I won’t feel right if you don’t accept it.”

Ye Chonglou smiled, “Put it this way. These spirit medicines are indeed nice, but they will have much more use with you than with me. Besides, I have some saint rank medicines. Save them for yourself.”

The old tutor was resolute in not accepting. Jiang Chen didn’t continue to insist and put them away.

“Jiang Chen, even this old man hadn’t thought that the Iron family would be as mad as a march hare to make use of the time in which I traveled to the sect to attack the Jiang manor. It was a good thing that your methods were sophisticated, making my worries on the way back completely superfluous.”

“This kid is truly shamefaced to have caused the old tutor worry.”

“Alright kiddo, I don’t see the slightest expression of self reflection on your face.” Ye Chonglou smiled and suddenly became serious. “Jiang Chen, I was invited by forefather Thousandleaf to the sect this time to discuss matters regarding the great selection.”

“Oh?”

“The scale of this year’s great selection is unprecedented. I already mentioned the reason why last time. The selection is divided into two parts this time. The first part is to make a selection from the ordinary

geniuses. Those selected will participate in a second part with the sect disciples. The second selection is the key. When the 16 strongest are determined, each of the four sects will receive four disciples for personal tutelage by each sect's forefathers as their true disciples. They will also receive the sect's most core and finest resources."

"Core, finest resources?" Jiang Chen blinked. This happened to be precisely what he needed at the moment.

In the world of martial dao, the richest, core resources were controlled by the sects. Only a small portion was left to the mundane kingdoms and fought over by countless practitioners. It was a case of too many monks and not enough gruel to go around.

Within the sects, those who truly benefited from the resources were the geniuses at the top of the pyramid, those standing at the very peak!

Ye Chonglou nodded, "To put it simply, you'll have whatever you want as long as the sect possesses it!"

This was undoubtedly the most exclusive treatment.

One had to know, the ones with the true power were the origin realm forefathers.

Even the sect head and the first of the esteemed elders didn't have the right to touch the most exquisite items unless the origin realm forefathers nodded in assent.

The fact that the geniuses selected by this time's great selection would enjoy whatever they wished for signified that they would enjoy treatment that even the sect head and esteemed elders couldn't boast of.

"Lordmaster, it looks like that the sixteen kingdom alliance is indeed in a precarious situation. Otherwise, how could they have possibly put down their proud stances and offer such sweet rewards?"

Ye Chonglou gave a long sigh, "It's actually bit late to only feel a sense of danger now. When I returned from my worldly travels, I had given the sects some hints not to remain static in their footsteps. It was a pity that no one listened to me then. They hadn't realized at all how subpar the alliance was in the greater picture of the Myriad Domain. I hope there's still a chance to salvage the situation now that they've realized where things stand."

The lordmaster's tone suddenly became a bit bleak as he looked at Jiang Chen, a flicker of light suddenly appearing in his eyes as a trace of hope shot out from them.

"Jiang Chen, I've heard that heroes emerge in troubled times. Perhaps, the chaos of the sixteen kingdom alliance is an opportunity for a genius of humble origins like you."

To be born of humble origins was to be restricted by one's circumstances. Many geniuses was resigned to an eventual fate of mediocrity due to a lack of sufficient cultivation.

This time's great selection was undoubtedly a chance for those of the masses.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly and didn't refute the old tutor's words.

One had to say, the old tutor was an honest and sincere elder. Jiang Chen could feel genuine care from him.

His every word and advice had been approaching things from Jiang Chen's perspective and been in consideration of his future.

This kind of elder was quite worthy of Jiang Chen's respect.

He suddenly had the desire to help this old man.

"Old tutor, why is it that there are such low numbers of origin realm practitioners within the sixteen kingdoms? Is it that the sixteen kingdoms don't possess enough resources, or insufficient martial dao legacy? Or is there another reason?"

Ye Chonglou sighed softly when he heard this, a trace of sorrow appearing on his face.

"Jiang Chen, to be frank, I've often contemplated the reason for this, but have never been able to come to a decent conclusion. Not enough resources is surely a reason, but although the neighboring great powers, empires, and dynasties possess more resources than us, it's not to the point of an overwhelming amount. However, they have much greater numbers of origin realm practitioners. I guess it comes down to weak and insufficient martial dao legacies."

The old tutor had indeed considered this reason before, but he'd felt that it was a matter with their martial dao foundations.

Each sect had only origin realm practitioner supporting them.

It was said that one tree did not a forest make, nor that only a single star of the show be a good thing.

Only one origin realm practitioner naturally couldn't give rise to a system, and being unable to form a system meant that no cycle of being able to pass on one's legacy could form.

There were too few origin realm practitioners, and thus they couldn't corroborate their knowledge with each other nor practice their techniques.

That meant that within the origin realm, they were going at it solo. The possibility of improvement naturally decreased when a lack of interaction and sparring between peers existed.

When they reached the the origin realm, they couldn't bear wasting time to teach disciples.

After all, having reached the origin realm, they wanted to make the best use of every moment to train.

The more they felt that, the more detached from the rest of society they become as they progressed through the origin realm and the less likely they had successors waiting in the wings.

Thus, the current situation was formed after a long period of time.

"I see that the lordmaster is well set in the spirit king realm, and not too far from the origin realm?" Jiang Chen started teasing out the topic at hand.

“It looks not too far away with just a half step, but it’s possible that I will never close this distance in my entire life. Jiang Chen, your natural abilities of comprehension are much greater than mine. I hope that you’ll have the right to assail the origin realm one day, or even higher!”

The old tutor had great expectations for Jiang Chen, and he’d never have thought that Jiang Chen was actually trying to give him some pointers.

Of course, as learned as the old tutor was, he would have never postulated that the young man sitting in front of him was the reincarnated son of the Celestial Emperor with a belly full of theories and knowledge of the heavens.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and seemed to remember something, remarking, “Old tutor, I actually heard the elder mention something about the origin realm.”

“What?” The old tutor’s face, originally wearing a careless expression, suddenly flushed red as it was suffused with surprise and agitation.

“Jiang Chen, what did that elder say?”

His voice actually trembled slightly when he spoke. Jiang Chen had told him before that he had met an otherworldly elder when young and had spent several years with him.

Therefore, the old tutor had never felt Jiang Chen’s astonishing performance was odd.

However, when it came to assailing the origin realm, the old tutor couldn’t remain calm.

The origin realm!

That was something he’d striven to break through for sixty years and never set foot into.

It was very possibly a realm he’d never be able to set foot into his entire life!

It would most likely become the thing that he regretted the most in his life!

His eyes stared fixedly at Jiang Chen, his face full of expectations. Since that elder had mentioned the origin realm, it was surely something from his own experiences!

Ye Chonglou suddenly seemed to see a ray of hope.

It was like someone walking the dark for decades suddenly discerning a ray of light.

How would this not make him agitated?

Jiang Chen pretended to be quite natural as he thought for a bit, “The elder once said, to progress from the spirit realm to the origin realm, one has to siphon the essence from their spirit ocean to form an origin infant. What is meant by an origin infant is the concentration of spirit essence and its rise to a higher level. The formation of the spirit infant gives rise to countless arts and techniques that are enough to overturn the rivers and oceans.”

