

Three Realms 281

Chapter 281: The Purple Sun Sect's Decision

Although Jiang Chen's name was quite famous within the sixteen kingdoms, apart from within the Skylaurel Kingdom, anything that was known about Jiang Chen had all been built on rumors.

Since it was just rumors and gossip, many were still refused to accept Jiang Chen deep within their hearts. They didn't believe the rumors, feeling that they painted a picture of Jiang Chen larger than life.

However, at this moment, the vice heads and sect head of three sects were setting aside their identities and openly extending invitations towards Jiang Chen in front of everyone!

The most crucial thing was, theoretically speaking, their actions weren't against the rules.

The rules said that no cheating was allowed after the first selection had started.

They didn't say that the sects couldn't recruit before the first selection started. It was right and proper if someone recognized value where it lay right then and was willing to use rich rewards to recruit someone.

Although Xie Tianshu felt a bit awkward, he was the head of a sect after all.

After being pressured by Wang Tuo and Jiang Ruo, he smiled faintly, "A treasured blade's edge is honed through repeated sharpening, plum blossoms that make it through winter smell even more fragrant. Although Jiang Chen has met some setbacks in the Skylaurel Kingdom, my sect was thinking of the greater picture and wanted to go to greater depths to test him. Reality has also proven that Jiang Chen is indeed suitable for the Precious Tree Sect, and is worthy of the sect recruiting him at all costs."

At all costs.

These were solemn words.

Wang Tuo and Jiang Ruo looked at each other, seeing worry in each other's eyes.

If the Precious Tree Sect was willing to do whatever necessary to recruit Jiang Chen, then their offers wouldn't be able to compete with that.

After all, Jiang Chen's foundations were in the Skylaurel Kingdom, his connections lay there as well. If the Precious Tree Sect paid no heed to the cost in recruiting him, then they would have a great advantage.

Wang Tuo grew worried, "Jiang Chen, you have such extraordinary potential in raising spirit creatures, and can be described as a rare genius that comes around once in a thousand years. The Myriad Spirit Sect alone is the most suitable sect for you. The Precious Tree Sect allowed you to languish in the shadows, not only not helping you, but suppressing you all around as well. How is that the proper attitude towards a genius?"

Jiang Ruo didn't back down either, "Jiang Chen, perhaps your potential isn't limited to just raising spirit creatures. Our Flowing Wind Sect is most adept at unearthing hidden talents. Perhaps there are other

potentials and great powers hidden within you. Only the Flowing Wind Sect within the sixteen kingdoms can uncover the utmost limit of your potential.”

Everyone’s words made sense.

They each emphasized their advantages and were extravagantly florid with their words, as if flowers were raining from the sky.

However, Jiang Chen’s prime target was the Precious Tree Sect. He was participating in the selection because of that sect’s spirit medicine resources.

Although the Myriad Spirit Sect was quite strong in training spirit creatures, he didn’t think that he’d be able to learn much from them.

It was true that the Flowing Wind Sect was skilled at unearthing potential, but Jiang Chen was well aware where his potential lay and was even more so aware of his advantages.

His worry wasn’t how to unearth his capabilities, but that he had too many of them.

As for the Purple Sun Sect, it never entered Jiang Chen’s consideration, no matter how he looked at things.

Although he’d long since decided on the Precious Tree Sect, he didn’t intend to declare his tendencies at the moment.

To do so now would make the Precious Tree Sect think less of him, and think that he was only worth this much. They had only asked offhandedly, and he had come running as soon as they’d beckoned.

This didn’t fit Jiang Chen’s personality.

If he were to enter a sect, they would have to be fighting each other for the honor.

The sect head putting in an appearance?

Jiang Chen didn’t give a rat’s ass about that at all. You’re the head of the sect alright, but isn’t it too late for you to express your sincerity now?

Where were you when the Iron family was making trouble for me again and again?

You want me to run to you with gratitude now that you’ve come and shown your old face?

Think again!

Since the master of the Precious Tree Sect was forefather Thousandleaf, then he was the one who had to extend the invite!

Besides, Jiang Chen didn’t want to give rise to rumors that he’d entered the sect using a backdoor.

I, Jiang Chen, can enter the sect on the basis of my own strength. What need have I for you, Xie Tianshu, to play the good guy now?

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Over where the forefathers were, apart from Sunchaser, the other three were in a stunning accord with what was transpiring over there. No one stood out to object.

It would've been ludicrous had the three forefathers stepped out to fight over a mundane disciple. Even though Jiang Chen had already left an impression on them, things had yet to progress to the final stage of the selection. With their positions as an origin realm forefathers, they wouldn't step out to fight over a disciple.

Even though Jiang Chen's performance was quite stunning and had made some eye-catching moves, showing off some extraordinary potential, but at their current stage on the path of martial dao, they had seen too much already.

They had seen too many geniuses with potential.

Yet how many of those had been able to make it to the origin realm in the end?

Only the four of them had appeared in nearly a thousand years.

Although they thirsted for talent, they still trusted only their eyes as proof and wished to observe the true talents of the various geniuses through the first selection.

Sunchaser from the Purple Sun Sect wrinkled his brow slightly when he saw this scene.

The other three had sent their sect head or vice heads, and only the senior executives of the Purple Sun Sect were notable in their absence.

This made forefather Sunchaser feel a bit disgruntled.

Even if you don't care about this young man, at least put on an act? Four hundred thousand ordinary disciples represent four hundred thousand pairs of eyes.

What will they think of our sect when they see how enthusiastic the other three are towards this young man?

People could possibly think that the Purple Sun Sect was too arrogant.

"Zixu, what's going on over there?" Sunchaser couldn't help but send a mental message to Purple Sun Sect head Zixu Zhenren.

Zixu Zhenren also felt quite awkward when he witnessed this scene.

It wasn't that he didn't want to recruit Jiang Chen, but once he heard of the feud between Jiang Chen and his sect's Shuiyue faction, he resigned himself to give up on that notion.

This Jiang Chen had come from the Eastern Kingdom and had a death feud with the Long Juxue genius of the Shuiyue faction!

When he heard the name "Long Juxue", Zixu knew that there was no hope for Jiang Chen to enter the sect.

Although it'd been less than two years since Long Juxue entered the sect, Master Shuiyue had used a monumental amount of effort to push Long Juxue from the peak of true qi master to the earth spirit realm half a month ago!

Long Juxue, a genius girl less than twenty years old, was already in the earth spirit realm!

This wasn't to say that the Purple Sun Sect lacked geniuses with this level of training, but Long Juxue was different. She'd entered the sect only less than two years ago. Her rate of improvement was truly the definition of leaps and bounds.

The advantage of the azure phoenix constitution beneath the attentive care of the sect pushed Long Juxue forward at such a rate that the other preeminent geniuses within the sect could only tsk in amazement.

Even though her level of training wasn't in the lead of the geniuses within the sect, her potential laid bare. Everyone was well aware that the second selection was three years long.

In these three years, Long Juxue's level of training was certain to see a significant increase!

Master Shuiyue's expectations for her were the peak of the earth spirit realm at the lowest, meaning the sixth level spirit realm.

And that was only her lowest estimate.

With such incredible potential like the azure phoenix constitution, if she had enough resources and fortuitous encounters within these three years, it was possible that she could break through to the sky spirit realm.

She could even continue further into the sky spirit realm as well.

The azure phoenix constitution, a genius found once in hundreds of years, was practically born for the martial dao. Her potential, her powers of comprehension, her bloodline – they all enabled her to take to any technique and method like a fish in water. Once she successfully practiced them to perfection, her power would also far exceed that of her peers.

Although Long Juxue was now only at the fourth level spirit realm, the executives of the Purple Sun Sect had long since listed her as one of the six most likely to make it into the final sixteen.

Apart from Long Juxue, the other five were almost all at the peak of the earth spirit realm, even with those incredible existences of the sky spirit realm.

Long Juxue was only at the fourth level spirit realm and was treated as on par with the premier geniuses within the sect. From this, it was obvious how extraordinary her potential was.

It was because of this that when Zixue Zhenren heard of the death feud between Jiang Chen and Long Juxue, he had given up the idea of recruiting Jiang Chen without a further thought.

Although Jiang Chen had a great reputation lately, from Zixu's perspective a few talented tricks still paled far in comparison to Long Juxue's azure phoenix constitution.

Zixu could only answer honestly when the forefather asked him, "Forefather, Jiang Chen and Long Juxue of the azure phoenix constitution both hail from the Eastern Kingdom and a death feud exists between them. One mountain cannot hold two tigers, so our sect can only give up on this Jiang Chen."

Sunchaser immediately understood once he heard this explanation.

He mentally put Jiang Chen on his blacklist. If he had a feud with Long Juxue, then he was the Purple Sun Sect's enemy.

Even Sunchaser had to admit that Long Juxue's potential made him want to take her as a true disciple.

He was merely waiting for Long Juxue to emerge from the masses during this time's great selection before taking her as a true disciple.

In this regard, Sunchaser's mentality grew detached, and he settled on the attitude of watching a good show as he watched the three sects fight one another. He was quite disdainful of them. Is it worth fighting over someone destined to die?

"I say, you three, to send out your sect head and vice heads to recruit a mere mundane disciple, don't you think you are raising a great fuss over nothing and damaging the repute of your sects?" Sunchaser chuckled.

Ninelion from the Myriad Spirit Sect barked out a laugh. "Old monster Sunchaser, don't take such a high and mighty tone. Who doesn't know that Jiang Chen has a death feud with one of your geniuses and thus you can't take him. What are you acting so aloof for?"

Ninelion's personality was a bit disagreeable as he mercilessly exposed Sunchaser's sham.

Chapter 282: Jiang Chen Refuses

Sunchaser laughed heartily, "Since all of you are aware of the matters behind the scenes, why go to such lengths in recruiting him? This Jiang Chen has offended the genius with most potential in my sect. What greatness can he amount to if he is destined to die within this great selection? Is he really that worthy of having all of you chasing after him?"

"Tsk tsk, I can't listen to you talk." Ninechaser rolled his eyes. "I've rather heard that it was those so-called sect geniuses who were almost destroyed by Jiang Chen in the mundane Eastern Kingdom. They had to rely on some of their senior brothers bullying the weak to limp away from the scene."

"Humph. That was then and this is now. Long Juxue had just washed away the evil humours that plagues the azure phoenix constitution, and had yet to deploy her full potential. Now that she's entered my Purple Sun Sect, it is as if the dragon is returning to the sea. She's destined to overturn rivers and oceans, and steal the very heavens and the moon. A mere ordinary brat is destined to be her stepping stone, and an inconsequential one at that."

Sunchaser had the most domineering personality out of all the forefathers.

It was forefather Thousandleaf who smiled faintly. "Why are we old folks standing here discussing such a boring topic? How many extraordinary geniuses have fallen to the hands of nameless nobodies in the end when pursuing the path of the martial dao? Although both you and I are of the origin realm, we are not gods, so what matters can we set in stone?"

Although he spoke conservatively, it was obvious that he was quite dismissive of Sunchaser's attitude – as if no one on earth could defeat him.

The old folks were indeed a bit envious of an innate constitution, but a good potential didn't represent everything.

At least, Long Juxue had been forced to almost the brink in the mundane world by Jiang Chen and had almost lost her life. This was a stain on her life and was destined to become one of Long Juxue's internal demons.

If she didn't eliminate it, she would have no hope of setting foot into the origin realm in her life.

If she couldn't enter the origin realm, then all was as intangible as the wispy clouds in the eyes of these old folks.

In the eyes of the origin realm practitioners, only the origin realm or those with the potential to enter the realm were worthy of entering their eyes.

