

Three Realms 361

Chapter 361: The Three Geniuses of the Shuiyue Faction

The sky quadrant was without a doubt the most mysterious sector amongst the four quadrants.

There were but a hundred candidates here, and none here were just to fill the quota. Not a single candidate was under fifth level spirit realm.

Even Long Juxue, who'd only entered the sect two years ago, was fifth level of the spirit realm after half a year of cultivation, and showing signs of breaking into the sixth level.

The azure phoenix constitution made her momentum as domineering as though she were splitting bamboo. No matter what she learned or practiced, it all came to her with less effort than any other genius.

This strong innate constitution caused others to both envy and admire her, and there was nothing else that they could do.

An innate constitution was something that occurred once in a thousand years in a place like the sixteen kingdoms.

Even the four forefathers didn't boast of this characteristic.

Long Juxue had gained much in this half year. Not only had her cultivation increased, but so had her confidence greatly spiked as well.

She was no longer the timid and cautious Long Juxue who'd just entered the sect. She no longer needed to purposefully fawn on a senior brother or match her words to someone's expression.

It was now other people's turn to watch hers, be mindful and purposefully kiss up to her.

Long Juxue quite liked this feeling. She enjoyed lording over others, watching them fret and intentionally restrain themselves to appease her.

She'd enjoyed the feeling of the various noble sons idolizing her in the Eastern Kingdom.

When she'd first entered the sect, she'd been a bit self-conscious because she'd spent a long time in the mundane world. She hadn't dared act as she usually would, and she'd deliberately sucked up to several senior brothers just so she wouldn't be suppressed.

But now, the potential of her innate constitution was on full display and her position within the sect was rising sharply as a result.

She had once again regained the feeling of the stars dancing attendance on the moon, just like she'd enjoyed in the mundane kingdoms.

Being fawned on, respected, and feared—these feelings that made one feel like a deity thoroughly restored Long Juxue's confidence.

If one had to say that there were any cracks left in her heart, that would be that enormous embarrassment in the mundane kingdom!

She didn't have much feelings for her family, but the matter with her brother and father was something engraved on her heart.

Therefore, she was always extremely irritated when she thought of Jiang Chen.

She almost couldn't wait to exact her revenge on him, burning his very bones into ashes and then going back to slaughter the rest of his clan in the Eastern Kingdom.

The message glyph had come from her honored master Shuiyue.

Shuiyue had conveyed everything that had happened in the earth quadrant, including her suspicions regarding the identity of the secular genius, and had even exaggerated them a bit as well.

At the same time, she also reminded Long Juxue to not underestimate this candidate no matter what. Long Juxue also had to suppress this candidate in the sky quadrant no matter what, or it would give rise to endless troubles afterwards.

"Is this secular swine really Jiang Chen?" Long Juxue learned of his rise through the message glyph, but she was suspicious whether the secular candidate really was Jiang Chen. *Could the honored master be mistaken?*

Is Jiang Chen really that strong?

Long Juxue's impression of Jiang Chen had halted on their battle at the Second Crossing. *This fellow had been lucky enough to grasp some methods to tame spirit fowl, which was why my Long family came off worse in the conflict. Does he truly have the potential described here?*

Formulaic thinking was like this sometimes.

Long Juxue's impression of Jiang Chen was too poor, and it had halted at where he'd been in the Eastern Kingdom.

Therefore, she felt that the secular genius likely wasn't Jiang Chen.

But since her honored master had said so, and she'd even described it so convincingly, even saying that Jiang Chen was possibly the Skylaurel Kingdom Ye Chonglou's secretly mentored disciple.

Ye Chonglou was the Skylaurel Kingdom's spirit king protector. When the matter involved him as well, Long Juxue had to place some stock into what was being said no matter how skeptical she was.

However, she also dismissed it right afterwards. "Hmph, whether he's Jiang Chen or not, he's caused my honored master to fall into such dire straits. As her disciple, I will not sit idly by after this. Especially after my honored master has issued warnings to me, indicating she wants me to make a move."

"It'd be even better if he was Jiang Chen, I can take care of old and new grudges in one fell swoop. If he dares come to the sky quadrant, I'll make him regret arriving in this world!"

Long Juxue was one who nursed a grudge. When she recalled the ignoble treatment she'd had at Jiang Chen's hands, her dignity couldn't absorb the hit and she couldn't help but feel the urge to go on a rampage.

In another residence in the sky quadrant, a man with exceedingly frosty features sat cross legged, an eerie light dancing in his eyes.

He was slightly lost in thought regarding a message glyph in his hands.

“The honored master was censured in the earth quadrant? She lost her position as the keeper? The source of all these sins is a secular cultivator??”

The fires of rage surged within the young man’s heart. This person was the eldest disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, within the top five of the Purple Sun Sect’s most preeminent disciples.

His name was Ceng Shi.

A head full of long hair was flung wildly back on his shoulders. It was grey on one side and black on the other, parted down the middle and clearly delineated. It looked rather peculiar.

“Sigh...” Ceng Shi was rather depressed upon reading all the messages within the message glyph. “The honored master wishes for me to mentor junior sister Long Juxue well, and listen to her when needed. It looks like my title of the first senior brother is far beneath junior sister Long Juxue in our honored master’s heart.”

Ceng Shi did indeed feel a bit of a dilemma. On one hand, he revered his honored master as one would a deity. He never dared slack on matters for his master.

It could be said that before Long Juxue had appeared, he had been the benchmark for all the disciples and his master’s pride and joy.