Ye Chonglou nodded. He knew of this.

“The elder also told me then that when forming the origin infant, it would be a difficult process if only relying on refining the spirit essence within yourself. Nine out of ten attempts would be unsuccessful. To

truly form a origin infant, not only does one have to raise its spirit ocean, but one also has to practice the arts of the heart. The origin infant needs both consciousness and form. Without consciousness, it's just a false infant. Only through daily meditation and continual training can one truly form a real origin infant within their bodies. The infant will naturally form in the marvelous instant that consciousness and form unite."

This was the true heart of the matter, and Jiang Chen strove hard to speak of it like he was remembering something.

However, as calm as Jiang Chen's tone was, it was like the evening drum and morning bell in a monastery, making one think deeply and petrifying Ye Chonglou instantly.

Chapter 276: Final Preparations Before the Great Selection

Like Buddhist chants or ringing sounds coming from the ninth heaven breaking through the shackles inside his heart, Jiang Chen's words shattered the bindings on his martial dao and sent a beam of enlightenment into his mind.

"Raising the spirit ocean, training the arts of the heart. Only when an origin infant has a consciousness can it be called an origin infant. Without consciousness, the infant can only be called a false infant... arts of the heart, arts of the heart... consciousness combining with form, forming the origin infant..."

These expressions were like marvelous symbols continuously crashing around inside his mind, chipping away at the barrier to his understanding, shedding incessant light in his mind.

"Dan Fei, see little friend Jiang Chen out for me, I'm going into closed door cultivation."

Shrewdness gleamed out of Ye Chonglou's eyes as he gave those instructions to Dan Fei before he turned to Jiang Chen, "Little friend Jiang Chen, if I can successfully assail the origin realm this time, it will be all because of you."

Jiang Chen chuckled. With his discerning eye, he too could see that the lordmaster's level of training had long since reached the level where he could break through to the origin realm.

He'd been unable to not because he hadn't comprehended the essence of the origin realm, but because he hadn't grown conscious of the need to train in the mental arts but had placed his focus on elevating his spirit essence alone.

Before the power of the heart met the requisite conditions, any origin infant formed at that time would still be a false infant and one wouldn't count as having fully set foot into the origin realm.

An origin infant would only be formed when the consciousness was combined with form!

Jiang Chen had mused upon each of these words in his heart. All of them cut straight to the point. To the old tutor, they were precious teachings struck his mind.

"This junior will be leaving now, I hope the lordmaster breaks through and ascend to new heights sooner rather than later, haha." Jiang Chen laughed heartily and walked outside.

Dan Fei had been waiting on the side all this time without interjecting any comments.

That evening, beneath the moonlit night, after Dan Fei had spoken those words to Jiang Chen she had remained beneath the laurel tree for half a night. However, not only had she not straightened out her mental affairs, but she seemed to have sunk even further, finding it even more difficult to extract herself.

She'd even sulked a bit today and hadn't said a word on purpose, nor had she even chatted with Jiang Chen. She'd even purposefully avoided his gaze.

However, she hadn't thought that the devious brat would cause the old tutor to completely lose his composure and call him "little friend Jiang Chen", displaying faint undertones that Jiang Chen was the old tutor's peer.

This made her emotions even more complicated.

She'd wanted to one-up Jiang Chen and ignore him, but when she saw his light footsteps almost at the door, her steps still anxiously moved forward as she ran up to him.

"Sister Dan Fei, the honored tutor is about to go into closed door cultivation. Please stay your footsteps and take good care of him."

Dan Fei bit her lips lightly as her charming eyes focused on Jiang Chen. A glimmer flashed through them as she looked somewhat lost while she looked at Jiang Chen.

"Jiang Chen you little devil, how many secrets do you have?" She seemed to murmuring, as if in her sleep.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly, "Sister Dan Fei, I..."

Dan Fei suddenly spread out her hands, sighing, "Don't bother explaining. Any of your explanations are surely just empty air. Jiang Chen, I'd rather you not tell me then always treat me as an outsider and use some casual words to stopper me with."

"Eh... so I have this kind of image in sister Dan Fei's heart?" Jiang Chen self-deprecated. "Alright, the honored tutor's closed door cultivation cannot be delayed for a single second. Here is good, sister Dan Fei."

Jiang Chen waved his hands as he spoke and pushed off his feet to land atop a Goldwing Swordbird, turning into a golden blur and disappearing from the front of the tutor's manor.

Dan Fei fell into a deep reverie as she stared in the direction Jiang Chen had disappeared in, remaining silent for a long time.

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When he returned to the Jiang manor, Jiang Chen swept away all the random thoughts from his mind. The day of the great selection wasn't that far off.

He decided to use some of the spirit medicines he'd just obtained.

The task at hand was to raise the quality of his Swordbird army and have them all advance into the spirit rank.

If the Swordbirds all entered the spirit rank, then the inside of the Jiang manor would be an impregnable fortress. Even when enemies came knocking, the Jiang manor would be able to hold them off for a bit.

Once a thousand spirit rank Swordbirds formed the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation, even a spirit king protector wouldn't be able to break through, and might even find themselves in danger.

However, it wasn't a small scale project to have thousands of Swordbirds break through.

It was fortunate that he'd gotten quite a haul this time, he'd done so precisely for this purpose.

The spirit medicines that he'd gotten from the Iron family would fill this need, and even have some left over.

As for the four saint rank medicines, Jiang Chen had wanted them to be of the ice and fire attributes precisely for the Bewitching Lotus of Ice and Fire.

Of course, he didn't plan on using those just yet.

He was only in the small spirit realm at the moment, using a spirit rank medicine would be quite a waste. It wouldn't be too late to use them after he'd entered the earth spirit realm.

Usually only spirit king level practitioners had the right to use saint rank medicines.

However, Jiang Chen was different from others in that his spirit ocean had been refined hundreds and thousands of times. His small spirit realm was the equivalent of other's earth spirit realm, so he'd be able to just barely use the saint rank medicines.

It was something he'd taken from others anyways. It'd be a waste to not use ill gotten gains.

In the next couple days, Jiang Chen spent most of his time on the Swordbirds.

He also wanted to refine another batch of the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill.

This was because of his eight personal guards, apart from Xue Tong, the Qiao brothers, Guo Jin, and Wen Ziqi had all made it into the true qi master realm.

They would be sure to assail the spirit realm when the time came.

Of these eight personal guards, Jiang Chen had been raising them from the Eastern Kingdom and so he had to make some preparations for their future.

The two Silvermoon Monsterapes were also in the focus of Jiang Chen's attention.

Rather, it was the Goldbiter Rats that Jiang Chen had yet to locate the right way for them to proceed with their bloodline evolution.

After all, evolving bloodlines and raising strength were different. The process of evolving the Goldbiter Rat bloodlines was destined to be a long and arduous one.

This needed fortune's hand.

It was a good thing that the Rat King had devoured many experts lately and was satisfied with its current life. He knew just as well that evolving bloodlines was up a bit to destiny, and so he didn't pressure Jiang Chen too much.