Icemist smiled demurely, "Daoist Sunchaser, an innate constitution is indeed rare, and difficult to find once in a hundred years. The fact that the Purple Sun Sect was able to find it in a mundane kingdom was indeed the Purple Sun Sect's blessing. However, with my Flowing Wind Sect's abilities in uncovering potential, I can see that Jiang Chen embodies great potential and power. And this power may not necessarily be inferior to an argus phoenix constitution."

The Flowing Wind Sect was adept at discovering geniuses and excavating the potential of their disciples.

Although forefather Icemist's words were spoken as gently as the spring winds of March, they had an aura to them that made one have to consider them gravely.

"Little sister Icemist, your old brother here normally wouldn't doubt your words. However, although Jiang Chen has a bit of potential, all is still hot air in the face of the argus phoenix constitution. Of this, I firmly believe. I think all of you know better than me what an innate constitution means."

Sunchaser's tone was also firm.

Ninelion laughed heartily, "And what of an innate constitution? If she can't get past Jiang Chen, he will forever be her internal demon. If she doesn't clear it away, do you think she will have any hope of entering the origin realm?"

The strength of a spirit king practitioner's heart in assailing the origin realm was of utmost importance.

Having internal demons meant harboring latent threats in one's consciousness. In the process of breaking through, the backlash formed by the internal demons made it very likely that the practitioner would be crippled at best, or dead at worst.

This was absolutely not alarmist talk.

Sunchaser chuckled, "It's precisely because that Jiang Chen is Long Juxue's rival to the death that he is fated to die by Long Juxue's hand."

Amongst the forefathers, none of them were willing to submit to the others.

It wasn't that they liked Jiang Chen or thought that much of him, but that they didn't want to see Sunchaser actually succeed in cultivating Long Juxue's constitution.

It was true that the sixteen kingdoms needed geniuses.

However, humans were selfish by nature and all the elders had hoped that geniuses would be in their sect, and not in their competitor's.

If all the geniuses had similar potential, then everyone could split them equally.

However, the advantage an innate constitution had was simply too great. The other forefathers were more or less a bit jealous.

Once an innate constitution broke through to the origin realm, then the advantages of their potential would be even more fully displayed. The rate in which she grew stronger would be limitless.

Once that kind of situation formed, the balance of the four great sects equally dividing up the sixteen kingdoms would more than likely be broken.

As the forefathers sparred verbally, Xie Tianshu, Wang Tuo, and Jiang Ruo had all returned to their own camps.

Judging from their appearances, it seemed that no one had gotten the upper hand and successfully recruited Jiang Chen.

When Wang Tuo came to Sunchaser, he said dejectedly, "Forefather, your subordinate was incompetent and unable to recruit Jiang Chen. Please pass down your judgement."

"Haha, Wang Tuo, even sect head Xie of the Precious Tree Sect made a personal appearance. This was not your fault."

Xie Tianshu smiled wryly, "Forefather Ninelion, I was incompetent and also didn't recruit Jiang Chen."

"Oh?" The forefathers turned their gazes towards Wang Ruo, thinking that Jiang Chen had been convinced by the Flowing Wind Sect.

Wang Ruo didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Please don't look at me this way, forefathers. Jiang Chen isn't as simple as everyone thinks."

"Oh? What's going on here? Wang Tuo, speak up." Ninelion was immensely intrigued. The three sects had set forth but hadn't succeeded in swaying a mundane disciple?

Wang Tuo spoke with depression, "Jiang Chen said that since he'd come here, he didn't want the four hundred thousand ordinary practitioners to feel that the four sects were a place that one could backdoor into. His reasons were quite noble and dignified. He said for the face of the four sects and so that everyone would think it's fair, he still wanted to participate in the great selection and use his own strength to make it into the sects so that no one would have any reason to speak ill of him."

Jinag Chen had indeed said so.

He hadn't been able to find a more noble and dignified reason.

This reason had been respectable and irrefutable.

The forefathers looked at each other, at a loss of what to do as they started laughing wryly.

Sunchaser also couldn't help but laugh, "It looks like we've underestimated Jiang Chen's personality. This personality isn't one of an elite genius, but one of a narcissistic, self indulgent idiot. This is just as well. Since none of you have decided on him, Long Juxue will be even more unperturbed in killing this brat. I also don't have to worry about the possibility of erupting in open hostilities with one of you."

Sunchaser laughed heartily as he felt that Jiang Chen was arrogant in his youth. Even though he had potential, he lacked the mentality to go with it.

He knew full well that he would possibly meet oppression from Long Juxue in the great selection, but he didn't understand how to grasp the one thing that might save him.

What need was there to fear a young genius who knew only the situation but didn't know how to judge the hour and seize the opportunity.

Sunchaser looked only more favorably upon Long Juxue killing Jiang Chen now.

The other forefathers also felt slight ripples of emotion in their hearts upon hearing this. To be honest, they didn't really know what to make of Jiang Chen's choice from their perspective.

As much potential a young genius had, he had no need to be so arrogant as to put on airs in the face of sect recruitment.

Indeed, in the eyes of these senior executives, they felt that Jiang Chen was putting on airs.

When a young man did so, that meant he wasn't mature enough. When one was like this, unless he was truly an unparalleled genius, his future would otherwise be worrisome.

Those present had been anticipating Jiang Chen becoming Long Juxue's internal demon.

They felt slightly disappointed now.

This Jiang Chen didn't even have the most basic grasp of what was an appropriate action to take in a situation like this. Could he really withstand the threat of Long Juxue in the great selection?

Although the selection was anonymous, if Jiang Chen could make it to the final stage, he was sure to be recognized.

At that time, once Jiang Chen and Long Juxue stood on the dueling stage, it wouldn't be difficult for her to kill a young man with no protection from a sect then.

In the eyes of these senior executives, the smartest move that Jiang Chen could take now was to join a sect, and then make use of the first selection to take a teacher, receive some pointers, and gain some good equipment, thereby adding to his resources to fight against Long Juxue.

In the eyes of the forefathers, this was merely a small interlude in the end.

Their original intentions were to discover geniuses through the selection. This was the true purpose!

The process of four hundred thousand participants receiving their participant tokens, uniforms, and masks was also a monumental undertaking.

It was a good thing that the four sects had dispatched enough people this time, so that all participants had received their tokens after two hours.

Jiang Chen took his token, changed into his uniform, and put on his mask.

He looked around and saw that it was a mass of silver-white masks around him. It was indeed difficult to make anyone out.

The most marvelous thing was that this uniform could actually mask a person's aura. This negated the method of using a person's aura to determine one's identity.

"Remember, all of you must maintain anonymity before the selection ends. If anyone lets their mask or uniform drop from you during the selection, that will result in automatic disqualification. Don't think you can slip through the cracks as there is a miniscule spirit glyph embedded within the uniform. We will know when it departs from your body."

Jiang Chen made a small probe when he heard this and discovered that this was true.

"It looks like that the four great sects are indeed valuing this time's great selection. The amounts spent on the uniforms and masks already are likely great indeed, not to mention the monumental costs of opening the legacy realm of the ancient times according to tutor Ye." Jiang Chen sighed in his heart.

His fighting spirits were naturally heightened when he saw how much emphasis the four great sects were placing on this selection.

Forefather Sunchaser's voice sounded again when everyone had received their participant tokens, "Alright, the legacy realm has already been opened. All participants, move out!"

The legacy realm was within the Redflame Kingdom.

The four hundred thousand strong army had arrived on a sea of clouds after roughly one hour. This ocean of clouds billowed indistinctly, giving one the impression that they were walking amongst the stars at a glance.

Many dots of light rippled through the ocean, as if untold numbers of leaping carp atop a mighty river, full of life and movement.

Jiang Chen could sense the strong spirit power field around him and knew that this was likely the entrance.

"Alright, you will be fully within the legacy realm less than thirty li after entering this ocean of clouds." Forefather Sunchaser and the others transformed into four streaks of light and led the charge after he finished speaking.

The other senior executives also followed closely behind and set out.

Jiang Chen was in no hurry as he fell in step with the rest of the army, making his way in.

Although Jiang Chen had lived two lives, his emotions were thrumming a bit with excitement right now as well. This could be marked as the first time he was truly greeting a challenge for the first time in his two lives.

Chapter 283: The First Trial, Path of Rebirth

After threading through the ocean of clouds, everyone's vision gradually cleared up, and they discovered that they'd already entered a world vastly different from the one they'd just been in.

Lofty and soaring peaks towered in the distance. As if numerous circling ancient beasts, they were so tall that they could reach the Big Dipper, and so mighty that they could dominate the nine heavens, giving one an awe inspiring feeling of overwhelming strength.

The senior executives of the four great sects had been waiting for quite a while within the legacy realm.

"Remember, you are now standing in the legacy territory of ancient times. You must heed instructions with your every movement within the territory. It is very likely that you will be buried here if you disregard instructions and go off on your own. This is absolutely not an empty threat."

The legacy territory of ancient times was widely acclaimed as the most mysterious of all territories in the sixteen kingdom alliance.

"Alright, let's not waste time in further talk. You will face the first trial next, the trial of the heart. This trial is called the path of rebirth. You will be divided into a hundred different areas and enter the path. The path that you will embark upon is the same difficulty for everyone, but different scenes will appear according to the composition of your hearts. This trial will be testing the strength of your heart. The duration of the trial is limited to ten days. If you cannot make it out within ten days, then you will be deemed as having failed the first trial."

"Those who fail will be sent out of the legacy territory."

A cold voice sounded in everyone's consciousness.

"This trial is also the one with the highest failure rate. Two thirds, or even more, of those assembled here may be disqualified."

On the path of martial dao, strength of the heart was of the utmost importance.

If one could not make it past a trial of the heart, then any potential one had was simply empty talk. If a practitioner couldn't even raise the strength of his heart, then he would never ascend to the peak no matter what he did.

After all, if one had insufficient strength of the heart when assailing the origin realm, one would never break through to it.

The ultimate goal of the four forefathers was to select geniuses with the potential to make it to the origin realm.

The path of rebirth?

Jiang Chen turned these three words over in his heart. They sounded quite mystical. This name would not have been arbitrarily bestowed.

Was this a road in which one had to experience the cycle of life and death?

Jiang Chen readily accepted this. He'd lived two lives, what aspect of reincarnation hadn't he experienced? What joys and sorrows hadn't he tasted?

"I have an advantage in this trial as well. Setting aside the fact that these practitioners can't measure up to my experiences, my practice of Boulder's Heart is enough to give me an enormous advantage in a competition between mundane disciples."

Jiang Chen was full of confidence.

"Remember, the time allotted for the first trial is ten days. If you can complete a circuit of the path in ten days, that means you've passed. If you can complete it in eight days, that means your strength of the heart is above average. If completed in five days, that means you are absolutely a genius in the matters of the mind. If you can finish in three days, then you are an unsurpassed genius in this regard."

The voice continued on faintly.

"Incidentally, if you finish within three days, your scores will be directly sent on towards the forefathers and you'll receive special attention. Although your identities will be temporarily masked, your participation tokens will be highlighted in front of the forefathers and receive their particular notice. I trust you don't need me to explain the meaning of this advantage?"

"What? Special attention from the forefathers?"

"My heart of martial dao has always been resolute. I'm definitely going to strive to finish within three days!"

"I have a hope of ascending to the skies in a single leap if I receive the forefathers' notice. Wonderful! I've always emphasized training the heart normally, this is surely my chance to shine!"

All the practitioners kept speaking words of encouragement to themselves to bolster themselves psychologically.

"Alright, we'll now be divided into groups. There are a hundred areas in total and each will absorb three to four thousand people. However, the path of rebirth is a lonely one. You will not run into each other on the path. Therefore, you won't need to worry about conflict from each other in this trial. You are always alone on the path of rebirth, remember this."

Four hundred thousand people wouldn't run into each other when walking the same path?

All the practitioners were quite astonished.