Because of the cultivation level and position that his honored master had brought him, in Ceng Shi’s heart, his respect for his master had exceeded even that of his birth mother’s.

When he learned that someone had plotted against his honored master in the earth quadrant, his first thought was to vent a breath of ill will for his honored master.

However, the words in the second half of the message rather depressed him. He knew that Long Juxue had an innate constitution, but he’d been the first senior brother for so long that he’d grown used to being the boss of all the junior brother and sisters.

Now that he was to suddenly heed to someone else and not be the boss anymore, it would take him some time getting used to.

“Forget it, since these are the honored master’s commands, I cannot disobey them. However, I must strive even harder in the sky quadrant and obtain a good ranking in the final competition. I need to fight my way into the final sixteen!”

Ceng Shi also knew that there would be enormous competition for the final sixteen. Only four would be selected from each sect!

Although he ranked in the top five in the Purple Sun Sect, now that Long Juxue had appeared, he’d undoubtedly gained another strong opponent.

Due to many reasons, Ceng Shi’s attitude towards Long Juxue was quite complicated.

“Forget it, let’s take a walk to junior sister Long Juxue first.” Although Ceng Shi was slightly jealous of Long Juxue, he couldn’t defy his master’s orders.

The second-ranked disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, Chu Xinghan, had also received a message glyph. His eyebrow raised, “Jiang Chen? The secular young man at the Second Crossing that day?”

Contrary to Ceng Shi, Chu Xinghan was one who had strong opinions. He had the most amount of predetermined views, and was the most capable of the bunch.

If one were to say that Ceng Shi had a sort of oedipus complex towards Master Shuiyue, then in contrast Chu Xinghan only viewed her as someone who’d pointed him down the way of his martial dao.

Honestly speaking, he also knew that his place in his honored master’s heart didn’t measure up to senior brother Ceng Shi, and was even far beneath junior sister Long Juxue.

However, he was broad-minded and didn’t feel the slightest bit unhappy or that there was something unusual about it.

“If that secular genius really is Jiang Chen, then he truly is junior sister Long Juxue’s fated rival.” Chu Xinghan also quietly left his residence thinking of this as he made his way to Long Juxue’s residence.

Ceng Shi and Chu Xinghan arrived at almost the same time at Long Juxue’s residence.

“Senior brothers, you’ve arrived.” Long Juxue nodded when she saw the two. “Have a seat in the courtyard.”

Chu Xinghan’s deep eyes looked at Long Juxue as he sighed in his heart, “This little junior sister has grown into her own in the end. She’s no longer the small girl who only knew how to play little schemes at the Second Crossing. However, her personality is without morals. I truly cannot tell if it’s a good thing or not to be pupils of the same master as her.”

Chu Xinghan’s personality was quite calm, and he had his own unique sense of judgement for various matters and people.

From Long Juxue’s actions, he could tell that this woman wasn’t the sort to value relationships and loyalty. He’d been the one who’d saved her in the ordinary world that day, but she’d only sought to flatter senior brother Ceng Shi after entering the sect, and he’d never seen her thank him, Chu Xinghan.

And now, she wasn’t even as respectful towards senior brother Ceng Shi anymore. The atmosphere of a talk between equals had replaced it, and even a sense of superiority creeped in.

To put things bluntly, her wings had filled out and she didn’t need to kiss up to anyone.

“Senior brothers, I trust you’ve also received the honored master’s message glyph explaining the particulars of the situation. This secular freak has caused our honored master to lose all face in front of her peers. As disciples, it will not do if we cannot take on some of our master’s burdens for her.”

Logically speaking, Ceng Shi was the senior brother here and he should’ve been the first to speak.

However, Long Juxue was obviously already viewing herself as the representative of the Shuiyue faction. She’d spoken with the bearing of a leader without waiting for Ceng Shi to speak.

Chu Xinghan had a distant expression on his face. He didn't respond, and didn't look at Ceng Shi.

Ceng Shi had thought that Long Juxue would make some small talk first and let him, the eldest senior brother, speak first. He hadn't thought that Long Juxue would straight-out view herself as the senior sister.

A bit of displeasure flashed through his brows, but he didn't express it.

"This candidate dared offend our honored master, he's bringing destruction down on himself with his words! Junior sister, I've heard that he's a fated rival in your life. If you find yourself in any difficult straits, Xinghan and I will absolutely not sit idly by." Ceng Shi bit off his words angrily.

"Fated rival?" Long Juxue felt as disgusted as if she'd eaten a fly when she heard these two words. "That title is too much. He's just a mere ant and unworthy of being a rival. If it really is him, I'll make him regret being born in this world!"

Ceng Shi smiled faintly, "Your silly senior brother made a mistake. Xinghan, you once exchanged blows with this candidate. What do you make of him?"

Chu Xinghan could make out the subtle clashes between Ceng Shi and Long Juxue in their words. He didn't want to get involved. He answered faintly, "He had yet to grow into his own then and thus isn't worth discussing. If someone hadn't interfered, I would've long since brought him back to the sect for the honored master's judgement."

Chapter 362: Two Portions of Beast Blood

In terms of strength, Chu Xinghan was currently below Ceng Shi. In terms of potential, Chu Xinghan could not match up to Long Juxue.

But in terms of shrewdness and strength of heart, neither of the two measured up to Chu Xinghan. He saw things more clearly than even Master Shuiyue.

Senior brother Ceng Shi and junior sister Long Juxue was destined to be unable to coexist together.

His honored master had never handled this problem well.