Half a month passed as Jiang Chen's plan neared completion.

The day of the great selection was also drawing closer.

On this day, Jiang Chen summoned his guards, planning a candid conversation.

"The eight of you have been with me for around two years now. You've been by my side from the Eastern Kingdom to the Skylaurel Kingdom. I've seen your loyalty. This time, the sixteen kingdom alliance is about to undergo a tremendous change. A chance lies in front of me, and so it also lies in front of you."

Jiang Chen smiled. "I'm not a selfish person and will naturally not strip this chance from you. I just ask, who amongst you will be participating in the selection this time? Tell me if you want to participate. I'll give leave to any who wish. If you emerge from the masses from the great selection, I will absolutely give you my best of wishes and won't hinder your future."

"Don't be in a hurry to make your decisions, carefully think about it first. After all, this is a chance. A sect is an unattainable existence for an ordinary practitioner. This time's great selection is a chance for the ordinary to become sect disciples. This can change not only your destiny, but that of your clan, your descendents, and everyone associated with you. Therefore, you must choose wisely."

The temptation of a sect was boundless.

Particularly for ordinary disciples, it was impossible for youths to be completely unaffected by the attraction of the lofty sects opening their doors to mundane practitioners.

A sect! That was the sacred place for every young practitioner.

Xue Tong however, didn't hesitate in the slightest. His brief pause was actually out of consideration for his peers' face. After a short silence, he took the lead, "Young master, I won't consider it. I wouldn't be where I was without the young master. Unless the young master orders me out one day, I'll die as a Jiang family ghost!"

Guo Jin hesitated a moment and said, "Ah forget it. I'm the only one left of my Guo family. I have no worries and will still follow the young master. With my personality, I'd likely be repressed after I enter the sect anyway."

The Qiao brothers chuckled in a silly manner. They were martial dao fiends and were still full of yearning towards a sect.

"Qian Shan and Qiao Chuan, what are your thoughts?" Jiang Chen's tone was calm.

"I... I'm still going to follow the young master." Qiao Shan finally said.

"Us brothers have one heart. Mine brother's decision is mine decision." Qiao Chuan added.

Wen Ziqi's voice was like a mosquito's as she said lowly. "I just want to feed the Silvermoon Monsterapes. Those sects... I don't like them and wouldn't be used to them."

Wen Ziqi had been a sect disciple to begin with, but she'd been part of those small sects in the Eastern Kingdom counties.

However, she patently didn't have much of an infatuation for the sect life. Otherwise, she wouldn't make the trek to answer Jiang Chen's call for personal guard recruitment.

The last three were obviously the most tempted.

Jiang Chen smiled when he saw that they seemed to want to say something. "Don't be so indecisive, you three. Go if you want to participate. With your training, it won't be hard for you to achieve glory and honor should you fail and return to the Eastern Kingdom or remain within the Skylareel Kingdom."

It wasn't that they were unloyal, but that their training had slightly fallen behind Xue Tong and the others these past few years. The deficiencies in potential were beginning to grow apparent.

This made them feel self-conscious. It was normal that they sought some change.

"Young master, we... " Shen Yifan opened his mouth and tried to explain.

"Speak no further, you know what kind of person I am as well. Although our relationship of master and follower no longer exists, our friendship does. If you fail in the selection and run into some difficulties, come find me. I'll help you in whatever way I can."

Jiang Chen had wanted to give them each a Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill before they left, but when he thought of the fact that they weren't even true qi masters yet, it would be damning them to disaster if he gave them such a gift. Trouble may even come looking for him.

Jiang Chen decided to gift it to them later.

An innocent man getting into trouble because of his wealth was all too often seen in the world of martial dao.

Chapter 277: Curtains Open on the Great Selection

After continual rumors of the great selection, the atmosphere around this event finally reached its peak within the sixteen kingdoms.

Almost all practitioners who fulfilled the requirements were each fighting for a piece of cake just for their chance to try.

On this day, Jiang Chen brought his personal guards to register within the capital.

The registration period would last for half a month.

There were hundreds of registration sites.

Particularly for the Skylareel Kingdom, as it was one of the four great kingdoms, there were many who'd reached the basic requirement of the advanced true qi realm.

In the entire Jiang manor, apart from Jiang Chen, Ke Mu, Shen Yifan, and Bi Yun were also participating in the great selection.

Jiang Chen had once spoken to Gouyu privately, but her attitude had been resolute and she'd had no interest in the great selection. She'd emphasized that her intuition told her that following Jiang Chen was far greater than joining any sect.

Although she didn't publicly criticize Ke Mu, Shen Yifan, and Bi Yun's decision, she privately thought very little of them. She felt that they'd thrown away the watermelon in order to pick up a sesame.

Setting aside the question of whether or not they'd be able to make it through the great selection, even if they could, they wouldn't receive too many resources from the sect with their potential. It was better to remain by Jiang Chen's side.

When had Jiang Chen not done right by his people?

Of course, Gouyu could only keep these thoughts to herself. Everyone had their own ambitions, and she was just his follower and naturally wouldn't say much else.

The registration procedure for the great selection wasn't complex. One had to supply proof of identity, test their strength, and verify their age.

They would receive the participation medallion after passing these three parts.

Of course, the medallion was tied to each person's identity and could not be transferred. Once lost, the practitioner would lose their right to participate.

Jiang Chen was quite renowned in the kingdom by now, and his appearance immediately caused a furor at the registration station. Many young practitioners even cleared a path for him, wanting to let Jiang Chen register first.

Ordinarily speaking, no one should be offered the right of way in the world of martial dao, particularly in the matters of registration. No one could even think about cutting in line then.

The fact that he could inspire practitioners to voluntarily give up their place in line showed that Jiang Chen had a place in their hearts.

However, he waved his hands and turned down everyone's good intentions with a smile. He was signing up with three personal guards and didn't want special treatment.

When they saw that Jiang Chen wasn't about to cut in line and was standing there with everyone, these ordinary disciples felt even more kindly disposed towards Jiang Chen.

They'd almost forgotten that they were here to sign up as they made their greetings to Jiang Chen and started chatting.

Jiang Chen was also quite easy going. Even when some of them asked him for pointers, he didn't hesitate to converse with them.

In this regard, his popularity grew even higher.

Those who'd received his pointers were overjoyed and their eyes sparkling with excitement.

People with higher abilities of comprehension restrained the delight in their eyes, meditating where they stood in order to digest the pointers Jiang Chen had given them.

With this, the registration site that Jiang Chen had selected became extraordinarily crowded.

In the end, even the person in charge of registering everyone wanted to abandon his station and listen to Jiang Chen's lecture.

After all, Jiang Chen's reputation lately had simply been too great.

Thanks to the processing of the gossip mill, everything he'd done had become synonymous with legends.

That a practitioner from a foreign land had gone up against stronger powers time after time, but had always won!

Everyone had thought at first that he was relying on Ye Chonglou's support.

But this time, when the honored tutor had gone to the Precious Tree Sect, Jiang Chen had used his own power to capture sect geniuses Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi!