Jiang Chen was rather noncommittal. Since the path of rebirth was a legacy territory, then everything was possible.

An art that merely folded space was just a parlor trick in the hands of the ancient heavyweights. Jiang Chen would be able to experience things for himself once he entered this path of rebirth that was shrouded in mystery.

Since everyone was wearing a mask, there was no fear of revealing their identities. Jiang Chen naturally had no need to conceal his strength.

“Let’s display my talents to the utmost!” Jiang Chen decided in his heart.

The groups were quickly divided, and Jiang Chen was sent to the second area.

Each area had their own organizer, and the one in charge of the three, four thousand in the second area led them to an enormous, empty field.

“Do you see this? This empty field is a formation. You will enter the path of rebirth when the formation activates. Remember, where you start is also where you finish. This is to say that when the formation activates, where you appear is your starting and finish line. What you need to do is to set off from the starting line and walk forward until you end up at the finish line. You must do a complete circuit of the path.”

“The starting line is the finish line?”

“Remember, don’t think of getting up to any tricks. If you stay where you are without moving, and don’t walk down the path of rebirth, that is equivalent to forfeiting. You’ll be sent out after ten days. Another important thing to remember is that once you set out on your path, you can only move forward, not backward. Once you go backwards, the path of rebirth will be thrown into chaos and you’ll be disqualified immediately.”

Since the starting line was the finish line, some who had jumped to a different conclusion immediately began to think that if they stayed where they are, would that count as having walked the path?

When they heard this warning, those who were harboring these kinds of thoughts received a great shock and immediately gave up on this cheat.

A breeze suddenly grew in the air around the empty field. The dust in this surroundings began to follow the gust as a large, circular air current started to churn the ground beneath it.

Bam!

As the dirt and dust flew, the practitioners within the second area began to disappear where they stood as the formation activated.

“Path of rebirth, here I come!”

Jiang Chen was full of expectations at this moment as he set off on the path of rebirth with a strong desire to conquer it.

His body suddenly wavered as his feet seemed to set foot on something. Jiang Chen then opened his eyes and saw that his surroundings had changed to lush greenery.

Large trees gave shade to the grass beneath them as the fragrance of flowers and birdsong permeated the surroundings. This scene almost made Jiang Chen doubt, was this truly the path of rebirth?

In Jiang Chen's eyes, the path of rebirth should be as dank and frightening as the path to the underworld, full of nefarious and evil things.

Why was the path of rebirth so peaceful, as calm as a paradise separated from the world? Relaxation grew in people's hearts as they greatly enjoyed the surroundings.

"This kind of scenery is as though it's an immortal realm. Just what kind of path of rebirth is this? It's basically a magical road to the immortal world." Jiang Chen tsk'd with amazement in his heart.

He spun a few times where he stood and discovered that the trees and grasses here were actually all spirit plants! The fruit on the tree branches were all spirit fruits that would've been impossible to run into in the mundane world.

The least of all the exotic flowers and grasses would be hailed as an utmost treasure within the four sects.

"Mm? There are so many spirit items on the path of rebirth? If this is so, why are the four sects still so poor and weak?" Jiang Chen was astonished as he looked around. His heart suddenly trembled as Boulder's Heart suddenly wavered. "Ah, no! This is the path of the rebirth, all I see may be an illusion."

Jiang Chen's reaction was quite fast as he immediately woke up from this illusion. He shook his head and cast aside these extraneous thoughts. He carefully deployed God's Eye to observe these plants, but still found it difficult to discern whether they were real or fake.

"Amazing, whether it is real or fake, the fact that the path of rebirth can set up such a strong illusion and give rise to such strong temptation is incredible. Ah, forget it, I'm here to walk the path and cannot linger here in nostalgia."

Jiang Chen shouldered the sights of temptation around him and moved his feet, walking towards the front.

He kept practicing his Boulder's Heart, warning himself not to look backwards, not to look backwards. If he did and witnessed such temptation again, he may very well start walking backwards.

According to the rules, once you selected your direction on the path of rebirth, you had to keep following it without turning back. Once you turned back, the path of rebirth would be engulfed in chaos and you'd be directly disqualified.

Under the steadying influence of the Boulder's Heart, no more ripples arose in Jiang Chen's heart. That little bit of mental wavering he'd experienced when he'd just entered also vanished without a trace.

Jiang Chen's heart still palpitated with fright even after walking for a while.

"I've experienced two cycles of life and practice Boulder's Heart, but still almost lost myself in that scene just now. Can it be that the stronger one's strength of the heart is, the greater the temptation of the path of rebirth? I was almost mesmerized by the sights just now, if I'd moved to pick any of them, would I have lost myself forever?"

Jiang Chen felt that he'd been lucky when he thought about it.

He'd been quite confident towards this path of rebirth, but it was because he'd been too confident and too relaxed that had nearly led him to failure.

"It looks like I cannot relax my guard in any aspect of the great selection. Once my mind relaxes, the various tests of the trial of the heart will take advantage and slip in."

Jiang Chen slowly came to a few conclusions as a thought flashed through his mind, "Can it be that the path of rebirth reflects out the participant's mindset? What I currently need the most are spirit medicines, and the first scene I was greeted with was countless numbers of spirit ingredients. Perhaps the others would've seen something else entirely?"

Jiang Chen was even less likely to relax after thinking these thoughts.

If the path of rebirth could reflect the participants' mindset, then the path of rebirth would become stronger the greater the participant was. The stronger the determination within your heart, the greater the tests the path of rebirth would give to you.

Indeed, one had to use that bit of truest intention in their consciousness to overcome the stubbornness of the heart.

The trial of the heart and the path of rebirth wouldn't be that easy to pass.

He'd been shown up as soon as it'd started, but Jiang Chen didn't become nervous. Rather, he privately rejoiced. To be treated thus as soon as it started meant that the situation could serve as a warning that he could not afford to continue in such a lackadaisical manner. He must treat this trial seriously.

As he walked, the scenes in front of his eyes continued to change.

He seemed to have gone through many days in an instant, weathering the four seasons and going through a cycle of life and death.

A thundering, crashing mighty river suddenly appeared in front of him.

The swift waters roared fiercely with a large racket. They churned and roiled in their motion, vibrating the heavens as if the skies were collapsing and the earth was cracking.

There were three bridges across the river in front of Jiang Chen.

"The first test of rebirth, Bridge of Helplessness" was written on a stone marker on the shore.

Chapter 284: Trial After Trial

The three bridges were obviously there for Jiang Chen to choose from.

Although there were no clear indications on the path, Jiang Chen was well aware of the fact that there was only one bridge that was the right path.

Choosing the wrong bridge meant that he was out, because there was no way to backtrack on the path of rebirth. One could only keep moving forward.

Jiang Chen looked out on the bridges and he saw that there were shadows moving on the bridges in the mist. Although his line of sight wasn't the best, he could still see figures moving about on all three bridges.

This meant that there was someone on each of the bridges.

"A moment, didn't they say that one is always alone on the path of rebirth? Why is it that there are figures on all three bridges?"

Jiang Chen felt that it was a bit odd and utilized the God's Eye to peer upon the bridges.

Indeed, there were people walking on all the bridges towards the shore on the other side. Each bridge was filled with many people.

It looked like the bridge was quite slippery, as people continuously fell off the bridge and landed in the frothing river waters below.

The even more frightening thing was that when they fell into the waters, it was like falling into a pot of boiling oil as their bodies melted, leaving behind only a pile of white bones in the blink of an eye.

"How can this be?" Jiang Chen was startled. White bones could float on top of the water? Judging from the water's momentum, it could basically churn everything away, so how could it possibly leave the bones behind?

If one of the three bridges was the right one, why would the people on them fall down instead?

"This is a trial of the heart and not of the others. Everything on these bridges must be fake." Jiang Chen made his judgment.

He stood there for a moment and he went over all the clues in his mind again, suddenly feeling a flash of inspiration.

"Yes yes, they said that one is always alone on the path of rebirth. How is it possible that other people would appear? Since this is a solitary path, then everything I see must be illusionary. Everything, including even these three bridges, must be an illusion. These figures are just a reminder for me."

Those stark white bones were an illusion.

Even that roaring river was most likely fake as well!

Having practiced the Boulder's Heart, Jiang Chen's instinct would continuously give himself hints as soon as these kinds of thoughts appeared, seeking to make the thoughts more resolute.

He gave a long whistle and ignored the three bridges, leaping directly into the frothing waters.

When he stepped on the water, Jiang Chen discovered that it felt like he'd stepped on something hard. He took a close look and realized that he was still on the flat plains.

What great river in front of him? What bridges? Where had all the figures and white bones gone?

"Indeed, fabrications. It was all just a fabrication." Jiang Chen sighed softly, even more impressed by the person who had brought the path of rebirth into existence.

If one didn't have strong power of the heart on this path of reincarnation, and lacked sufficient powers of deduction and logic, or overlooked the organizer's words, then he would've surely embarked on the wrong path as soon as he'd set foot on any of the three bridges and he might've been disqualified immediately.

It was precisely because Jiang Chen had remembered that sentence — you are forever alone on the path of rebirth and you won't bump into anyone.

Since this was a trial of the heart, it wouldn't be so silly as to make people choose a meaningless decision and rely on luck to make it across the swift river.

Since it wasn't a game of chance, this meant that it was most likely that the three bridges were fake.

The river then was fake as well.

Jiang Chen's deductions were reasonable.

"Perhaps the words on the stone marker were a hint. What is the Bridge of Helplessness? It's a bridge on the path to the underworld. Perhaps the three bridges were called thus to hint that if you took these bridges, you wouldn't be able to make it past the path of rebirth at all."

These were Jiang Chen's thoughts.

"If anyone else meets the bridges, I believe that many of them will be disqualified. The word of at least two thirds of participants being disqualified in the first trial were most likely not an over exaggeration. It's very possible that many would've fallen in the first test."

After all, the three bridges were right there, and according to customary logic, many would choose to pass through one of them.

If one's heart was resolute and their powers of deduction strong, then one might consider the fact that without any clear hints, it was a game of chance if one would select the right bridge when it came down to choosing one amongst the three.

But it was a bit nonsensical to have a game of chance here. The path of rebirth was one of the trials, why would a game of chance be used to determine a practitioner's future?

"I wonder if my three followers can make it past this trial?" Jiang Chen suddenly thought of his three followers who were also participating in the selection.

However, he didn't have time to consider.

The path of rebirth's continual tests had made it so that Jiang Chen didn't dare think lightly of it anymore. Its first test had been enough to shock him slightly.

The test of the Bridge of Helplessness made Jiang Chen treat the trial with even more gravity.

Even though he had his advantages, it would be difficult to ensure that he'd have full confidence in passing if he relaxed his guard.

Jiang Chen suddenly felt a wall of heat hit his body, as if a strong current of hot air was rushing towards him from the front.

A stone marker suddenly appeared in front of him.

The second test of rebirth — Ocean of Divine Ashes.

Wham, wham, wham

Fire columns that shot into the sky were hovering on the path ahead, like ancient fire dragons spitting out goutts of flame.

Jiang Chen looked out and he saw that it was a vast expanse of fiery ocean wherever he looked, with no end in sight. The fiery ocean filled the heavens, and the tongues of flames gave rise to a mass of burning flames, giving one the feeling that they were in a fiery purgatory.

The strong scene of fire continued to rampage wildly, projecting the feeling that it would break through the boundary and rush to Jiang Chen's feet.

"Ocean of Divine Ashes?" Jiang Chen halted and frowned as he looked at the fiery ocean.

His first thought was that this fiery ocean was an illusion.

However, that feeling that everything would go up in flames, and the fiery ocean that felt like it would burn everything in sight made his entire body burn hotly as well. This kind of suffocating feeling felt quite very real indeed.