However, Chu Xinghan was a smart person. He naturally wouldn't give Master Shuiyue any pointers for he knew her well, and offering her any suggestions would be asking for trouble.

His honored master might even think that he was purposely running his mouth out of jealousy of those two people.

Therefore, the wisest decision was to avoid being involved, refrain from speaking too much and stay out of this matter entirely.

Jiang Chen? Chu Xinghan wasn't interested. He was different from Ceng Shi. Although he respected Master Shuiyue, he didn't respect her to the point of being willing to die for her.

Since Long Juxue and Ceng Shi were that enthusiastic, there was no reason for him to become involved. At any rate, he wasn't as strong as either of them, so they could go have their fun.

Chu Xinghan was well aware that Long Juxue was not a peer that he could become friends with. She certainly wasn't the least bit grateful towards him for saving her in the Eastern Kingdom.

Who knew, she might even resent him. After all, he had the chance to kill Jiang Chen back then but had not taken it, opting to bring Jiang Chen back to the sect for his master's judgement instead.

Chu Xinghan had rather admired Jiang Chen then, and hadn't wanted to kill a genius for no reason other than Long Juxue.

But now it looked like his actions then had likely already caused Long Juxue's to hold a private grudge against him, particularly since she'd been quite bedraggled in that match, even making a fool of herself.

He was one of the three who had seen her in those laughable circumstances. There had also been Yu Jie and Xu Zhen. And now, both of them were dead.

A proud person like Long Juxue would definitely be unwilling for others to remember her embarrassment. Therefore, it was likely that not only was she not grateful that Chu Xinghan had saved her life, but she actually bore him a death wish.

People's hearts were hard to predict.

Chu Xinghan's observation of Long Juxue was that she was the sort to employ all sorts of methods in order to reach her goal.

Whoever who was at odds with her was her stumbling block.

Therefore, he knew full well that his wisest decision was to not become embroiled in all this.

His master's favour was important but Master Shiuyue's care of Chu Xinghan had not reached the point that he must sacrifice his own life in response.

There was a scale in Chu Xinghan's heart, and he knew what position he occupied in his master's heart.

Ceng Shi chuckled upon hearing Chu Xinghan's words. "This means that someone is supporting Jiang Chen. However, no matter who this supporter is, everything is but a fleeting cloud in the face of our junior sister's innate constitution. Junior sister, the third cycle is about to be begin. I'm going to head back now. Let's stay in touch if anything happens."

Long Juxue's forehead creased slightly. She'd invited the two here to listen to any plans they had or to invite them to offer plans of their own.

Chu Xinghan stood up and smiled, "Since the eldest senior brother has said thus, then I will be taking my leave as well. Junior sister, you shouldn't think too much about this. Even if that Jiang Chen has three heads and six arms, he's destined to be a mere stepping stone in the path of your rise!"

Words of goodwill were free, so it didn't cost him anything to voice them.

Long Juxue was dejected, but maintained a noncommittal expression as she watched her two senior brothers walk out of her yard and vanish into the distance.

"Hmph, it looks like both of them are unwilling to submit to me. Ceng Shi, I know you don't accept me because you feel that I've stolen your status as the eldest senior brother. If you possess enough self

awareness, you will submit to me. If not, don't blame me for not valuing us our relationship as fellow disciples if you force me to action!"

Long Juxue had never been a kind person. Although Ceng Shi hadn't had the slightest bit of malevolent intention just now, she could hear his obvious intentions in the way he spoke.

What bloody fated rival or talk of a backer.

This all had obvious connotations to it.

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It was Jiang Chen's last day in the earth quadrant.

The scores of the earth quadrant had been announced a lot earlier. Jiang Chen was the champion without any doubt.

However, neither Liu Wencai nor Fatty Lu had made it into the top ten and received the right to move up to the sky quadrant.

Liu Wencai however, was quite satisfied. Before he arrived in the earth quadrant, he had been worried about the prospect of demotion, feeling quite sure that he'd be sent back to the spirit quadrant.

However, thanks to his friendship with Jiang Chen, his strength had suddenly increased over these three months. His scores had placed him in the top 100 out of the five hundred earth quadrant candidates.

Fatty Lu had also improved a hundred places over the last cycle. He'd improved from three hundred to a ranking in the two hundreds.

Their rates of improvement had all been exceedingly swift.

"Ai, human connections are fleeting. Brother Boulder, I truly don't wish to be parted from you just like this." A trace of sadness marked Liu Wencai's eyes, before he laughed a little self-deprecatingly.

"However, Brother Boulder's future will be bright after going to the sky quadrant. I should be happy for you."

"Come, I raise this toast to Brother Boulder! May your momentum remain just as strong in the sky quadrant. May you obtain the qualification to fight for the final sixteen after making it into the list of sixty-four!"

The second selection would ultimately select sixty-four candidates to take part in a final match and compete for a spot in the final sixteen.

The final sixteen would then become the personal disciples of the four forefathers and learn from the four venerated origin realm cultivators.

This was undoubtedly a dream-like goal for the cultivators of the sixteen kingdoms.

"I too raise a toast to Brother Boulder." Fatty Lu's emotions were also slightly uncertain today as well. Normally, he was different from Liu Wencai who was usually in high spirits and wore his heart on a sleeve. Fatty Lu fancied himself as the calm type.

However, today his calm facade seemed to have been infected by the melancholy of parting. He'd been a bit depressed all day.

Indeed, he'd been in the earth quadrant for so long, but not that many people showed him any respect. The two in front of him counted as his rare friends in the earth quadrant.