When this news spread through various channels and had been embellished by this game of telephone, Jiang Chen had become the youngest legend within the capital without a doubt.

Without Ye Chonglou's help, Jiang Chen had taken down two earth spirit realm geniuses and had even captured a group of law enforcement disciples by himself!

When this news traveled, Jiang Chen's fame shot upward, unstoppable in its momentum.

In actuality, the hearts of the ordinary practitioners held a particular longing for the sects. This feeling, apart from yearning, was also mixed with a bit of distaste and even envy for the sect disciples.

On what basis that they were out there in the ordinary world, fighting tooth and nail for a bit of resources and yet these sect disciples could sit within their homes, enjoying vast amounts of resources, becoming the proud sons of the heavens? Why could these sect disciples throw their weight around in the mundane world and have no one within their sights, stepping on faces as they would?

While ordinary practitioners envied the sect disciples, they were also quite ticked off about their demeanors.

And Jiang Chen happened to fulfill their various negative feelings. He'd beat them into a pulp, stepped on them and pulled them down from their thrones, thereby ripping through the facade of their geniuses and thoroughly made them lose face!

One had to say, they'd found a psychological comfort with Jiang Chen and a place to vent their emotions.

In this regard, it wasn't too hard to understand why the mundane practitioners viewed Jiang Chen as a hero.

At first, they hadn't accepted Jiang Chen as they felt that he was just someone who depended on the great tree which was Ye Chonglou. But now, Jiang Chen could still stomp on the sect disciples without the honored tutor!

What did that mean?

It meant that Jiang Chen was an ordinary genius, making him the hope of ordinary practitioners, and the role model that they should strive to emulate.

Jiang Chen hadn't thought either that his surprise appearance would cause such an uproar.

Normally, registration should have taken only an hour, but it took ten to twelve hours for him before he was allowed to leave.

This scene also made the three followers who were also registering pause and think for a moment. They couldn't help but doubt themselves, was it a wise move that the three of them were joining in the great selection?

However, they knew that since they'd made their choice, there was no way to turn back now.

Fifteen days registration period actually wasn't a generous amount of time. It was a good thing that those who reached the minimum requirements didn't want to miss out and made haste, making it so that there weren't very many left who needed to sign up in the last two days.

Three days of preparation followed the end of registration.

Jiang Chen made use of this time to make some basic preparations.

This initial selection was of no difficulty towards Jiang Chen. He knew that his goal was the ultimate selection in the second round.

He wasn't that interested in becoming the true disciple of an origin realm practitioner.

However, he truly needed that kind of core resources. In his current stage, only the sects controlled the core resources of the sixteen kingdoms.

Jiang Chen was well aware that with the rise of his martial dao, he could not possibly avoid the sects.

Since he couldn't avoid them, then he would face them with aplomb. The demeanor of his past life allowed him to be able to put anything down in front of him.

"Although I, Jiang Chen, possess the memories of my past life and thus hold an unparalleled advantage, this body is only of average quality in this world. If I can't put my pride down and join the sects, then I will only meet stronger and stronger young geniuses in the future. In this vast world, not all of them are as childish as Iron Dazhi..."

Jiang Chen thought through things after he'd made up his mind.

He must try his hardest in this great selection!

There were around fifty thousand who'd reached the advanced true qi realm below the age of 40 in the Skylaurel Realm.

All of the four great kingdoms could field this number.

The second rate kingdoms were around ten thousand.

The third rate kingdoms, such as Eastern Kingdom, could send around two to three thousand.

After the disaster of the Soaring Dragon rebellion, it was in last place without a doubt, along with the Darkmoon Kingdom.

After the Darkmoon Kingdom's failure to invade the Eastern Kingdom and the thorough defeat by Jiang Chen, they'd suffered great losses and their number of elites diminished.

The number of people from the two kingdoms were less than a thousand. It was a true tragedy.

Within the sixteen kingdom alliance, all of their numbers added together were almost four hundred thousand!

Although this number was enormous, it still fell far short of the four great sects' expectations.

They'd thought that the total would exceed five hundred thousand at the very least, or perhaps even reach a million. They hadn't thought that there'd be less than four hundred thousand suitable candidates.

The smaller the denominator was, the less choice they had in selection.

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The legacy territory of ancient times sat in the center of the sixteen kingdoms, within the third rate Redflame Kingdom.

With the legacy territory within its boundaries, that should've been a boon to the Redflame Kingdom. However, it was an absolute nightmare instead.

With the legacy realm here, the four great sects naturally wouldn't let any strong kingdoms appear around it.

Why was that?

It was naturally because they were worried that the Redflame Kingdom would grow too strong and thus control the realm, threatening the four sect's positions of power within the sixteen kingdoms.

The four great sects could not afford to let this situation happen at all.

Therefore, the strongest kingdoms and four great sects of the alliance had all formed an accord that limited the development of the Redflame Kingdom, continuously halting it at the stage of a third rate kingdom and never allowing it to have any hopes of growing strong.

Whenever a genius appeared within its borders, they would immediately be taken out of the Redflame Kingdom, absorbed into the sects and brainwashed into becoming loyal to the sects unto death.

In this regard, it was impossible for the Redflame Kingdom to grow strong.

The royal family of this kingdom were also puppets and had seemed to accept their fate, never rebelling even once.

However, the number of participants from this kingdom was slightly better than the Eastern and Darkmoon kingdoms. It was third from last.

It was actually rather surprising that the shame of being last hadn't landed on its head.

Three to four days were needed to travel from the Skylaurel Kingdom to the Redflame Kingdom. Jiang Chen had made sure everyone was settled at home before leaving.

He obviously couldn't take the Swordbird Army with him, so he left them to Gouyu and directed them to protect home.

Jiang Chen brought the Goldbiter Rats with him, however.

The key thing was that the Millionditch Stone Nest could be placed into a space ring and thus made it easier to carry around.

The most defining factor was that no one knew anything of the legacy realm. So one additional bit of preparation was one more bit of insurance.

The participants from the Skylaurel Kingdom reached the Redflame Kingdom in less than a day.

As for the Redflame Kingdom, it was a bustling spot of activity as many participants had already arrived.

Chapter 278: The Four Great Forefathers

On the outskirts of the Redflame Kingdom was an enormous plain. All the nearly four hundred thousand participants were gathered here.

The participants' faces held barely contained excitement, they'd just been notified that the highest levels of the four great sects were about to arrive and announce the selection rules for them.

They'd heard that not only would the executives of the four great sects arrive, but even the four great forefathers!

The four great forefathers had always been a legendary existence within the sixteen kingdoms.

Even many sect disciples had never caught a glance of them, never mind these ordinary practitioners.

Even the senior echelon of the sects couldn't see the forefathers just because they wanted to.

The forefathers represented the highest levels of power within the alliance. Invincible, they held life and death in the palm of their hands.

When they heard that the forefathers would appear to talk to them, how could this not cause the young practitioners to jump for joy?

Some youngsters with particularly vivid imaginations even dreamed of having some special potential that catches the eye of the forefathers, then they would've really made it and would walk amongst the clouds.