"There is no way backwards on the path of rebirth!" Jiang Chen had once again reached an obstacle and he was faced with a difficult decision.

Roar, roar.

Several red twisters rose in the fiery abyss, roiling with immense fire spirit power like crazed fire dragons and they hurtled towards Jiang Chen.

That momentum that they had was as if they were hated rivals with Jiang Chen and they wanted to swallow him where he stood.

Jiang Chen was shocked, and his first thought was to back up.

But a thought continuously appeared in his heart, and that was that he couldn't retreat.

There was no retreat on the path of rebirth!

The path would be thrown into chaos as soon as he took a step backwards and he'd be disqualified.

"Fake, fake, it's all fake. As real as it feels, it's still fake." Jiang Chen repeated to himself.

When this thought grew in his mind, he grit his teeth and charged forward, rushing headlong into the fire dragons.

He actually really wanted to activate the Lotus of Fire and Ice and see how it'd do, but reason told him that it wasn't time yet. If anyone was surveilling this trial, his trump card would be revealed there and then.

The ravaging fire dragons crashed into Jiang Chen, dispersing into nothingness like a soft breeze.

Jiang Chen rushed into the fiery ocean like an arrow loosed from the bow.

As he neared the unbridled heat waves, they continued to weaken and waver until they slowly disappeared.

“Fake again!” Jiang Chen wiped off some sweat. “It was a frightening thing to be caught between life and death. Even though I knew it was fake, it was still tough to charge into an ocean of fire. Since there is no way to turn back on the path of rebirth, I can only move forward. But to be honest, how many practitioners would dare make such a decision in the heat of the moment?”

Jiang Chen’s performance at the Ocean of Divine Ashes was much more resolute than before.

His Boulder’s Heart had also thoroughly been deployed to full effectiveness as he’d triumphed over that feeling of fear.

They said that one felt great horror when caught between life and death, but if they could triumph over this life and death, they would discover that this trial of life and death was still just an illusion.

After the Ocean of Divine Ashes, Jiang Chen’s mentality was even more bolstered.

The two trials had enabled him to slowly become used to the tests on the path of rebirth.

“No more hesitation, I need to keep moving. There will surely be more tests on the path of rebirth.” Jiang Chen made his way hurriedly and he didn’t hesitate any longer.

After the two tests, Jiang Chen didn’t run into anything else for a full half day.

The day passed, and night descended upon the path of rebirth.

As night fell, the inky black sky seemed to be an enormous monster filling the skies, making one’s emotions become heavy involuntarily.

Jiang Chen continued to walk as he discovered that he’d arrived on a path of flowers and shrubbery.

It was a sea of flowers that greeted his eyes.

The faint fragrance from the flowers seemed to follow him wherever he went, suffusing the air with fragrance.

“Jiang Chen you brat, I’ve waited for you for so long. You took your time getting here!”

Jiang Chen suddenly heard a sound as he looked around and discovered that he’d made it to the tutor manor beneath the cover of the night.

Those quiet surroundings, the familiar doorway, and the familiar figure. It was Dan Fei!

“Come on, I’ve waited for you for a long time.” Dan Fei smiled sweetly and walked forwards with the flowers’ fragrance, grasping Jiang Chen’s arm.

“Sister Dan Fei?” Jiang Chen started slightly.

“Still calling me sister at a time like this? Are you really a dunderhead?” Dan Fei’s jade finger poked at Jiang Chen’s forehead softly.

Her lithe figure softened as she collapsed into Jiang Chen's embrace. Jiang Chen's body grew hot as he held a soft, sweet smelling body in his arms.

Her skin was as flawless as jade, her breasts firm and perky, and that kiss that imprinted itself on Jiang Chen's lips was oh too real.

In the next moment, Dan Fei's slender hands had actually reached down and grabbed Jiang Chen's private parts.

Suddenly, the light clothes on her body began falling to the ground like a peeled egg, glistening and unblemished, full of a fatal temptation.

Chapter 285: A Myriad of Illusions, Heart as a Boulder

Dan Fei?

Jiang Chen shook his head slightly, his heart was as calm as still water.

Although he'd been slightly taken aback when Dan Fei had appeared, it wasn't enough to stir any bit of desire of him.

It wasn't that he didn't find women pleasurable, but that the ambiguous feelings between a man and a woman didn't exist between him and Dan Fei at all.

As real as this illusion was, it was still fake.

If the illusion had been Gouyu, that might've been enough to mesmerize Jiang Chen for a second, because Gouyu's style was indeed that bold and straightforward in her loves and hates.

However, there was none of that kind of draw between Dan Fei and Jiang Chen, and even if there was, this wasn't something that Dan Fei would've done.

Hoo!

Jiang Chen exhaled a long breath as his eyes shot towards the front like lightning. His footsteps moved forward resolutely.

The illusions around him vanished like the mist.

He appeared in the ocean of flowers once again as fragrance wreathed itself around him.

"There seems to be something in the fragrance of these flowers. They seem to be producing a type of stimulant that gives rise to illusion, controlling one's body and consciousness."

Jiang Chen didn't linger as he quickly strode forward.

Since he could only move forward on the path of rebirth without turning back, he continued to walk forward without hesitation!

He walked roughly four to six hours like so as the night deepened.

A soft call suddenly sounded by Jiang Chen's ears.

"Chen'er."

What was that? Jiang Chen's ears twitched. He'd heard a voice! The voice was low, but he could hear it very clearly.

"Chen'er."

He heard it even more clearly this time.

"Father's voice?" Jiang Chen's thoughts raced as he immediately told himself, this is an illusion, it must be an illusion!

Illusions would continuously pop up on the path of rebirth, and phantom sounds as well. Everything was fake!

Jiang Chen kept repeating that to himself.

However, the more he stressed this to himself, the more real the voice beside his ear became.

"Chen'er, save me, save me!" Jiang Feng's voice was in obvious pain, as if he was suffering through the agonies of the eighteen hells.

"Chen'er, I found intelligence of your mother in the Upper Eighth Realm, but was captured by them. They tortured me with countless methods and they wanted me to reveal where you were... Chen'er, you're my child. I wouldn't betray my son even if I died! Never! ... ah!"

This voice kept surging into Jiang Chen's ears like a magic spell.

Although Jiang Chen kept reminding himself that all of this was illusion, the voice kept weaving itself around him and it wouldn't be dismissed.

A towering tree suddenly appeared in front of Jiang Chen.

Someone was hanging on the tree. He was covered with wounds as his hands and feet were nailed to the tree with long nails.

"Chen'er, don't come close! Go! Leave! They're using me as bait to lure you in! You have yet to grow in your strength and you can't fight them, go!"

The person hanging on the tree suddenly lifted his head, yelling wildly at Jiang Chen with a head full of wildly bedraggled hair.

It was Jiang Feng!

Three scabs criss crossed Jiang Feng's face at the moment, splitting his entire face open and appearing quite frightening.

There wasn't a single bit of unmarked skin on his body as it was dotted with wounds.

The most horrifying thing was that there were black beetles crawling all over the tree, and long, pliable creatures waving enormous tentacles around, continuously feeding off of Jiang Feng's blood and nibbling away at his wounds.

Only stark white bones were left of Jiang Feng's calves after a short while.

Suddenly, a group of black clothed practitioners poured out from the two sides of the great tree, each of them holding the leash of a ferocious beast in their hands.

All of these beasts were in the origin realm!

Roar!

When the beasts roared, their presence reverberated up to the heavens, as if the entire sky and earth would be shattered by their roars.

Roar!

The fierce beasts howled and started running towards Jiang Chen.

Jiang Feng used all of his strength to scream hoarsely, "Chen'er, run for your life! Flee!!"

Flee?

One had to say, this illusion was quite realistic. Even though Jiang Chen kept repeating to himself that this was all fake, his heart still wavered in the moment that he saw his father's state.

It wasn't that his heart was weak, but the blood ties between father and son made his heart tremble almost uncontrollably in that moment.

It was innate, a resonance between bloodlines that could not be done away with.

However —

Jiang Chen had trained the Boulder's Heart after all. If it'd been anyone else in this illusion, they might have been gradually consumed by the illusion.

But Jiang Chen hadn't believed what was in front of his eyes from beginning to end.

His father had indeed gone to the Upper Eighth Realm, that was correct.

But a test of this level wasn't enough to defeat Jiang Chen.

As he looked at the beasts pouncing towards him, Jiang Chen didn't back up, but he pushed off his feet savagely and charged at the tree.

"All you illusions, break!"

Jiang Chen's Divine Aeons Fist smashed heavily into the great tree, sparkling with the light of the mysteries of the ages.

Wham!

The mysteries of one cycle of blooming and wilting were contained within that punch, and it too counted as a cycle of rebirth.

When he flung that punch out, all of the illusions vanished cleanly like clear glass being shattered.

“The path of rebirth can grasp everyone’s points of weakness alright. The Bridge of Helplessness was testing judgment, the Ocean of Divine Ashes was testing courage, Dan Fei’s appearance tested my resolution, and this was a test of rationality in the face of family.”

Every test was able to grasp the weakest part of everyone’s hearts.

This trial was something else, alright.

However, Jiang Chen’s Boulder’s Heart was even stronger and it wasn’t defeated by this level of illusion.

Although he didn’t know how many more tests lay in front of him, he still charged forward without hesitation.

Night passed as the daybreak of the second day arrived.

With the advent of dawn, the psychological pressures of night also began to slowly decrease.

However, this trial was also an enormous drain on one’s mental resources.

Jiang Chen’s Boulder’s Heart hadn’t been depleted much, but if the other practitioners hadn’t had special methods to train their mental strength, they would be weaker and weaker in the face of the tests to come if they didn’t sit down and meditate.

The more their mental strength was drained, the more pressure they would feel from future tests.

Once they’d exhausted themselves and lacked sufficient mental strength, they might very well be swallowed by the illusions and become one of the failed statistics.

Although Jiang Chen had met many tests along the way, this level of testing was not enough to truly impact his mentality.

The Boulder’s Heart was now at the seventh level, and his heart was as strong as a boulder. Even a little bit of impact wasn’t enough to affect him.

Keep moving forward!

Jiang Chen had no stray thoughts in his mind as he moved forward without any interference.

He saw an awe inspiring palace in the distance after roughly an hour.

The words “Myriad Treasures Pavilion” were written on it.

He looked around and saw no other path. He would have to enter the Myriad Treasures Pavilion to continue forward.

Jiang Chen warned himself that this place was another illusion again.

With that firmly in mind, he walked into the pavilion. A voice traveled to his ears as soon as he set foot inside.

“Welcome to the Myriad Treasures Pavilion. The pavilion is a wondrous place on the path of rebirth. You can select any method or martial art technique you want here, or any divine weapon, miraculous pill, or rare and exotic creature... remember, you can only choose one out of all the treasures here.”

.....

The four forefathers were gathered in a place outside of the path of rebirth.

Icemist sighed lightly, "One third of the mundane practitioners have been disqualified up until now. This is indeed a stunning number. It looks like even ten thousand would be hard pressed to remain out of the four hundred thousand to walk the path."

They'd estimated the two thirds would be eliminated on the path as it had layers upon layers of trials. To practitioners with weak strength of the heart, this would be a very, very difficult trial for them.

But a third of the group had been disqualified after less than a day. At this rate, the amount of people disqualified may far exceed their original expectations.

"Although the path of rebirth is not easy, it just so happens to test the strength of the heart. If they cannot even pass the trial of the heart, then the ones disqualified are just mediocre talents and they have no future ahead of them whatsoever. Since they are trash, what point is there to sigh with regret over them once they are out?" Sunchaser snorted.

He had no particular feeling towards the numbers of people disqualified.

What he cared more about was how many could remain, and if there were any dark horses that could enter their line of sight.

He felt that with the resources in the mundane world, there was no way that any geniuses that could fight for a spot in the final sixteen could exist amongst them.