Particularly Jiang Chen, Fatty Lu felt greatly indebted towards him.

Jiang Chen's every word and gesture had deeply impacted the fatty's very being, tempering his confidence.

Moreover, this secular genius was different from other sect geniuses. His eyes were not at the top of his head, and he did not form connections based on the other's potential, background, or looks.

He used a true heart of sincerity to make friends.

A true heart for a true heart. Only friends like these would be true bosom friends.

Although Fatty Lu had his street-smartness and his craftiness, that was just a way of survival that he had developed out of resignation. It did not mean that he was really a heartless fellow.

A heart was made of flesh. Jiang Chen truly had brought no small amount of change to Fatty Lu and Lu Wencai during this time.

He'd changed their strength, their mental state and their destinies.

Jiang Chen also felt similarly as he looked at the two.

Although he had lived two lifetimes, his heart of devotion had never changed. He had never been the sort to abstain from human feelings.

He had always been especially generous towards friends.

"You two count as friends I've made in the earth quadrant. You value me and treat me as a big brother. Since I'm a big brother, I should act like one. I'm going to the sky quadrant tomorrow, but I should give you guys something."

Gifts?

Liu Wencai and Fatty Lu started. They hadn't thought about this at all.

In their eyes, to be able to spend time with Brother Boulder everyday, listen to his teachings and spar with him was the greatest gift of all.

He still wanted to give them gifts? n).O**v**e**l**bIn

When it came to gifts, they were sect disciples after all and theoretically had more resources than secular cultivators. If one were to give presents, they were the ones who should be doling them out.

Jiang Chen made a grasping motion with his right hand and took out two flasks the size of fists.

"These two flasks of beast blood may be of some use to you. Both of you are from the Myriad Spirit Sect and usually rely on beast blood to cultivate, right? Particularly you, Wencai, I feel that your foundational

potential is quite extraordinary and seems yet untapped. There should be bigger secrets in your body, but I'm not quite sure at the moment. Take these two flasks and refine them. Remember, you must refine them yourselves and can't gift them to anyone else. Don't ask what beast they came from or what rank it was. Just remember that this blood is exceedingly precious. If you lose it, you'll regret it for the rest of your life."

This blood had been collected from the body of the Redscaled Firelizard. While Jiang Chen had given the flesh and blood to the Goldbiter Rats, he'd also collected quite a bit for himself.

He'd collected dozens of little flasks like these. However, for something as enormous as the Firelizard, the amount in those flasks was less than even one-one thousandth of its blood.

The Firelizard was a saint rank creature that was on par with a human origin realm cultivator.

It was likely hard for even forefather Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit sect to obtain blood from a beast of this level, not to mention the two of them.

Of course, just these two little flasks were insufficient to thoroughly remake someone.

But even a little bit of this heaven-defying blood was enough to change one's potential. That in itself was astonishing enough.

The slightest hint of a bloodline from a saint rank creature was enough for a cultivator to use for the rest of his life.

When the two saw Jiang Chen warn them like this, they did not dare tarry. The moment they took the flasks and grasped it in their hand, they could immediately feel a strong sense of spirit power, as if it wanted to burrow straight into their bodies.

"What a strong life force!" Fatty Lu could not help but exclaim.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and thought, how could the blood of a saint rank beast not be strong?

It was then that the two understood this was not ordinary blood, and carefully stowed the flasks away like they were putting away a treasure.

"Remember, don't speak of this matter to anyone, or it might bring destruction upon you."

"Yes, I won't even speak of it in my dreams." Fatty Lu hastened to express.

Liu Wencai nodded lightly, but his attitude had already explained all.

"Wencai, this is the reflections of beast taming that you gave me last time. I took a read and thought it was quite good. I've mastered it all now so I'm returning it to you. I've also made some additions that may be of use to you. You can peruse them when you're bored."

Jiang Chen handed a scroll back over to Liu Wencai.

Chapter 363: Liu Wencai Undergoes a Complete Change

The three of them began to pour wine for each other and started chatting about all topics beneath the heavens. Finally, Fatty Lu asked to be excused when it was past midnight.

He could sense the beast blood and the immense aura emanating through the flask. This made his heart itch, and he couldn't wait to go back earlier and refine it.

Jiang Chen smiled and sent Fatty Lu on his way.

Liu Wencai felt a bit awkward and smiled, "He's always like this, so don't think much of it Brother Boulder. He still has his principles when the situation calls for it and is worthy of a deeper friendship."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, "This is precisely what's cute about him. Why would I blame him? Come, let's keep drinking."

The two returned to the yard and continued drinking.

When Fatty Lu had been present just now, Jiang Chen had not said anything lest he was someone who easily spilled the beans about his internal thoughts. Now that there was only Liu Wencai left, Jiang Chen said, "Wencai, this beast blood may be ten times more effective for you than it is for fatty. I've sparred with you for a few months and have sensed that there is still untapped power inside you. There is still potential that hasn't been unlocked. You should refine this as soon as you go back; you'll see unexpected gains from it. You may even be able to make it into the sky quadrant after three months."

"What?" The light of surprise dawned in Liu Wencai's eyes. It was already a legend that he'd made it into the top 100 from a ranking at the bottom of the earth quadrant.

Make it into the sky quadrant?

To be honest, Liu Wencai had never even thought about this. If Jiang Chen had remained within the earth quadrant and they could've sparred every day, then he might've had a bit of confidence in that claim.