There were quite a few with such wild fantasies.

Particularly when it came to youngsters, who didn't harbor a few daydreams? The age of teenagers and twenty somethings was precisely the age filled with imaginings.

Many of them had never seen the highest levels of the four great sects, not to mention the forefathers.

However, Jiang Chen's expression was as calm as his heart.

He hadn't come here to sightsee and gawk at some senior executives. He had come for the final battle.

Even though it was just a group selection of ordinary practitioners right now, Jiang Chen didn't allow a single ripple to appear in his heart.

With his knowledge, it was impossible for him to grow excited about an origin realm practitioner even after he'd reincarnated. It was even less likely for him to be full of idol worship like the others.

In his past life,, even experts that were hundreds of thousands of times stronger than these venerated origin realm practitioners were extremely polite in front of Jiang Chen.

He completely ignored the fervent atmosphere around him as he activated the Boulder's Heart, temporarily entering a state of meditation.

When four hundred thousand people gathered, even if everyone only whispered, the scene was like a great boiling pot, continuously bubbling over with a hubbub of voices.

"Ho!"

A roar suddenly sounded in the air like a crack of thunder.

It dispersed into countless rumbles of thunder and seemed to cover the sky in an instant, making everyone's blood boil and silencing the plains immediately.

Four hundred thousand practitioners abruptly fell silent.

"Haha, Sunchaser you old monster, are you trying to put on airs from the beginning?" Another wild and unbridled roar traveled through the air.

Four beams of light tore through the clouds. Filled with a stern divine aura, they were as if celestial beings descending upon the earth. All sorts of light and splendor resounded through the sky.

A strong presence immediately enclosed an area of a thousand li.

In his meditation, Jiang Chen's blood slightly sped up, causing him to open his eyes and use God's Eye to look upwards.

Four beams of light hovered in the air in four different areas.

Three men, one woman, four venerated origin realm practitioners!

"The four great forefathers of the great sects!" Jiang Chen's heart raced as he narrowed his eyes to look at the four figures, standing there as if they were gods descending upon the earth.

Such strong auras were indeed something he'd never experienced before from Ye Chonglou. Jiang Chen had no doubt that these were the four people who controlled the core power and resources within the sixteen kingdoms, standing as representatives of the four great sects.

The Purple Sun Sect, the Precious Tree Sect, the Flowing Wind Sect, and the Myriad Spirit Sect.

Jiang Chen's gaze first stopped on the elder who was second from the left. Dressed in a green robe, and with a hat like a crown on his head, an unearthly feeling exuded from his body as his long mustache trailed to his chest. A sense of tranquility spread out from between his brows, as if he was completely set apart from the struggles of the world.

"This must be venerated elder Thousandleaf of the Precious Tree Sect?" Jiang Chen decided.

The first elder on the left was tall and stocky, his eyes like lightning as a stern awe suffused them. Fiery red robes offset his entire being like a fireball as he flared and blazed, giving others a feeling as though he could send the world up in flames.

Jiang Chen could almost be certain that this person was the venerated elder Sunchaser of the Purple Sun Sect.

The third from the left was a lady, as clean as ice and as pure as jade. Wearing white clothing, she looked like a fairy amongst the clouds. She was middle aged, yet appeared exceedingly beautiful.

This was naturally venerated elder Icemist of the Flowing Wind Sect.

The one on the right was a brawny man. His outfit was the wildest amongst the four, as his clothes were as ragged as a quail's tail, appearing quite disheveled. He had a head full of hair like an untamed lion's mane, thrown haphazardly over his shoulders. The spirit creature beneath him was even odder as it had nine heads, a perfect combination with this wild, stocky person. The two of them together appeared even more ferocious and made others naturally respectful and fearful.

This person must be venerated elder Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit Sect.

Jiang Chen had heard of the four great forefathers from Ye Chonglou, and although he lacked exact knowledge of them, he could still discern who was who now that he had seen them in person.

They were origin realm practitioners alright, a single careless syllable from them was enough to make the entire place quiet down. Even a spirit king rank practitioner would be unable to produce this aura.

Jiang Chen lauded them in his heart.

"It's... it's the four great forefathers!"

"Venerated origin realm practitioners? My god, am I dreaming?"

"Hahaha, it really is them! Grandpa, da, your child has finally seen the four great forefathers! Be well in the underworld, and protect your child so as to emerge from the masses in the great selection and become their personal disciple! Your child will make use of the opportunity to bring honor and glory to the ancestors so that I may strut with pride!"

After a moment's petrification, the ones with higher levels of training out of the four hundred thousand recovered their wits first, full of agitation as their lips trembled and tears gathered in the corners of their eyes.

The four great forefathers were the totems of the sixteen kingdoms, their absolute idols!

How would they not be greatly moved and have a face full of tears now that they saw that the forefathers had come themselves?

Figures continued to shoot out from the air. However, these ones knew their places, and found their positions behind the forefathers.

These people were obviously the senior executives of the four great sects, the judges of the initial selection.

"Sunchaser, since you like to make a scene, why don't you go ahead?" The wild and stocky Ninelion elder spoke with a smile and a shake of his unbound hair.

Sunchaser of the Purple Sun Sect smiled faintly and didn't refuse. He spurred the steed beneath him and cantered a few steps forward.

"A vibrant atmosphere of martial dao has always flowed within the sixteen kingdoms. With the four great sects as the banners, this atmosphere has only grown richer, spreading to the neighboring sixteen kingdoms. Today, we are gathered here, because the moment to select the geniuses for the sects has arrived. After consultation between my fellow daoists and I, today, we give you ordinary practitioners a chance to rise head and shoulders above your peers, an opportunity to carve out a noteworthy figure. Thus, this old man hopes that you will make use of this opportunity to enter our sights and thoroughly unearth your potential."

Venerated practitioner Sunchaser was known for his stern personality, always emanating a feeling of oppression.

"Perhaps you might think it unfair that you have to go through an initial selection before obtaining the right to compete with sect disciples."

"I can tell you now that there is nothing unfair in this. Fairness has never existed in the world of martial dao. You were born in the mundane dust and they were born into the sects. Your starting line was different. Although this may be cruel, in the world of martial dao, a birth of low circumstances is often an original sin."

"Now, the four great sects are giving you a chance to shake off your destiny of low birth, and giving you a chance akin to that of a carp transforming itself into a dragon. If you can make use of this chance, I promise you that you will receive the same opportunities as the sect disciples. In the second round of selection, the sect disciples won't receive special treatment, and the rules will not favor them. You will see fair competition when it reaches the second selection!"

The crowd grew agitated, fair competition!

At least ninety percent of the four hundred thousand had been worried about this.

They'd been worried that having ordinary practitioners participate was just a formality, that the final battle would be conducted between the sect disciples.

They feared that they, being ordinary practitioners, would just be supporting characters.

But elder Sunchaser's words had thoroughly dispelled their hesitations and filled their hearts with emotion.

If there was no bias towards the sect disciples within the second selection, then they might have a chance!

Even if they couldn't reach the final sixteen, they still had a chance to enter the sect if they displayed their entire potential, right?