Thousandleaf sighed, "They have yet to reach the hardest. The Myriad Treasures Pavilion is the biggest test of all. The last test after the pavilion is even greater. The rate of failure will be highest in the last two tests. I wonder if anyone's made it to the pavilion yet?"

The forefather's couldn't see what was happening in the path of rebirth.

All was revealed only when the practitioner left the path of rebirth.

Ninelion laughed. "It's only been less than a day. If someone's already made it to the Myriad Treasures Pavilion, then their pace is simply too fast. I surmise that many are still dithering in front of the Ocean of Divine Ashes and some are even stuck in front of the Bridge of Helplessness?"

Icemist also nodded. "Indeed, if anyone's made it to the Myriad Treasures Pavilion, then they would be an unparalleled genius. The strength of their heart of dao would be such that we would be hard pressed to find such a genius even in the four great sects?"

"What are you lot worried about? We'll receive a notification as soon as someone passes through the pavilion."

They couldn't see what was happening on the path of rebirth from the outside world, but the pavilion was the only part of the path of rebirth that had a connection with the outside world.

The ancient venerated expert who had created the path of rebirth must have had his reasons for placing the Myriad Treasures Palace here. The outside world would receive notifications as soon as someone passed through the pavilion.

Chapter 286: One with Genius Strength of Heart Has Appeared!

However, just like they'd said, one had to indeed possess an incredible amount of strength of heart to make it to the Myriad Treasure Pavilion in half a day's time.

Even if they were the four forefathers, the strength of their heart when they were young wasn't up to the level where they could make it to the pavilion in half a day on the path of rebirth.

Setting foot into the pavilion was when the real tests began.

The level of illusion within the pavilion was higher than all those that had come before it.

If all the temptations, horror, and illusions of life and death were unable to defeat one with a strong strength of heart, then they would then face boundless temptation within the pavilion.

Those who could resist the temptations of methods and divine weapons were few and far in between.

After all, in the world of martial dao, particularly mundane practitioners, almost everyone lacked martial arts techniques and methods.

It was precisely this deprivation they had that made them hunger for these items. Since they hungered for them, how many could remain as unmoving as a mountain and refrain from browsing through them or not touch any of them at all?

"Even those with a strong strength of heart will most likely pass the Myriad Treasures Pavilion on the third day?"

"The third day?" Sunchaser smiled faintly. "Younger sister Icewind, you're always so optimistic. A mere mundane practitioner passing through the pavilion on the third day? In my eyes, that's completely impossible. Only the premier disciples of a sect can pass through the pavilion on the third day. I'd estimate that less than five of those exist in each sect, and these are the ones who have specifically trained in methods to strengthen one's dao heart. If it's those who have never focused on the mental arts, then I would estimate that they wouldn't be able to pass through the pavilion in less than five days."

The organizer in charge of the first trial had once said that one would pass if they completed the path in ten days. Completing it in eight days was above average, while five days meant that one was a genius in the matters of the mind, and making it out of the path of rebirth in three days was an unparalleled genius difficult to find in even a hundred years, and sure to gain the attention of the forefathers.

After all, not even many of the premier geniuses of the four great sects could make it through the path in three days.

"Old monster Sunchaser, you seem to be quite dismissive of the mundane practitioners, even though you were the one who discovered a genius with the azure phoenix constitution in the ordinary world." Ninelion laughed sarcastically. "Can it be that you don't wish for another genius to appear in the mundane world?"

Sunchaser smiled faintly, "It's not that I don't want to, but just that I'm objectively analyzing the situation. The ordinary world is still the ordinary world in the end. The resources out there are less than one percent of what the sects have. The rate in which geniuses will appear there are naturally less than one percent of the sects. How many geniuses do our four great sects boast of? In this regard, you will also know that finding a genius in the mundane world is akin to looking for a needle in the haystack."

Thousandleaf smiled faintly and shook his head, not saying a word.

A cry of shock suddenly came from the control center. "How can this be?"

"This... this can't be right?"

"No way? Someone made it through the Myriad Treasures Pavilion already? Hasn't... hasn't it only been half a day? It's not even been a full day!"

"What a... a perverse genius! Is the mundane world truly giving birth to such a perverse existence as this?!"

"Something must be wrong with the hints or with the path of rebirth itself. There's no way that anyone could've made it to the Myriad Treasures Pavilion in just half a day, much less than pass through it."

"Indeed! How many can withstand the enormous temptation of so many treasures within the pavilion? How can ordinary practitioners pay no heed to them? Impossible!"

The forefathers wouldn't personally oversee the first selection.

Those who were crying out with shock were the senior executives that had been selected from the four sects and put in charge of overseeing the first trial.

The forefathers were all flabbergasted to hear waves of these undignified exclamations. Their gazes all drifted to the control center.

The control center would receive a notification whenever someone cleared the Myriad Treasures Pavilion. A green figure would appear for each person who had passed through.

"Ridiculous! The path of rebirth is a legacy territory of the ancient times, how could there be a mistake?" Thousandleaf hectored and was the first to rush over.

Icemist also hurried over as well.

Ninelion looked at Sunchaser with a supercilious smile. "Old monster Sunchaser, since you were so certain that no one would pass through the Myriad Treasures Pavilion in three days, then I trust this must be an error with the path of rebirth, hmm? Haha!"

Ninelion seemed to have middling relations with Sunchaser, and naturally wouldn't give up this opportunity to crack a sarcastic quip with the latter.

Sunchaser also felt extremely put out at this time.

Someone had passed through the pavilion in only half a day? This sounded like bullshit no matter how he thought about it.

However, he was an old monster of the origin realm and naturally knew that the path of rebirth was a legacy from an ancient expert. It was impossible for anything to go wrong with it!

This meant that someone among the mundane practitioners really had passed through the pavilion. With their speed in clearing the trial in less than a day, it meant that this person has well beyond surpassed many of the ultimate geniuses within the sects!

The strength of this person's heart was at a frightening level!

Although Sunchaser felt his face burn thanks to Ninelion's mockery, he didn't have the time to be bothered by this right now. He set aside his reservations as well and made for the control center.

A green figure had appeared on a smooth, rock mirror in the control center.

"Incredible, incredible!" Ninelion murmured to himself. "Many good talents are indeed concealed amongst the mundane practitioners. It appears that there have been flaws with the method our four sects have used in selecting disciples in the past. We were too heavily biased against mundane practitioners in the past."

The four sects had always selected disciples from within the sect previously, passing the tradition down through the generations. Although they had set up sites in the mundane world, thereby making them the so-called outer sites of the sects, none of the four sects particularly valued the outside sites. Those who were sent to these sites were either marginalized characters within the sects, or those who had no future within the sects and would rather go enjoy fame and fortune in the ordinary world.

Because the sects didn't value the outside sites, that made the channels in which ordinary practitioners could enter the sects quite narrow.

After all, the outside sites held few selections in the mundane world.

And the sites held an equally few amount of selections for the outside sites.

One might come around every five or ten years, and they were held infrequently at that.

To the young practitioners, ten years would make them miss out on too much of the prime years of training and the best period of training in their lives.

Therefore, the fates of the majority of mundane practitioners were decided at the moment of their birth.

This wasn't to say that there were none who could change their destinies and make a turnaround to enter the sects, but those were few and far in between.

"Daoist Icewind, with your vision, did you see that such a genius existed amongst the mundane practitioners?" Thousandleaf's face was also filled with incredulity.

A wry smile stole across Icewind's beautiful face. "Daoist Thousandleaf, although my Flowing Wind Sect is adept at uncovering genius, a process is still needed to do so. Would you believe me if I said I could discern someone's potential with a first or second impression?"

Thousandleaf chuckled, "That's true, it's just that this kind of genius is simply too rare. There may be premier geniuses or those with extraordinary potential in our four sects, but ones with such strong strength of heart are as rare as dragon's scales and phoenix feathers."

A light shone out of Ninelion's eyes, "Can it be one of those geniuses with an innate strength of heart? I remember something called the Heart of a Ruler that only geniuses with an innate strength of heart possess. They possess immense strength of heart and are not disturbed by outside interference, as unmoving as a ruler..."

"Don't delude yourself." Sunchaser laughed coldly. "Our sixteen kingdom alliance is a territory with the most diminished existence amongst the Myriad Domain. I've never heard of a genius with the Heart of a Ruler in the history of the Myriad Domain, why would we have the luck to run into one?"

Ninelion also chuckled, "Well, I don't know who was the one who said just now that it was impossible for one of the mundane practitioners to walk out of the Myriad Treasures Pavilion within three days."

Sunchaser spoke faintly, "There is always an exception within this world. Not to mention that although it's impressive they made it out of the pavilion, they may not necessarily pass through the final test."

"Do you think the last test would stump someone who could easily walk out of the pavilion?"

"You never know." Sunchaser chuckled.

"Sunchaser, I feel that you're arguing for the sake of arguing. How about this, if this person can make it through the path of rebirth, then your Purple Sun Sect will not set your sights on this genius and allow us three sects to fight over him, how about that?" Ninelion tried to provoke the other.

"Old monster Ninelion, why do you always voice these naive words at your age? I may have some personal opinions, but a selection is a great event for the sect. There is no relationship between the two. Back out of the competition? Why should we back out when we have a genius on our hands?"

"You admit now that we've met a genius?"

"It's a rare thing to have strength of the heart. Their future performance remains to be seen. If their potential is mediocre and talents in other areas are nothing, then they are still useless trash in the end."

Sunchaser's words still made some sense.

Strength of heart was merely one guarantee when assailing the origin realm. However, it would be useless if a practitioner lacked both the sufficient martial dao potential and the ability to train to the origin realm.

Potential was equally important on the path of martial dao training.

But if one lacked strong strength of heart and having only potential, one wouldn't be able to go far on the path of martial dao.

It would just be a waste of this strong dao heart.

However, even though Sunchaser's words made sense, the other forefathers obviously weren't paying him much heed.

What they were paying more attention to was keeping an eye on this mentally invincible genius and seeing how he would do in the next trial.

If this one's potential and other areas were all not bad, then he would absolutely be a talent ripe for shaping. Even if his strength was insufficient to make it into the final sixteen, he would still be worth cultivating in the long run.

"Just who is this genius?" The figure of Jiang Chen suddenly appeared in Thousandleaf's mind. He himself didn't even know why he'd suddenly had this thought.

Perhaps the only one who'd left an impression on him from the four hundred thousand was Jiang Chen.

Except, forefather Thousandleaf hadn't himself discovered anything special from Jiang Chen.

Of course, Jiang Chen also floated across the minds of the other forefathers as well. After all, he was the only one who'd left an impression on them before the trial.

However, when it came down to a genius of the heart, no one was certain who this person might be since he was merely one person out of the four hundred thousand participants.

It was impossible for them to ascertain the person's identity after he put on both the mask and the uniform. They could only use the participant token to remember this participant's number, and keep an eye on this number in the future.

As for who was behind this token, that would have to wait until the final reveal.

Chapter 287: A Thousand Attentions Concentrated on One

Jiang Chen breathed out lightly as he spoke ruefully, "The Myriad Treasures Pavilion? If I hadn't seen countless numbers of treasures in my past life, I might have actually stopped to take a look. The level of the illusions in the Myriad Treasures Pavilion is much more advanced than those before. If any ordinary practitioner actually makes it to the pavilion, I'm afraid many will stop there."

Jiang Chen had seen everything beneath the heavens, so he had a certain degree of immunity towards the temptations of the Myriad Treasures Pavilion.

Not to mention that his powerful mental strength kept reminding him that this pavilion was illusory. It was fake, and not real.

In the end, the most realistic illusion would still remain a mere mirage.