But now that Brother Boulder was leaving, Liu Wencai was convinced that his rate of improvement would absolutely not be that swift in the future.

"Remember, don't doubt your potential and don't suspect this flask of beast blood. Right, let me gift you something else that might be able to become a very useful weapon for you."

Jiang Chen took out another item that was as thick as a child's arm. It was ivory in color and gave one a very noble feeling.

"This is a bone of the same beast the blood originates from. If you can request a strong weapons refiner to meld all sorts of divine patterns and formations into it, its battle strength will certainly be stunning. Even in its natural form right now, six or seven times refined spirit weapons are no match for it."

A spirit weapon was just a spirit weapon in the end.

This bone had been taken from the body of the Redscaled Firelizard. Thus, the durability of a saint rank spirit creature was easy to imagine.

Liu Wencai studiously listened to everything Jiang Chen said. He accepted the spirit bone and toyed with it for a bit, sensing the enormous power within and its natural resonance with him. The strong spirit ripples it emitted created a formidable aura.

“This bone is something else alright.” Liu Wencai’s eyes lit up with brilliant light. “Brother Boulder, I’ve discovered that I owe you more and more. If I were a girl, I would’ve promised myself to you already to repay you for all you’ve done.”

Jiang Chen rolled his eyes, “Oh stop it!”

Liu Wencai chuckled, “Don’t be mad, don’t be mad. Come, let’s drink.”

The two of them drank to their heart’s content, with Liu Wencai finally taking his leave when the night was about to draw to a close. Jiang Chen walked him out as well and clapped his shoulder, “Remember, study the scroll when you go back.”

Liu Wencai found it odd that Jiang Chen was mentioning the scroll again. He nodded subconsciously, “Brother Boulder, I will see you again if fate permits.”

“I hope to see you in the sky quadrant in three months.” Jiang Chen said faintly.

Sky quadrant? A strong sense of confidence took root in Liu Wencai’s heart for the first time.

He bade Jiang Chen farewell and returned to his residence. Liu Wencai was in no hurry to refine the flask of blood and unfurled the scroll first.

“Mm? What’s this?”

Liu Wencai immediately discovered that the contents of this scroll wasn’t what he’d given Jiang Chen.

The scroll was the same, but the contents weren’t what they were before.

“This...” Liu Wencai’s eyes lit up. “These are reflections in the area of spirit beast taming. And! This has to do with refining beast blood, and...”

Liu Wencai was quite shocked when he took a closer look. He discovered that every sentence was exceedingly profound.

Even the most precious tomes of the Myriad Spirit Sect had content inferior to that inside this one scroll.

“Amazing, truly amazing!”

The more Liu Wencai read, the more he was astonished and wreathed in smiles. He discovered that he’d picked up a treasure! Even if forefather Ninelion had been the one to pick up the scroll and read it, he would likely still be speechlessly astonished.

“Just what kind of perverse existence is Brother Boulder to give me such a precious scroll? Is... is he the reincarnation of an omnipotent god?”

Liu Wencai’s hand was almost shaking in shock and excitement. He put the scroll away carefully in his storage ring.

“I’ll need at least a few decades to digest all the knowledge in this scroll. I need to treasure it well and not let it leak out at all. Otherwise, countless numbers of geniuses within the sect will set their sights on me, and perhaps even the heavyweights of the sect will try to pry it from my hands.”

Liu Wencai knew the value of the item in his hands. If it was claimed by the sect, it would absolutely become the treasure of the sect.

“Brother Boulder isn’t an ordinary person at all. I’m but a passing acquaintance of his and we’ve struck up a friendship, but he’s gifted me with such a treasure. I, Liu Wencai, must do well and not let him down!”

“Brother Boulder, three months! I will make it to the sky quadrant in three months and reconvene with you!” Liu Wencai had a sudden explosion of confidence.

He knew better than anyone that he’d met a man who’d changed his life.

He was also more aware than anyone else that, although Brother Boulder came from the ordinary world, he was destined to soar to the skies. Even the candidates in the sky quadrant might not be able to curb his rise!

Liu Wencai suddenly thought of his initial invitation to Jiang Chen in the mystic quadrant, and that Guo Ren from the Purple Sun Sect had also invited Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had mocked Guo Ren then that he was a frog at the bottom of a well, seeing only the sixteen kingdom alliance in his eyes and knowing only the four great sects.

It now looked like Brother Boulder had vast aspirations that had long since exceeded the boundaries of the sixteen kingdoms. He was considering problems from a higher vantage point.

“It looks like the four great sects are just Brother Boulder’s springboard. How laughable that Master Shuiyue was such a pathetic little character. With Brother Boulder’s stunning talent, is this something an old woman like her could hold back? I can already predict that in the moment Brother Boulder reveals his true colors, all of the geniuses of the four sects will look dim in comparison!”

“Mm, I must hurry up. Right, Brother Boulder reminded us several times that this blood isn’t ordinary. I trust that it’s no common item either.”

Liu Wencai could use the scroll to deduce that there was much to this flask of beast blood, and that bone than met the eye.

He felt that he’d changed from a poor little kid to a millionaire in the span of a second. He felt quite fulfilled and very excited.

When his thoughts traveled here, Liu Wencai took out the blood and began to refine it.

In the instant that the blood entered his body, however, Liu Wencai seemed to feel something collapse with a roar inside of him, and his entire body started howling like the waters bursting through a dam.

Crack crack crack.

Crisp sounds rang out from all over Liu Wencai’s bones.