As long as one made it into the sect, it would indeed be like a carp transforming to a dragon with a great bound upstream, leaving the mundane world behind!

"Of course, don't be too optimistic either. Since it's a selection, it will naturally be harsh. Competition will be fierce. You must be mentally prepared for the despair on the level of a thousand calvary trying to squeeze onto a wooden bridge."

Venerated elder Sunchaser's voice was like a ringing bell, reminding all practitioners not to be happy that early.

"There are around four hundred thousand of you, but less than ten thousand will make it into the second round. After that, no more than thirty percent will be chosen by the sects. That is to say that out of four hundred thousand of you, only three thousand will be able to make it into the sect at the end."

The ratio of three thousand to four hundred thousand was the equivalent of choosing one out of every hundred.

This ratio was indeed cruel, but to those listening below, they became extraordinarily excited.

As high as three thousand?

This number had exceeded their expectations.

After all, ordinary practitioners still had a bit of self consciousness when facing the sects. They both yearned to enter and knew just how difficult it would be to set foot in one.

In their eyes, it would be a lot if one thousand made it in.

To think that there would be three thousand!

Jiang Chen also sighed slightly when he heard this number, "It looks like the four great sects are feeling no small sense of urgency. To take in three thousand all at once means that each sect will receive almost a thousand people."

This truly hit home just how alarmed the sects were.

Chapter 279: The Five Trials of the First Selection

Indeed, it was as Jiang Chen had thought, the four great sects felt a great sense of urgency these days.

If it wasn't for this sense of crisis, with the level of status the four great forefathers had, they would never appear in front of ordinary practitioners, much less speak to them.

Forefather Sunchaser continued, announcing the rules.

"I trust that everyone's received a small bit of intelligence with regards to this time's great selection. I am here to emphasize the rules. The great selection is divided into three stages. The first stage is the initial selection. Once you pass, you'll enter a second round that will last three years with the disciples of the four great sects. The strongest 64 will be chosen from this group and they will enter the final round. From there, the strongest sixteen will be selected and divided accordingly amongst the four sects, receiving personal guidance from the forefathers. To speak candidly, they will become our personal disciples, even true disciples!"

Personal disciples personally receive guidance from the forefathers.

But, true disciples were disciples that could inherit the forefather's legacy, an even more advanced level than personal disciples.

The three stages of the great selection were clearly delineated.

The first stage was to pick out the cream of the crop, about ten thousand from four hundred thousand people.

They would then join the sect disciples in entering the second round of the great selection.

This stage would be the longest, running for three years straight.

These three years would not only be the second round, but also a cultivation process. Hidden potential and strength would come to light in this stage, and competition would be fierce.

This round would rank the top 64 candidates.

These 64 would then enter the third stage, where the final 16 would finally emerge.

These 16 participants were destined to be the final winner.

Of course, many of those present lacked the ambition to mount a challenge to reach the list of the final 16.

They didn't feel that their strength gave them the right to contend with those preeminent sect disciples.

However, they could make a play for one of the three thousand slots to enter the sects.

That was a more reasonable goal.

"Remember, we are taking a holistic approach in this time's selection. You may not have the best potential, but if you display other unique talents in other areas, you may still have the chance to enter the sects. If these talents are particularly extraordinary, then you may receive added attention. The quota for us four old folks are four personal disciples, but if you have particular skills in other areas, we will open a backdoor for you. Of course, the caveat is that your potential must be great enough to draw our attentions."

“For instance, if you have incredible skill in the dao of pills, or you possess a remarkable affinity in the area of taming spirit creatures. Or if you have a masterful grasp of ancient glyphs, constructing mechanisms, comprehension of formations, or others, then hope exists yet to enter the sects.”

Forefather Sunchaser expounded in as much detail as he could, and paused after these words. He wanted to give the audience some time to digest these messages, and give everyone sufficient time to analyze their own potential.

“This means that even if I lose on the basis of martial dao potential, I still have a chance if my potential in other areas is equally as stunning?”

“Tsk tsk, my teacher said that I have an innate sensitivity for formations, perhaps I’m a formation genius?”

“Pfft, keep dreaming. Formations aren’t that easy. But me however, I’ve had an ability to communicate with spirit creatures since my youth. Perhaps I’ll become a disciple of the Myriad Spirit Sect!”

The Myriad Spirit Sect was the sect most adept at training and raising spirit creatures. Almost all its disciples had talents in this area.

Therefore, when one fought against a Myriad Spirit Sect disciple, not only would one fight against the practitioner, but one would also have to contend with their opponent’s contracted spirit creature.

It was possible that the contracted spirit creatures of some of the more unbelievable disciples would be stronger than the master!

“Heh heh, good, this is fantastic. My potential for the dao of pills has never been able to find an avenue to showcase itself. This is my chance, my goal is the Precious Tree Sect!”

The Precious Tree Sect was the undisputed king of pills within the four great sects. Any youths with potential in the area of pills would be setting their sights on the Precious Tree sect.

“Humph. These daydreaming idiots. In the world of martial dao, it’s naturally martial dao that is king. So what if you use unconventional methods to advance into the sect when your martial dao is lacking? You’ll just be a servant for others. Only martial dao is the undying legend and the king of all! In this life, my focus is only on martial dao. I will use the sword in my hand to enter the Purple Sun Sect!”

These were naturally the words of a young man focused on martial dao.

When it came to the atmosphere of martial dao and its foundations, the Purple Sun Sect was undoubtedly the strongest.

As for the remaining Flowing Wind Sect, it didn’t measure up to the Precious Tree Sect in terms of the dao of pills, nor was it the Purple Sun Sect’s equivalent for martial dao legacy, and it was naturally below the Myriad Treasures Sect in terms of taming spirit creatures.

However, the Flowing Wind Sect had a skill that no other sect could best, and that was the ability in unearthing geniuses.

The Flowing Wind Sect had a set of methods that was particularly adept at unearthing geniuses with undiscovered potential and digging out gold from the sands.

It was this skill that had enabled the Flowing Wind Sect to discover many geniuses. These special methods and its uncommon foundations put it completely on par with the others in the four great sects.

Every practitioner had a sect that they were particularly disposed towards.

Some liked the Purple Sun Sect's emphasis on martial dao, others liked the Precious Tree Sect's focus on pills, yet others leaned towards the Myriad Spirit Sect's invincibility in taming spirit creatures, and of course there were those who wished that they had special talents that would be identified by the Flowing Wind Sect.

However, they were still a bit worried.

"So how is this first stage going to be conducted? How will they discover if we have uncommon potential?"

"Yeah, and with so many of us, what if they miss one?"

"Don't you worry, I don't believe that they wouldn't have considered these problems since they're conducting this selection!"

"The four great sects possess great arts, they naturally have their ways. Stop fussing."

With the four forefathers' hearing, they heard snatches of all of the various conversations taking place beneath the stage.

Forefather Sunchaser laughed heartily, "There must be those amongst you that worry how we will discover your potential amongst the hundreds of thousands of participants?"

"I can tell you, it's not difficult!"