Items such as methods and martial arts techniques provided the least temptation for Jiang Chen. He doubted that even those from stronger factions within the Myriad Domain would attract his attentions, much less the ones in the possession of the sixteen kingdoms.

As for divine weapons and those rare and exotic spirit creatures, since he knew it was all fake, he had a natural immunity to them and didn't even pay them a glance.

He saw and thought no evil, so he didn't take the bait no matter how tempting it was.

Therefore, Jiang Chen had spent almost no effort in passing through the pavilion.

He also gave no thought the possible reactions in the outside world at the moment, and never would've guessed that his strong momentum in passing through the pavilion had given rise to spirit discussions regarding this genius. An uproar and fervent atmosphere had been incited.

When he left the pavilion, Jiang Chen rubbed his eyes after taking a few steps, he seemed to think that his eyes were playing tricks on him.

The person in front of him was the organizer for the trial of heart, and the man was equally nonplussed to see Jiang Chen.

"Why are you already here? Give me whatever you selected from Myriad Treasures Pavilion."

"What I selected?" Jiang Chen started. "That pavilion is merely an illusion, what could I have picked?"

The organizer arched his brow, "Things are both real and illusory on the path of rebirth, who told you the pavilion was fake? How will you pass the test when you didn't select an item?"

"Real and illusory?"

"Cut the blather. Either you select a treasure and hand it over to me so you can pass, or I'll disqualify you right now." The organizer's tone was remote.

Jiang Chen was thrown into a bit of disarray, but he organized his thoughts and a hint of a smile appeared on his lips.

He suddenly stepped forward and sent a punch crashing down, "Fakery and tricks, all are illusory. Begone!"

The organizer was pulverized into a cloud of mist with that punch and dissipated where he stood.

In the next moment, the scene shifted to one of lush trees providing shade. Jiang Chen had returned to where he'd started out from.

A voice sounded at this moment, "Congratulations for passing the path of rebirth!"

Jiang Chen was given no time to resist before a surge of strength took him out of the path.

His figure appeared at the testing center for the trial of the heart in the next moment.

When he appeared, pairs of eyes that numbered in the hundreds all shot straight at him. Their gazes seemed to bear the intent of burning through the mask and uniform to see who Jiang Chen really was.

"Participant, congratulations, you're the first to pass! You need not speak, just hand over your participant token and we will record your results so as to form your final grade."

Not speaking was obviously to avoid someone recognizing him based on his voice.

After all, everyone present was an expert, particularly the four forefathers. They might be able to discern the person behind the voice if he spoke up.

Jiang Chen gained his bearings before confirming that he had indeed made it out of the path of rebirth and returned to the outside world.

The four forefathers had long since agreed that they should not personally appear after the testing results were out. It would be considered intervention if they did.

However, all of the forefathers were itching to break their own rules at the moment, wishing to speak a few words with this heaven defying genius.

He'd spent less than a day to walk the path of rebirth. This performance was truly the epitome of heaven defying.

The forefathers had no doubts whatsoever that even amongst their premier geniuses, there would likely be less than three who could make it through the path of rebirth within three days.

Maybe not even a single one of them would be able to!

According to the rules, those to complete the first trial could enter the designated rest area and wait for the end of the ten days. He would then be led to the next trial with the other participants.

Jiang Chen was led to the rest area and sat down cross legged, he then started to meditate.

After this mental trial on the path of rebirth, Jiang Chen's mental strength seemed to have risen, while Boulder's Heart seemed to be showing subtle signs of a breakthrough.

Naturally, Jiang Chen hoped to make use of this opportunity to once again raise the level of his Boulder's Heart.

It was an art that bore greater difficulty in training than the God's Eye or Ear of the Zephyr.

It was rare that there was a chance to train the strength of one's heart. Jiang Chen had truly gained a lot this time.

To pass through the path of rebirth in one day, this was truly an astonishing performance.

When he walked into the rest area, many senior executives of the sects all stretched their heads in his direction and peered at him, casting looks of surprise and shock at him with blatant curiosity.

If it hadn't been for the strict rules, they definitely would've run up to Jiang Chen and torn off his mask, so as to see just who this person was.

The forefathers were also feeling a great agitation of emotions right now. They really, really wanted the ten days to hurry up and pass by so that the next trial could begin.

The next trial tested talent.

If this person continued his heaven defying performance in the next trial, then it would prove that this person was an unparalleled genius of an age, and someone worth recruiting and training at any cost.

The path of rebirth was difficult alright.

Although there was one perverse genius, no one else emerged from the path of rebirth in the next three days.

There were a few that had higher strength of heart who walked out on the fifth day.

The numbers grew noticeably higher on the seventh and eighth day, increasing to a deluge on the ninth and tenth days.

The ten days passed by quickly.

There were only seventy thousand left of those who had truly passed through the path of rebirth.

Those who hadn't made it out or were disqualified halfway were directly kicked out of the legacy realm. They didn't even have the right to linger around.

After all, a shocking amount of spirit power was necessary to maintain the legacy realm.

The fewer the number of people, the lesser the drain on resources.

Those who had been disqualified all naturally became trash in the eyes of the sects. They wouldn't continue to waste resources on trash.

These were the rules of martial dao survival — immediate discardment of those of no value.

Apart from Jiang Chen, the group of participants who had made it out within five days also received additional attention, naturally.

Because of the appearance of Jiang Chen, all the organizers in charge of the trials were incredibly enthused.

They patently wanted to see just how this genius of the heart would perform in the future trials.

Would he continue his heaven defying performance?

Or would he sink down to the masses and reveal mediocre potential?

All of the organizers were expectant in that second, full of anticipation towards this divine level dark horse that had emerged from the mundane practitioners.

Jiang Chen stood amongst the seventy thousand, listening carefully to the rules of the second trial.

“The second trial isn't to test how high your level of training is, but how great your talents can be. Of course, we are also testing other talents apart from martial dao. We greatly welcome you to test all your talents. After all, we are looking for talents in all areas in this selection, and not just limiting ourselves to martial dao.”

“Alright, I now announce that the second trial has begun.” The trial had officially begun with this announcement.

The tests of the second trial weren't actually that complicated.

To put it plainly, it was a test of spirit roots.

What was a spirit root? Long Juxue's innate azure phoenix constitution was an example of one.

The spirit root is a measure of how much potential there is in your body, what level, and approximately how far you could walk along this path.

Potential was equally vital on the path of martial dao.

If it'd been the former Jiang Chen attending this trial, he would be kicked out immediately.

However, after two years of reforging and a slew of corrections, and add on to that the absorption of the Flaming Heart of Ice, Jiang Chen's potential had been thoroughly transformed through this series of heaven defying changes.

His potential and spirit ocean were both superb and extraordinary now.

The most important thing was that he had absorbed the Flaming Heart of Ice, which was the essence of the Lotus of Fire and Ice.

One had to keep in mind that the Lotus was a plant spirit that ranked in the top ten beneath the heavens. Thus, its immense potential was plain to see.

The second trial was once again divided into a hundred testing sites. Jiang Chen was again placed in the second area. There were only a few hundred participants left in each area now.

What he didn't know, however, was that his participant token was now the subject of much scrutiny after the first trial.

Although he could occasionally feel all sorts of strange, covert looks at him, but with his personality, he wouldn't become timid or shy because of surreptitious attention from the outside world.

Inversely, it actually make him more forthright.

Since he was participating in the selection, then he would stun all those present with one amazing feat!

Since he didn't feel any malice from those subtle glances, he paid them no heed.

"Tsk tsk, did you see that? That perverse genius is in our area. It's going to be his turn soon."

"Sigh, I'm sure that the forefathers already have their sights set on him. If he's extraordinary in the trial of potential as well, then this kid will have vaulted to new heights and soared to the skies in one leap!"

"What need is there to be extraordinary? His future would be limitless as long as his potential is not bad. If his potential is extraordinary, then he'll be number one of the first selection without a doubt, and an unprecedented genius who absolutely has the right to vie for one of the final sixteen slots!"

"The final sixteen? That won't be easy. Countless numbers of sect geniuses will be competing for a place on that list. As an ordinary practitioner, even if he possesses astounding potential, his foundations are shallow and he hasn't had enough time to build them up. It will still be difficult for him to surpass the sects' geniuses."

These comments were all captured by Jiang Chen's Ear of the Zephyr.

He reacted rather nonchalantly at this time as it just so happened to be his turn.

Chapter 288: The Trial of Talent, Jiang Chen's Choice

The trial of talent was much more simple and straightforward.

Jiang Chen had undergone something similar in the Eastern Kingdom.

Although there were slight differences in testing potential and testing level of training, it was more or less the same.

“May I inquire which tests you would like to undertake?” When the organizer of this trial saw Jiang Chen’s participant token, he recognized the genius from the first trial and so his tone and gestures all became uncommonly polite.

He was deathly afraid that he might give offense to this genius with the slightest bit of inappropriateness in his tone, and that the other would remember him because of that and implicate his sect for it. If this genius rejected his sect because of him, then the forefather of his sect would certainly scalp him and pull out his tendons for it.

There were tests of martial dao, pills, glyphs, formations, and taming spirit creatures in the trial of talents.

According to the rules, the second trial would also run for ten days.

However, if one were to participate in every test, that still wouldn’t be enough time.

Therefore, all participants had to make a decision.

They should make the best use of these ten days to choose the tests that they had the most confidence in. Otherwise, if they wanted to participate in all of them and attend to one thing whilst losing sight of another, they would end up with nothing in the end and fail to display their best talents in the trial.

“I will only participate in the test of martial dao.”

Jiang Chen’s goal was very clear, his ultimate goal was martial dao.

As for the other talents, he felt no need to test them at all. Within the range of the sixteen kingdoms, he didn’t feel that anyone existed who would be able to measure up to him with the other talents.

There was no need to test them.

The organizer started and immediately smiled, “Good, you’re the genius of the trial of heart alright. Your dao heart is as resolute as a boulder and different from others!”

He was indeed different from others, most other participants would choose at least two or three tests.

Jiang Chen was the first to choose only one test.

One had to know that those participants who dared choose only one meant that he had the utmost daring and vigor.

After all, choosing only one test meant forcing one down a desperate path.

If his results were subpar, then he wouldn’t have the chance to continue participating in the selection and would be disqualified immediately.

But if he’d chosen two or three, he’d still be able to look forward to the other tests even if he failed in this one.

Participants would be able to continue as long as one of their tests met the standard.

“Just one?”

“This genius of the heart is indeed invincibly confident.”

“Tsk tsk, a genius indeed. Geniuses always do things differently from others.”

“If this genius has uncommon talents, then a miracle will have been born in our sixteen kingdoms, one that has arisen from the mundane practitioners!”

“Indeed! For a mundane practitioner to have this level of talent, he is on par with the premier geniuses of the sects! For a genius such as this, if given enough time, he will walk a further path than the sect geniuses and create even more miracles!”

“Precisely, a mundane practitioner makes progress through grueling and arduous conditions. The difficulty inherent in this is not something that a privileged sect disciple can measure up to.”

As the voices conversed, Jiang Chen had arrived in front of a cave with the organizer.

“The test of martial talent is one that tests your control, affinity, and mastery over the powers of nature. The powers of the five elements are present in nature, and that is exactly what this test is focusing on.”

“There are countless caverns here, and each one embodies the power of one of the elements. These caverns are divided into three difficulty levels, easy, intermediate, and difficult. Participants are to decide upon a level of difficulty and remain within it to perceive the power of nature. The greater the difficulty and the longer you remain within the cavern means the greater your potential in this area.”

“For instance, if you select a metal attribute cavern, then you will receive boundless testing from the element of metal within.”

“Is all clear?”

Jiang Chen nodded; the rules weren't hard to understand.

“Mm, since you understand, then begin selecting the difficulty of your test. If you choose the easy level and remain within for three days, that will be considered a pass and you will be noted as one with lesser spirit potential.”