And then—

Every single one of his bones, every single drop of blood, every inch of flesh and blood seemed to be smashed into pieces, reassembled, smashed again, and reassembled again.

“What... what’s going on?”

There seemed to have been a vault of energy inside Liu Wencai, and this vault was explosively opened all of a sudden in this moment.

All of his clothes exploded into tatters and fell to the ground. His taut and study muscles were all exposed to the outside air.

At this moment, numerous strange glyphs appeared over his skin. They were as thin as tadpoles, giving off an exceedingly mysterious feeling.

“Ah!!”

Liu Wencai emitted a dull roar reminiscent of a beast. His eyes appeared quite violent due to their bloodshot appearance.

“What... what kind of beast’s blood is this?” The thought flashed through Liu Wencai’s mind.

Refining beasts’ blood was an ordinary occurrence for cultivation in the Myriad Spirit Sect. But he’d never bumped into such a happening.

Bam!

Bam!

Bam!

The endless collisions finally slowed down. Liu Wencai laid prone on the ground, utterly exhausted and listless.

“Mm? Wait, the purity of my blood seems to have changed. There’s also a difference in my spirit ocean. How is this possible? How could my spirit ocean have become so clean all of a sudden? Where are all the impurities? The impurities within my blood are gone as well!”

This discovery made Liu Wencai spring up to a sitting position.

“How... how is this possible? A flask of beast blood could cast off my old self and completely change me? No, this wasn’t a rebirth. It just cleaned the impurities in my body. Right, I felt an enormous power awoken in my body just now. Can it be that the power in my body helped me turn into what is essentially a completely new person?”

“I remember Brother Boulder saying that some potential seemed to be hidden in my body. Can it be that this blood tapped into my latent potential?” Liu Wencai’s mind was a chaotic mess right now. He only knew that his potential wouldn’t lose out to those preeminent geniuses in his sect from now on.

Looking at the purity of his spirit ocean, it was practically ethereal!

Liu Wencai was awash in delight though he wasn’t able to explain this sudden change either. However, this was without a doubt a wondrous phenomenon. He knew that his potential had suddenly increased three to five times.

The nature of the wildness exuding from his body was also several times more potent than previously. The Myriad Spirit Sect always pursued the untamed beauty. This was needed to tame spirit creatures. In the Myriad Spirit Sect, wildness was an allure and a charisma, the symbol of strength and potential.

The wild nature within Liu Wencai had been perfectly released. There was an explosive presence to him now, a symbol of an extremely strong life force!

Chapter 364: The Rules of the Sky Quadrant

“Brother Boulder?” Liu Wencai walked excitedly over to Jiang Chen’s residence in anticipation of clearing up his questions, but soon realized that not a single soul was present.

“Left?” Liu Wencai looked dumbly around at the empty yard. He knew that Brother Boulder had likely gone to report to the sky quadrant.

“Thank you, Brother Boulder.”

Even though the person had left, Liu Wencai still bowed deeply and respectfully outside Jiang Chen’s residence.

“I’ll make it to the sky quadrant after three months and continue our brothership!”

An unforeseen surge of confidence rose in Liu Wencai’s heart at that moment.

.....

The sky quadrant was exactly as Jiang Chen had thought, a place full of spirit power.

The earth quadrant couldn’t hold a candle to the sky quadrant.

“Welcome to the sky quadrant.” An examiner greeted them enthusiastically.

There were four keepers in the sky quadrant, one from each of the four great sects.

“According to the rules, your rankings will be the last ten in the quadrant. All of your scores will start from zero in this quadrant.”

Everything was starting from zero?

Jiang Chen started. Did this need to be announced? It was a new cycle, of course everything was starting from scratch.

“Heh heh, judging from your expressions, you must feel it odd that I’m saying this. Don’t think it’s strange; this is the sky quadrant, and thus different from all the others. The scores for each cycle are cumulative here, and every candidate that ascends to the sky quadrant starts off with zero.”

“Master examiner, I spent my first cycle in the sky quadrant and had obtained a score before. I fell to the earth quadrant but performed well and came back again. Can I not regain the score I had before?”

There were many candidates like this one.

They’d been the bottom ten in the first cycle and had been demoted to the earth quadrant. Due to superior performance in the earth quadrant in the second cycle, they’d been promoted again.

Now that they were back, they naturally wanted to regain their old scores.

The examiner smiled faintly, "My apologies, your scores are zeroed when you leave the sky quadrant. When you come back, you will start off as a newcomer and start from scratch."

The candidates' faces immediately changed. "This... this isn't fair! Then they who've been here for the past two cycles will have much higher scores! We're starting from scratch, then doesn't that mean we're only going through the motions for the selection?! How can we compete with them?!"

"Going through the motions?" The examiner laughed coldly. "If you have no confidence in yourself, then what meaning is there in you participating in the selection? This selection is meant for geniuses, and a true genius would be able to fight against disadvantageous conditions. What need do we have for mediocrity? If you truly have talent and potential, why would you have been demoted from the sky quadrant to the earth quadrant? Did we purposefully send you away?"

The candidates were speechless.

Jiang Chen had remained silent off on the side. Although the rules seemed a bit ridiculous, he wasn't of a mind to bring contempt upon himself and protest something.

The rules had been set by others. To question their rules was to invite ridicule and scorn.

"Alright, old rules it is. Every single person who arrives must first understand the rules of the quadrant. The sky quadrant is completely different from the other quadrants. The tests that you need to undertake here aren't just limited to matches in the rings." $n/\sigma \cdot \mathcal{V}((e^{-l/B} - 1)/n$

"Come and pick up your participant tokens as well as a set of the rules. Go carefully study them!"