Sunchaser's tone was confident. "Unless you purposefully hide your potential and don't wish to be discovered, the tests will be enough to fully display your talents!"

"And now, I will explain the rules of the first stage."

"There are five trials in the first stage. We've combined particular characteristics of the terrain of the legacy territory to build the tests."

"The first trial is one of the heart. In the world of martial dao, regardless of what your potential is, you must pass the trial of the heart. If you fail to pass even that, then you are destined for mediocrity in this world. Without a strong heart on the path of dao, you will amount to nothing in the end!"

The trial of the heart was the first one!

Jiang Chen privately applauded Sunchaser in his heart. These were rules set personally by the forefathers alright! To put a trial of the heart as the first one, this proved their status as origin realm practitioners.

Those who had entered the origin realm all knew how difficult it was to form a spirit infant.

Ye Chonglou had continuously failed to advance because he hadn't placed enough emphasis on the strength of the heart.

The forefathers had no relationship with Ye Chonglou and naturally wouldn't give him any pointers.

Seeing the forefathers set a trial of the heart as the first test indicated that they knew that strength of the heart was a vital prerequisite to assailing the origin realm.

"The second trial is one of innate talents. You will face many decisions in this trial. You can choose a test of martial dao, a test of pills, or a test of formations. Of course, the best thing to do is to run through all of them once. You will have more opportunities to excavate your own potential this way!"

To put a trial of talent as the second test, that made sense as well.

It wasn't that those with ordinary talent couldn't raise their level of training to perfection in the world of martial dao, but that they were as rare as the scales on a dragon compared to geniuses.

Jiang Chen had once heard of such an example in his past life. The person in question had been called Han Li and was born quite ordinary with no spirit base in his body, but had become the strongest in his world and ascended to the world of immortals in the end.

However, examples of practitioner with mediocre talent training to the level of perfection were pitifully few and far in between.

This was also to say that talent was still quite important on the path of training.

The potential of Jiang Chen's body could only be characterized as ordinary, but he could raise that through the various methods he'd gleaned from his past life.

"The third trial is one of endurance and potential. In this trial, you will face the Endless Mountain. There are ten thousand steps in the mountain, divided into ten floors. The level of floors and steps you can take will partition your endurance and potential. Someone else will explain the exact rules to you in detail before you enter."

"The fourth trial is one of practical combat. Combat cannot be avoided on the path of martial dao. This will test your skills in actual fighting and your comprehension of martial arts techniques. If the trial of talent was to test your innate skills, then this one is to test your understanding and skill in actual combat."

Talents and comprehension were similar, but still different.

Innate talents were the potential that one was born with, such as Long Juxue's azure phoenix constitution. That was an innate talent, and a premier one at that.

Comprehension was one's powers of understanding.

It was difficult to say whether talent or understanding was more important in the world of martial dao. But if one possessed both, then they would be the 'genius' that people often spoke of.

To test endurance and potential first, and then skill in practical combat, this was to avoid the injuries of the combat trial affecting the previous trials. This arrangement was reasonable as well.

Jiang Chen also inwardly approved of this. They were origin realm old monsters alright. They had fully considered details from all aspects and weren't haphazardly designing the first selection.

“The fifth trial may sound a bit silly, but it’s something that no one can overlook. We will be testing fortune in this trial. Fortune appears as something abstract and intangible, but it’s something that cannot be ignored in the world of martial dao. Some have extraordinary potential, others have superb powers of comprehension, but why can they not make it to the peak of martial dao? What are they lacking? That would be fortune. There was once a great practitioner who was suddenly struck to death by lightning during a journey. This is a classic example of lacking good fortune. So do not treat this trial lightly.”

Jiang Chen had to be impressed by the four forefathers when he heard about this last trial.

From the looks of things, these four forefathers were indeed at the level of a preeminent existence of the sixteen kingdom alliance!

Chapter 280: Three Sects Fight Over Jiang Chen

The five trials of the first selection were: first – trial of the heart, second – trial of talent, third – trial of potential, fourth – trial of combat and fifth – trial of fortune.

Jiang Chen was hard pressed to find flaws in the design of these trials, even with his past experiences.

Just as Jiang Chen was thoroughly turning the meaning behind these five trials over in his mind, Sunchaser’s voice sounded once again. “Through these five trials, what potential you possess, what abilities you have, and how far you can walk in the future, will be divided out.”

The first selection would choose ten thousand from four hundred thousand participants to advance onwards.

The ten thousand would then participate in a second selection with the disciples of similar ages from the four sects.

Three thousand lucky participants would then receive the right to enter the sects.

But of this three thousand, it was uncertain how many of them would make it into the final sixty four.

After all, the opponents that these three thousand would face were the sect geniuses.

It was a pessimistic outlook on how many slots for the final sixty four would be taken by ordinary geniuses.

“Alright, this is all I will say with regards to the selections for now. There will be people specifically in charge of each trial and they will explain the rules in detail for you. Remember, before you enter, you must surrender your registration token for a participant token, a uniform, and a mask. Let me remind you that participation in the selection is anonymous. You are not allowed to reveal your real identity. Why is this, some ask? The answer is simple, this is to prevent cheating and ensure that the four great sects make their selections fairly.”

“It will be the same case in the second selection. You might ask if the sect disciples will be anonymous as well? Of course not. They are already part of a sect and they are only participating in the selection to compete for a slot in the final sixty four. They do not need to be anonymous.”

It wasn’t difficult to understand this rule either.

The mundane practitioners all had different backgrounds, nationalities, and naturally, they had certain relationships with the four great sects.

In this way, unhealthy competition could form as relationships prevail over rules.

If they conducted the selection anonymously and make it so that the four great sects were unable to recruit on basis of relationships, then recruitment would be able to be conducted through fair competition.

Of course, the rules were thus, but there were still room for cheating.

Nothing could be perfect, and the rules could only minimize the possibility of cheating as much as they could.

Some particular situations were unavoidable, and there was nothing for that either.

Take Jiang Chen for example, his trademark style would be recognized sooner or later in the second selection.

His light was too bright to be hidden, not to mention that there was no need for him to conceal anything in a selection like this. He would face the preeminent geniuses of the sixteen kingdoms in the final competition. If he hid too much of his strength, it would be a lack of responsibility towards himself.

“Alright then, come and collect your participant tokens, uniforms, and masks according to your nationality.”

Forefather Sunchaser left the stage after announcing the rules and he left it for those in charge of the details.

The four sects had sent thousands of their middle and upper management to the great selection, demonstrating how highly they viewed this year’s event.

Jiang Chen stood in line, neither impatient or restless.

Suddenly, white light flashed in front of his eyes as a figure landed in front of him.

It was a senior executive riding a spirit creature. His style of dress was quite similar to forefather Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit Sect, and his steed bore the unique mark of the Myriad Spirit Sect.

This person was most likely upper management in the Myriad Spirit Sect.

“Heh heh, young friend, I recognized you with a glance from the crowd of four hundred thousands. You’re Jiang Chen right?” The person wore a smile on his face as he appeared quite benevolent and kindly.