“If you pass the intermediate difficulty level, you will be noted as one with intermediate spirit potential.”

“If you choose the difficult level and remain within for three days, then you will possess superior spirit potential.”

“This should be relatively clear as well?”

Jiang Chen chuckled, “Difficult is the highest level? How is one tested if born with an innate constitution?”

Although Jiang Chen didn't possess an innate constitution, he was still rather curious.

“Haha, if it's an innate constitution, then one would definitely have superior spirit potential. With the foundation of superior spirit potential, an innate constitution would absolutely give rise to unusual phenomena in the earth and sky, so it's not difficult to discern. Besides, the senior executives of the

sects naturally have their ways of testing innate constitutions. However, innate constitutions are a once in a hundred years occurrence. In all these years, I've only heard of the Purple Sun Sect happened to pick up a treasure."

Picked up a treasure? Jiang Chen smiled. He knew of course that the organizer was speaking of Long Luxue with the azure phoenix constitution.

He also knew that having an innate constitution in a small place like the sixteen kingdom alliance was indeed a rare thing.

But one had to say that with Jiang Chen's breadth of vision, a mere innate constitution wasn't much of a big deal.

In his past life, which of his disciples hadn't possessed an innate constitution?

To those who were at the level of the heavens, an innate constitution was just a basic requirement. One wouldn't even have the face to show themselves in front of everyone else in the heavens without possessing even an innate constitution.

"Alright, please make your selection now."

"The difficult level and the fire and ice attributes." Jiang Chen had long since made his decision.

"What?" The organizer was startled.

Since the genius in front of him had quite a bit of pride, the organizer didn't think much of him selecting the difficult level.

The rare thing was that he had selected the two attributes of fire and ice.

Everyone knew that fire and ice didn't mix, just like oil and water didn't play nicely with each other!

There was limited martial dao knowledge within the sixteen kingdoms. Most martial dao practitioners could only develop potential in one attribute.

Only particularly special geniuses could develop two attributes.

The advantage of an innate constitution was that they were born with perfect affinities for all five elements, and possessed complete potential with all five from birth.

"Is there a problem?" Jiang Chen thought he'd made a mistake when he saw the organizer express his shock.

The organizer hastily waved his hands, "No, no problem at all."

However, the organizer privately cursed, this genius was simply too perverse. The difficult level was his first reaction, and he'd chosen two attributes that were the antithesis of each other.

Setting aside the results of this test, this heaven defying method of testing was already enough to cause jaws drop in shock.

"Can it be that all geniuses are freaks?" The organizer smiled wryly in his heart.

Indeed, in the organizer's eyes, Jiang Chen's decision was simply too odd.

"Alright, can we begin now?" Jiang Chen wasn't much interested in the organizer's emotional changes and just wanted to get through the testing.

"Of course you can, right away." The organizer laughed ruefully. "Look over there, those two caverns are the difficult level testing sites. One of them holds the spirit vein of heavenly fire, another the spirit vein of heavenly ice. Remember, the difficulty level of this test is exceedingly high and the environment will be quite abominable. Hurry and leave if you cannot withstand it, don't lose your life in there."

The organizer spoke a reminder out of good intentions.

Jiang Chen's gaze swept in a meaningful way around the caves.

He lifted his foot and stepped into the cavern with the spirit vein of heavenly fire. He decided to start with the attribute of fire!

Once he set foot inside, Jiang Chen suddenly felt that he'd gone from spring to summer. A fiery feeling immediately spread throughout his entire body.

There was another world within the cavern. It was a sea of colorful and radiant rosy clouds wherever he cast his gaze. It was if the very air was a fiery red.

This feeling was like he'd suddenly gone from an icy cavern to the mouth of a volcano.

Jiang Chen could feel his very pores shriveling with the heat. Waves of heat beat down on him as the flaming clouds around him continued to gather, forming a fiery tornado of cloud that roiled towards Jiang Chen.

This feeling was as if the great waves were lashing the beaches, making Jiang Chen's breathing speed up slightly as well.

Although this level of heat wave wasn't fatal, the continuous burning, continuous increase in temperature, and continuous feeling of being baked alive was enough to slightly discomfort Jiang Chen.

He'd have to stay within this environment for a full three days before he could be considered as having passed.

Jiang Chen circulated the qi within his body to refine the heat wave that was continuously beating down on him. The currents of fire attribute essence continuously injected themselves into Jiang Chen's spirit ocean beneath his guidance.

"Mm? The essence of this fire attribute is this pure?" Jiang Chen also felt slightly surprised when he started absorbing it.

The purity of the fire attribute power within this cavern wasn't the least bit inferior to spirit rank fire attribute medicines, and it was approaching the purity level of saint rank medicines.

"The organizer said that the testing site of the difficult level embodied a spirit vein of heavenly fire. Can it be that the heavenly fire is concealed within the depths of this cavern?"

As these thoughts went through Jiang Chen's mind, he activated the Lotus of Ice and Fire in his body and six red vines grew out around him after a short while.

Each of the vines grew swiftly and each of the lotus petals were enough for three to four fully grown men to lie on them.

There were twenty to thirty petals on each of the lotuses.

Sensing the sustenance within the fire spirit power, the six lotuses immediately displayed great vitality like they were foodies having starved for millions of years. They began to furiously soak in the great feast in front of them and absorb the fire spirit power within the cave.

Chapter 289: A Freak with the Boulder's Heart

With the aid of the six fire vines, it became much easier for Jiang Chen to absorb the fire attribute spirit power.

The six fire vines coiled around Jiang Chen, greatly decreasing the stress on him, as well as doubling his effectiveness in absorbing the spirit power and halving the effort to do so.

"The Lotus of Ice and Fire has been fretting about lack of nourishment for a while, and here comes this perfectly made cave. Tsk tsk, I've worn out iron shoes in my search, but have found what I needed right here. It's a pity that I can only manipulate six vines at a time, or the rate of this absorption would be even faster. In the end, I'm still too weak."

Jiang Chen felt a bit regretful. If he could release more vines, then the rate of his absorption would be even faster.

The faster they took in nourishment, the faster the Lotus would grow.

The faster the Lotus improved, the more it would raise Jiang Chen's level of training. It would naturally be of great aid to Jiang Chen.

The six fire vines greedily took in the endless fire attribute essence in the cavern, continuously filling his spirit ocean after Jiang Chen's refinement.

Jiang Chen's spirit ocean had been forged by the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill. Although he didn't possess an innate constitution, thanks to the pill, his spirit ocean also possessed the basic foundations of the five elements.

It was just the the two attributes of fire and ice that had been developed first, thanks to his encounter with the Lotus of Fire and Ice. They were temporarily the major direction that Jiang Chen was training in.

Although he wanted to train the other three attributes, he hadn't had the same kind of heaven defying opportunities that he'd had with the Lotus. The speed in which he trained the other three was naturally far below the fire and ice attributes.

There was an abundance of fire spirit energy within the cavern, so Jiang Chen's Lotus was as if a fish in water.

To other secular practitioners, this was a test.

But to Jiang Chen, this was a vacation, and something even more leisurely than a vacation.

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“Tsk tsk, a full day has passed. This freak of a boulder’s heart is indeed strong. He’s the first amongst the ordinary disciples to take on the difficult level.”

The outside world had already given Jiang Chen the nickname “freak with a boulder’s heart” because his performance in the first trial had been too perverse. How would he have made it through the path of rebirth in a day if he didn’t have a boulder’s heart?

Therefore, everyone could only use this nickname to refer to him before his true identity was revealed.

“Heh heh, geniuses are all lone wolves. This freak of a boulder’s heart has such a resolute dao heart that he must have his own opinions. He never would’ve trained such a resolute dao heart if he was just a mediocre talent. In my opinion, this person is completely confident of his success.”

“Indeed, a true genius must have this kind of charisma.”

Jiang Chen had no idea that outside gossip about him had already reached a feverish pitch.

What he could feel was that since the second day of his arrival, the fire spirit power in the cavern had grown noticeably wilder.

The tornado of flame kept churning around everything as if countless ancient beasts were crashing about the cavern and seeking to tear all life within it to pieces.

As for the Lotus, it had noticeably grown stronger after a full day of absorbing the fire spirit power. The enormous fire lotus petals seemed to have no limit as they devoured the fire that crashed around them.

“This fire is so strong and the fire spirit power is noticeably more lively. It looks like the level of difficulty of the test is increasing day by day.”

Jiang Chen had also discovered this. However, since he had the protection of the continuously strengthening Lotus, Jiang Chen’s body wasn’t injured at all. He was held safely within, completely without pressure and as noncommittal as the clouds and wind.

The second day passed by silently as well.

On the third day, Jiang Chen once again discovered that the fires within the cavern had the intensity of an erupting volcano, fiercely and unceasingly spewing forth.

Tongues of flame licked up all over the walls of the stone cavern, like a flock of countless fiery birds rising to the roof.

Judging from the looks of things, it looked like the strength of the fires had more than doubled since the second day.

However, the Lotus had fed richly for two days straight, and naturally didn’t feel the slightest pressure when faced with a situation like this.

If this had happened on the first day, the six fire vines may have been slightly pressured in the face of these rampaging flames.

But after two days of conditioning, the six fire vines could handle this situation with aplomb.

In the outside world, the third day brought an odd atmosphere amongst the organizers.

“The third day is going to be over soon, which means this freak with the boulder’s heart should have no problem whatsoever in passing through the test!”

“Doesn’t this mean that this candidate has superior spirit potential?”

“Superior spirit potential and a heaven defying dao heart... what an absolutely perverse being. Can it be that the heavens has bestowed great fortune upon our sixteen kingdom alliance?”

“Haha, those sect disciples will finally not be lonely anymore. How much pressure and challenge will they face now with such a secular genius?”

“Challenge, pressure?” Some refused to play along with this. “Don’t speak too early. The foundations of a sect genius aren’t something that a secular genius can measure up to. Even if the freak with a boulder’s heart wants to challenge the sect disciples, his starting line is far behind them. If his age is above thirty, he will have missed the prime period for training, no matter how good his potential and dao heart are.”

The best ideal time for training on the path of martial dao was before the age of thirty.

If one didn’t fully uncover their potential before the age of thirty and didn’t lay their foundations, then one’s potential would be limited no matter how gifted they were.

Even though this person’s words weren’t pleasant to hear, it was still the truth.

However, someone immediately leapt out to object.

“Above thirty years old? How is that possible? How could such a genius be hidden for 30 years?”

“Yes, it’s best that he’s a teenager or twenty something. If this is the case, he absolutely has the right to challenge those sect geniuses, and even put them beneath his feet.”

The organizers conversed animatedly. Most of them still desired to see a genius rise up from the secular world.

Although they were of the sects, they would still be happy to see such a heaven defying miracle.

The third day finally passed beneath the attention of all those assembled.

However, the freak of the boulder’s heart still hadn’t emerged from the cavern.

“Hasn’t three days gone past already? Why... why hasn’t the freak emerged yet?”

“Can he have lost track of time because he was too engrossed?”

“Indeed, perhaps he really has lost track of time.”

“Humph, you lot are optimistic. Why don’t you say that he couldn’t withstand the trial of heavenly fire and was burnt to a crisp?”

“Impossible!”

“What’s impossible? Does one’s potential have to be strong just because they have a strong heart of dao? Who set down those rules? Not to mention that mundane disciples have no foundations whatsoever and don’t know the might of the elements of nature. It’s said that newborn calves are not afraid of tigers. It’s not impossible that he could’ve been swallowed by the heavenly fire!”

The person speaking had been someone who had been jealous and unaccepting towards the so-called genius with a strong dao heart. He was one of those stubborn folk who didn’t want to see the rise of a mundane disciple.

The freak with the boulder’s heart, the alleged genius still hadn’t walked out from the cavern after three days.