It was apparent that even those candidates who had returned to the sky quadrant were treated like newcomers upon their return, with redefined participant numbers.

There were a hundred in total in the sky quadrant, so the newcomers naturally started at number 91.

Jiang Chen had been the champion, so his number was 91.

He received his token and a copy of the rules.

"Alright, just as usual, there won't be any exams on the first day. The third cycle will officially begin tomorrow."

"Remember, the sky quadrant only welcomes true geniuses, not trash who only knows how to complain and not work hard. Read the rules well. Even though you're latecomers, you may not necessarily lose. Alright, dismissed!"

Jiang Chen didn't linger after he finished listening to the examiner. He headed directly for his residence.

The sky quadrant was at least five times larger than the earth quadrant. Each candidate had their own residence and yard. All was extremely quiet and no one had any fear of being disturbed.

Jiang Chen arrived at residence 91 and looked at the quiet residence, murmuring to himself. "This will be my hideout for the next three months."

He pushed open the door and as per his habits, began a thorough inspection. After making three or four circles around and encountering no accidents, he finally sat down leisurely on a chair in the yard and began to read the rules of the cycle.

The sky quadrant was indeed much different than all the others.

It seemed to deliberately want to protect the various geniuses, foregoing the endless rounds of battles between candidates.

This quadrant seemed to focus more on the candidates' cultivation.

One's scores was dependent on the acquisition of points in the sky quadrant, and there were two major ways to gain points.

There was a foundational way to win points and an advanced way.

The foundational way was the same for everyone. It was divided into four areas, and each area had five exams for a total of 20 exams.

Each exam was worth five points, for a total of 100.

An appropriate number of points would be awarded based on the number of foundational exams completed. Points would not be deducted if exams were left unfinished.

There were a lot of ways to win points in the advanced method.

Challenging other candidates, for example.

In order to challenge other candidates here, you needed to bet 20 points. If you won, you would regain your 20, and the opponent's 20. Accordingly, the same if your opponent triumphs, your loss would forfeit your 20 point bet to the opponent.

The rules stated that every candidate could issue one challenge a day, with their opponents selected at random.

The option to accumulate points through battle was something that those who excelled in battling loved. If they selected someone who was roughly on par with themselves, then they could even designate their own bets.

What did that entail? That meant under the condition of mutual agreement, they could increase the number of points being bet.

The rules set the original bet at 20 points, but if both sides agreed, one could increase that up to 50, 100, or even all the points a candidate currently had.

But of course, both sides had to agree to this.

Moreover, this aspect was strictly regulated. If it was discovered that someone was purposefully taking it easy, cheating, or giving his points to someone of his sect, then both parties' points would be reduced to zero.

Therefore, although bet designation had occurred in the first two cycles, the bets hadn't been particularly large. No one had dared to bet all their points at once either.

After all, the qualification to be in the sky quadrant was one that was hard to come by. No one wanted to lose all their points because of a gambler's mentality.

Everyone wanted to make it onto the list of 64 and then the final 16 in the sky quadrant.

No one would purposefully lose their points for someone of the same sect.

In the world of cultivation, sacrificing oneself to elevate another of the same sect was something that happened, but just not in this manner.

Apart from challenging others, there were still many ways to earn points.

Conducting various missions, for example.

There were five mission levels.

A first level mission would result in 10 points if completed.

A second level mission would result in 20 points if completed.

A third level mission would result in 40 points if completed.

A fourth level mission would result in 100 points if completed.

Finally, a fifth level mission would result in 200 points if completed.

Regardless of what level mission it was, a candidate had to have sufficient points in abeyance. This was because if the mission wasn't completed, the value of the mission was deducted from the candidate's points.

If you wanted to apply for a fifth level mission, you would have to have two hundred points in reserve. If you had less than two hundred points, then you didn't have the right to apply for the mission.

According to the rules, there was only one chance a day to apply for a mission. If one failed, one was barred from applying for a mission within the next five days, and had to wait until the sixth to apply again.

Apart from these regular missions, some special ones were occasionally released as well. The points available from these special ones were exceeding high.

However, there was only one such mission a month.

Whenever this special mission appeared, it would stir all the geniuses into a frenzy.

This was because the number of points available was extremely high, and points wouldn't be docked if candidates failed. However, what made these missions special was that there was a degree of danger to them.

This mostly summed up the rules. Overall speaking, there were many ways to obtain points apart from the 100 points from the foundation missions each month.

Jiang Chen read the rules over several times and formulated a general plan of attack. It looked like there was a possibility for large gaps between candidate points.

And it wasn't like there weren't necessarily no chances for newcomers.

This was because apart from the foundation missions, all other chances to earn points had to be prefaced with a candidate betting their own. Some could make it big, some could suffer losses.

After all, there would be successes and failures a-plenty with the missions.

If a candidate was a bit more aggressive and failed a few more times than others, it was easy for him to end up with nothing as his points dropped.

If newcomers maintained a steady pace, there weren't necessarily no chances to find their footing.

"The sky quadrant exams are truly complicated. I don't have a single point right now, so it looks like I need to start from the foundation points. There are 20 missions in total, so I have to get all 100 points from them. When I gain these 100, then I'll take on some more missions and slowly accumulate my points. I have no capital now as I have no points, so I can't be too aggressive. Otherwise, if I lose even my foundation points, I'll have no chance to make a comeback."