“Allow me to introduce myself. I am Wang Tuo, the vice head of the Myriad Spirit Sect. I’ve heard that young friend Jiang Chen orchestrated a thousand spirit birds to set up a formation and captured two earth spirit realm disciples of the Precious Stree Sect in the Skylareel Kingdom?”

“Vice head Wang has a wondrous intelligence network.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

“Haha, it’s most likely that everyone knows about it. Young friend Jiang Chen, I don’t like to waste time with blather. I’m here to invite you to join my Myriad Spirit Sect. I wonder if the young friend would be interested?”

“Oh? Isn’t vice head Wang’s recruitment like this against the rules?” chuckled Jiang Chen.

“The selection hasn’t started now, has it? It’s not a violation as long as the selection hasn’t started. As long as young friend Jiang Chen nods, I will immediately take you and make you my personal disciple. You won’t need to participate in the first selection at all, and you can go directly to the second selection.”

Wang Tuo, the vice head of the Myriad Spirit Sect, was personally asking Jiang Chen to be his personal disciple! The participants in area around Jiang Chen immediately erupted into a furor when they heard this.

Everyone immediately looked at Jiang Chen with admiration.

This kind of treatment had fallen into his lap from the sky! He could bypass the first selection and enter the second selection, and he wouldn’t have to worry about fighting for a place in a sect. He could directly jump ahead to fighting for a place the final sixty four!

Sounds of astonishment sounded from all around.

There was admiration and envy.

All eyes were on Jiang Chen. They all thought that he was going to soar into the skies with one step.

There was a faint smile on Jiang Chen’s face.

Although the Myriad Spirit Sect was one of the four great sects, it wasn’t Jiang Chen’s first choice. His first choice, and only choice, was the Precious Tree Sect.

He had his sights set on the Precious Tree Sect precisely for their reputation as being the leader for spirit medicines.

What he needed most right now was spirit medicines and the best spirit medicine resources.

Although the Myriad Spirit Sect was good in the area of taming and raising spirit creatures, it wasn’t Jiang Chen’s first choice. Besides, there was really nothing the sect could teach Jiang Chen with regards to spirit creatures.

In the same regard, they may not even have the right for Jiang Chen to teach them anything.

He was hesitating over how to politely turn them down when another pulse of spirit power flashed right next to him as a woman touched down.

“Vice head Wang, recruiting before the selection begins is not the thing to do.” A smile played about her lips as hints of temptation and promise were held within. Her every move and sway were quite alluring.

“Young friend Jiang Chen, I am vice head Jiang Rou of the Flowing Wind Sect. You and I have the same surname, maybe we were even part of the same clan five hundred years ago. I am here with orders from the Flowing Wind forefather to recruit you. As long as you...”

“Daoist Jiang, what do you mean by this? The order of arrival has to be respected in all things, no?” Wang Tuo felt a bit alarmed when he saw Jiang Ruo’s sudden interruption and her tug on the heartstrings with her mention of their shared surname.

“Heh heh heh heh...” Jiang Ruo tittered delightfully. “Vice head Wang, what are you worried about? The choice lies with young friend Jiang Chen. If he’s already predisposed towards a certain sect, then he has his choice already. What use is there in the two of us yelling at each other?”

Wang Tuo gave a soft snort. “Daoist Jiang, you’ve even employed your unique seduction art. This is a vicious competition already. Who amongst young men can resist your art?”

Jiang Ruo’s eyes shone as she laughed, “If you have any tricks up your sleeve, vice head Wang, bring them out as well!”

Wang Tuo called out, “Young friend Jiang Chen, if you’re not satisfied with a position as my personal disciple, even the forefather of my sect would be willing to take you as a disciple. It’s not impossible for him to take you as a personal disciple if your talents in training spirit creatures are extraordinary!”

He had upped the ante.

Jiang Ruo was about to add to her terms as well when a soft voice called from above, “Friends, this isn’t quite the thing to do, hmm? You’re attempting to steal one of my kingdom’s talents from right in front of me?”

“Eh?”

Jiang Ruo and Wang Tuo’s expression changed when they saw who had arrived. A hint of wariness could be seen and they smiled with some difficulty.

The person who had arrived possessed an uncommon air and he was as if a graceful willow tree welcoming the breeze. He was the head of the Precious Tree Sect, Xie Tianshu.

Xie Tianshu was the current sect head and his position was second only to forefather Thousandleaf. He even ranked ahead of esteemed elder Iron Long.

In his capacity as the sect head, he had naturally heard of Jiang Chen’s reputation in the past couple of days.

He’d actually been keeping an eye on Jiang Chen in private, but he hadn’t been able to make an appearance to recruit Jiang Chen because of the circumstances. He was the head of a sect after all.

Jiang Chen and esteemed elder Iron Long’s clan was in the midst of furious unpleasanties. He’d have to wait for this wave to die down even if he wanted to recruit Jiang Chen.

Otherwise, his performance as a sect head would come off as too hasty, lacking of good bearing and a complete loss of understanding the greater picture.

However, now that his competition, Wang Tuo and Jiang Ruo, were openly stealing his target, Xie Tianshu found it hard to sit still!

Setting aside the matter of Jiang Chen's potential, just his ruthlessness in handling the Iron family made Jiang Chen worth recruiting.

After all, the veiled struggles and open confrontation between the Xie and Iron family in the Precious Tree Sect was an eternal theme. If Jiang Chen could become a thorn in the Iron family's side, then there was no reason not to recruit him.

"Heh heh, sect head Xie, Jiang Chen was in the Skylaurel Kingdom for two years and the Precious Tree Sect didn't make a move. You can't dictate what we want to do with who you didn't want, can you? Not to mention, what's the purpose of the great selection this time? It's to unearth talents! You try to disallow us from recruiting someone you don't want. Now, this is a public oppression of the genius Jiang Chen and to make it so that he never can make a name for himself?" Wang Tuo chuckled oddly.

"Indeed, indeed. You speak like your Precious Tree Sect values talent, but I've heard that some within your sect have been suppressing Jiang Chen regardless of the cost. You don't want a genius such as him, but you dare say that we can't have him either? What kind of logic is this?" Jiang Ruo wasn't about to take this lying down either.

Xie Tianshu's face lost all color thanks to their words, and he was in quite an awkward situation.

He'd lost quite a bit of face in the span of a moment. That's true, Jiang Chen was in the Skylaurel Kingdom for so long, yet the Precious Tree Sect had failed to recruit him and they had allowed a bright pearl to be covered in dust. This was indeed the sect's negligence.

However, Jiang Chen had only recently started displaying such potential, and he himself had only started noticing Jiang Chen in the last couple of days.

Thanks to Jiang Ruo and Wang Tuo's words, it appeared that the Precious Tree Sect had been purposefully neglecting Jiang Chen.

Xie Tianshu was worried that Jiang Chen would be unhappy and he would have thoughts of which of the other two sects to join.

However, everyone around Jiang Chen was flabbergasted by this turn of events.

The first selection hadn't even begun! Jiang Chen was already being fought over by the senior executives of three of the sects, with the sect head of the Precious Tree Sect showing up in person!