Therefore, his first thought was that the so-called genius had been swallowed by the flames.

Otherwise, what reason did he have to stay within the cavern after the three days were up?

However, according to the rules, the duration of the trial was ten days. Even the organizers couldn’t venture into the cavern to investigate within the ten days.

“Ai, the mundane world still lacks experience in the end. A country bumpkin didn’t know the complexity of things when he took the challenge and ended up paying the price with his life. What a pity, what a shame for that strength of heart and talent.” The person tsk’ed and his tone held a few traces of taking pleasure in another’s misfortune.

“Tsk tsk, do you Purple Sun Sect people always derive pleasure from others’ misery? Or is it that you’re afraid the rise of a mundane genius will threaten the so-called innate constitution that also hails from the secular world in your Purple Sun Sect?” Someone couldn’t help but retort when he heard this fellow kick a person when he was down.

The Purple Sun Sect executive smiled, “Deriving pleasure from other’s misfortune? Is there a need for that? Not to mention, even if a genius of the heart has ordinary talents, what right does he have to be mentioned in the same breath as Long Juxue with the innate constitution? An innate constitution to be threatened? You must be joking. Is an innate constitution something that any random cat or dog off the streets can threaten?”

“Stop arguing, both of you. The limit of ten days has yet to arrive and no one knows what happened in the cave. What evidence do you have that he’s been swallowed by the heavenly fire?”

“Is there any evidence needed? He passes the test after three days. He still hasn’t emerged after the deadline, isn’t this obvious enough already? Or is it that it’s an enjoyment to remain in a cavern with a spirit vein of heavenly fire?”

“Humph, the style of a genius is never something that a frog at the bottom of a well can discern. We should wait and see and see what happens!”

No one could convince anyone else, but no one was truly willing to accept the reality that a genius even the forefathers were watching had fallen, just like that.

Four days had passed, and he still hadn't emerged from the cavern.

In this regard, the ones that'd always thought the genius had perished became even more proud.

"He would've emerged a long time ago if he could after four, five days. It looked like this so-called genius still couldn't hold up beneath the trial of fire. I think it's time everyone set aside their expectations and accepted reality."

"Mm, even the fifth day is almost over. He would've come out a long time ago if he could've. It looks like it's not a wise thing to have too much expectations towards a mundane disciple. Ai!"

Most of the organizers who'd supported the freak with the boulder's heart all had dim and dejected expressions.

Although they still didn't wish to accept reality, the more time that elapsed, the dimmer hope became.

At this moment —

Bang!

An enormous bang came from the cave and rumbling noises traveled out from it. It seemed as if the skies were falling in, the earth was cracking, and a great earthquake had struck the cavern.

Chapter 290: The Endless Mountain

The feeling of the land ripping asunder continued for a full hour before it slowly weakened.

Thick smoke that accompanied a volcano eruption billowed out of the cavern continuously.

The air was filled with hazy ash and it obscured everyone's vision for a while.

When all of the smoke had cleared, all the organizers looked at each other, their faces full of surprise.

It was obvious that some violent change had happened in that cavern. In this regard, it looked like the freak with the boulder's heart was most likely dead.

At this moment, an organizer rubbed his eyes as his pupils suddenly shrank swiftly, peering into the cavern entrance with a look of incredulity.

A figure imprinted itself into the eyeballs of all those assembled.

This figure was the freak genius that they had been discussing about endlessly just now.

"How... how is this possible?!" The Purple Sun Sect executive, who had been talking negatively the most just now, was utterly flabbergasted.

He'd been the one mouthing off the most, certain beyond a doubt that this so-called genius had long since been devoured by the heavenly fires.

Jiang Chen's appearance at the entrance to the cavern at this moment was a undisputed slap to his face.

“The fire attribute test is over, can I enter the cavern of ice now?”

Jiang Chen walked up to the organizer and handed his participant token over, asking faintly.

All of the organizers had exceedingly rich expressions on their faces. It was the head organizer who reacted first and chuckled, “Of course, of course.”

Even though they didn’t know what had happened in the cavern, but what that important now? The participant had made it through the trial and he had emerged safely, what had happened in the cavern no longer mattered.

The most important thing was, a true genius had appeared!

The four forefathers also learned of what had happened here in the first moment. Thanks to the rules, they couldn’t fight over recruiting this person right now.

But the four forefathers were all ablaze with passion in their hearts in this instant, all of them were plotting on how they’d run their recruiting plan.

To finish the path of rebirth in one day, this genius of the heart was enough to make all the premier geniuses of the four sects lose face completely.

He then finished as superior spirit potential in the trial of talent.

His performance in the two most important trials could only be described as ‘perverse’. It wasn’t the type of performance that an ordinary disciple should have at all.

Even if the preeminent geniuses of the sects participated in these trials, their grades wouldn’t be as thus either.

“When did such a genius appear in the mundane world? No matter what, I must have this practitioner.” Even Sunchaser had changed the attitude he’d held before the path of rebirth.

He had indeed been prejudiced against the mundane disciples.

But at this moment, those prejudices had completely vanished without a trace. Jiang Chen had used the truth to prove that geniuses still existed in the ordinary world.

However, if Sunchaser knew that the genius beneath the mask was the Jiang Chen that he’d previous said would be destined to die, his expression would’ve been a sight to watch.

“This one has set his sights on martial dao and he ignored all other tests of talent. With such a strong heart of dao, my Purple Sun Sect has the strongest heritage of martial dao of all the sects. Apart from my sect, what right do the others have to recruit this genius?”

Sunchaser had always had a supreme feeling of superiority on the path of martial dao.

The other three forefathers were also continuously making and revising their plans at the moment.

Thousandleaf of the Precious Leaf Sect also mentally listed the Purple Sun Sect as his strongest competitor.

“The Purple Sun Sect already has a genius with an innate constitution. If this genius is also taken by them, then the situation of the four sects being on equal footing will likely be thoroughly broken in a few decades. No matter what, I must recruit this genius to the Precious Tree sect. We must have him at all costs! Although my sect has a bit of a gap with the Purple Sun Sect in terms of martial dao heritage, we rank an undisputed first amongst the sects with our resources. As long as we employ the temptation of superior resources, this genius may not choose the Purple Sun Sect. After all, the Purple Sun Sect already has Long Juxue. Even if this genius goes to them, he will always be regarded as just the one with the second greatest potential.”

Thousandleaf had quickly grasped the pros and cons of the Purple Sun Sect.

The Flowing Wind Sect and Myriad Spirit Sect were in a comparatively weaker position when it came to recruiting martial dao geniuses.

“My Flowing Wind Sect is less than the Purple Sun Sect when it comes to martial dao heritage, and less than the Precious Tree Sect when it comes to resources. However, the strength of my sect in uncovering potential is unparalleled amongst the four sects. Add to that my sect’s tradition of dual cultivation, if I can hit this point home, this martial dao genius may come to my sect after all!”

These were the thoughts of Flowing Wind’s Icemist. The Flowing Wind Sect had many female practitioners and all sorts of beauties in the sect.

This was most likely their best point to make if they wished to recruit martial dao geniuses.

As for the Myriad Spirit Sect, although they ardently desired to recruit this martial dao genius, they also knew that they had the least advantage out of all the sects.

However, the Myriad Spirit Sect always had their particular focus in recruitment.

“Although this genius of the heart is a rare find in a hundred years, if this old man were to choose, I would still rather go with Jiang Chen. He can tame large numbers of spirit creatures and setup formations. My sect has never seen this level of spirit creature genius in all our history. I can give up competing for this genius at hand, and I can also use this opportunity to make the other three sects give up competing for Jiang Chen.”

Ninelion was more interested in Jiang Chen, but he never would’ve thought that the genius that everyone was so enthusiastically discussing at the moment was Jiang Chen.

Another five days silently passed by.

When Jiang Chen once again walked out of the cavern of ice, the organizers were looking at him with gazes of practically gazing at an immortal.

Alright, so he was a genius of the dao heart.

So he was of superior spirit potential, fine. However, his two attributes were both of superior potential, and ones that were antithesis to each other at that.

This was unheard of!

“What an insane genius! To have dual attributes means that he will have more choices regarding which martial arts techniques he wants to learn from, and his path of martial dao will naturally be broader. He will have more of an advantage in practical battle. This genius was practically born for martial dao!”

The organizers all had to raise their thumb in approval in their hearts. Even if one was jealous and envious beyond belief of this genius, you still had to admit that he was a defining genius of the ages.

This genius was sure to become a thorn in the side of the sect disciples in the final selection.

They could almost see how many sect disciples would be trampled beneath his feet in the final selection!

The organizer held Jiang Chen’s token and looked at it again and again before recording Jiang Chen’s results in it.

“Congratulations, young man. Your fire and ice potential are all of superior potential. I must say, some of your caliber has a fighting chance with the sect disciples. Good luck!”

This organizer had quite an open demeanor. Jiang Chen smiled when he heard these words, “Thank you for your encouragement.”

Another round of people had been cruelly disqualified after the end of the second trial.

Nearly half of the seventy thousand was gone.

Less than forty thousand made it to the third trial.

An enormous mountain was in front of them in the distance. It looked like it towered into the heavens as it shot straight into the clouds, as if it was on the same level as the clouds. Countless numbers of clouds surrounded the peak, making it look like a mountain of immortals and giving rise to endless imagination.

“This mountain is also known as the Endless Mountain. There are a hundred thousand stairs, and each ten thousand steps is one floor. You will have qualified if you make it to the fifth floor. The sixth floor marks you as above average and the seventh floor marks you with excellent potential. The eighth floor indicates that you are worthy of the title of genius, and the ninth floor means that you are on par with the geniuses of the four sects. If anyone can make it to the tenth floor, then you have reason to be proud of yourself. Even the premier geniuses of the sects cannot make it to that floor.”

Although the Endless Mountain was towering, it wasn’t as simple as just increasing numbers of stairs.

“This is a magnetic Endless Mountain. The magnetism of each floor and the difficulty of each floor will double as you pass them. Therefore, you’ll find it easy at the beginning, but you’ll find each successive step more difficult as you go up. So if you use too much strength at the beginning, you may exhaust yourself before you reach the fifth floor and you will be unable to proceed. Remember, the magnetism of the Endless Mountain will make your body feel heavier as you climb. You will feel your steps become more leaden with each stair you climb.”

The organizer explained the rules in detail.

“Of course, in order to stimulate your potential and reward your advancement, some unique opportunities will await you starting on each floor after the fifth. If you’re lucky, you’ll receive some unexpected gains from there. Of course, you can only linger for two hours before you attempt the next floor, so you only have two hours in which to try your luck. Otherwise, if you tarry for longer than two hours, that means you’ve given up on climbing and the mountain will bounce you out, thus concluding your trial.”

“Alright, these are the rules, begin!”

Jiang Chen looked at the stone steps with golden sparkles at the bottom of the towering mountain, sighing with emotion in his heart.

“A magnetic Endless Mountain! To think that such a mountain exists in the mundane world.” Jiang Chen couldn’t help but sigh.

Perhaps these organizers, including the forefathers, all knew that this mountain had incredible magnetism and it could attract all matter, creating an immense magnetic force field that would dictate its operations.

However, this was only one of its ordinary functions.

The true experts of ancient times would refine the mountain into a treasure, it could be stored and summoned, and they could manipulate it with their hearts.

Jiang Chen was also rather curious as he looked at this enormous mountain. Could it be that this mountain was one of the treasures of those ancient experts?

Figures continued to shoot past Jiang Chen like flying birds. When they landed on the stone steps, they climbed up using hands and feet like monkeys, deathly afraid of falling behind.

Jiang Chen cleared his mind of all thoughts and he took a deep breath in, and he bounded for the stone steps of the magnetic, golden colored mountain.