Jiang Chen was well aware that as a newcomer, he had nothing to play with. If he lost even his foundation points, then he'd be demoted.

There were only 100 foundation points to be had in the three month cycle. There would be no more if he lost them all.

Therefore, he had to be conservative in earning his points in the beginning, without the luxury to take risks.

If he advanced brashly and failed several times in a row, he'd only be able to stay on the sidelines and watch others have fun as he awaited demotion at the end of the three months.

Chapter 365: Meeting Long Juxue Again

By the time Jiang Chen had thoroughly digested the rules, he'd also formed a basic plan of attack.

"I must seek to obtain all of the hundred foundation points. I can also appropriately issue some challenges. The most steady way of going about things is to apply for the regular missions. A first level mission results in ten points, and they can be run everyday. As for the special missions, although they award a lot of points and have no risk of losing points, they only come around at most once a month. They're something I can only hope to run into."

"I've only just started; I must seek to do things steadily, and not blunder about with brute force."

Jiang Chen set down a plan for himself. He was starting from scratch with no foundation, so taking things slowly but surely was the way forward.

"Having completed two cycles already, the candidates in the sky quadrant must've amassed quite a few points already. My starting point is already far behind these fellows. It's good thing that only half a year has passed out of the three years. I still have two and a half years to catch up. Of course, the caveat

being that I'm not eliminated in that time. If I lack sufficient points and rank in the bottom ten after three months, then I'll be sent back to the earth quadrant with dust on my face."

Jiang Chen would never let this happen.

"I wonder how many points those premier candidates have received now?" Jiang Chen had yet to participate in the trials of the sky quadrant, and so couldn't come up with an accurate estimate.

"Although I temporarily can't calculate it, those at the top will likely have more than 1,000 points."

After all, six months, 180 days. Even if one completed one mission a day, that would result in 1,800 points.

That didn't even include the 200 foundation points each month.

Of course, it wasn't like points would only increase. Once a candidate failed a mission, their points would be docked and they would be forbidden from applying for missions for the next five days. This would also affect their points as well.

Jiang Chen could see that the rules of the sky quadrant were focused on cultivating the candidates, allowing them to fully develop in these three years.

Therefore, there were less clashes between the candidates when compared to the other quadrants. This was to avoid the premier geniuses exchanging blows too early and thus leading to the early loss of genius talent.

When premier geniuses crossed hands, the interchange may very well be fatal.

Therefore, there were a lot fewer trials that involved combat.

Of course, this wasn't to say that there were none at all. Successfully challenging other candidates would result in 20 points. This was a popular way to earn points for those confident in their fighting ability.

There was also the need for the occasional match in order to confirm how the candidates were developing. *nOVe/1B*-In

These kinds of challenges usually wouldn't be to the death, but they were just as ferocious as those in the other quadrants.

Jiang Chen knew that this was the intention of the four sects.

After all, in the end they would select the strongest 64 for the final selection. Then, the candidates would have ample opportunity to display their techniques and determine who was truly the most superior.

The final rounds three years later was the true stage for the geniuses to display their talents. The three years in the interim were a period of time for them to cultivate, improve, and ascend higher.

All sorts of superior conditions were available in the sky quadrant.

In addition, all of the sect geniuses were gathered here. Everyone was existing within a nervous, competitive bubble. They were each other's best motivation. After all, it was hard for one not to improve when they felt the stress of competition.

Rates of improvement were fast with opponents and motivation.

After familiarizing himself with the rules, Jiang Chen's first plan of attack was to gain all one hundred foundation points.

These foundation points would form the capital he needed to expand into other areas.

In addition, he was a newbie at the moment, and could only play around in the newcomer area. Even when he earned 100 points, he wouldn't be able to apply immediately for the fifth level missions.

"Forget it. I should walk around and take a look at things since I've just arrived in the sky quadrant. I should observe the competition." Jiang Chen hadn't bothered to scout out his competition in the earth and mystic quadrants.

Thanks to his advantages in those quadrants, he was able to obtain an overwhelming victory without having to understand his opponents.

However, the sky quadrant was different. He was dealing with the elites amongst the elites here!

Here, none of his opponents could be underestimated. The most critical thing was that these opponents had already completed two cycles, and their knowledge of the environment and rules would be infinitely stronger than any newcomer.

The sky quadrant was also similar to other quadrants, with a lot of off limit areas.

If a candidate barged into the taboo areas, they would be attacked by all sorts of restrictions and formations.

Apart from the residences, the main square was the only other place which candidates could access. The foundation missions, mission announcement areas, and the rings for matches could all be found here.

As for the residences, apart from the walkways, other candidates' residences were all private property. Jiang Chen wouldn't be able to enter without the owner's permission.

He walked around for a bit but noticed that no one was doing the same.

"It looks like I was too naive. Time is money. No one would spend valuable time walking around outside when they could be cultivating."

Jiang Chen shook his head at himself. Thinking carefully about things, he had no friends in the sky quadrant at all. If he had to speak of any old acquaintances, then it was likely just down to the usual suspects.

There was Long Juxue, Chu Xinghan, and Luo Huang from the Purple Sun Sect, who'd attacked Eastern Gouyu and Tian Shao on the outskirts of the Skylareland Kingdom that day. Of course, there were also Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi of the Precious Tree Sect.

They were all his rivals.

When Jiang Chen's thoughts wandered their way, he couldn't help but smile ruefully. He had yet to start up in the sky quadrant, but already had five strong enemies.

He became bored after walking around for a while and returned to his residence.

When he felt that all the other candidates were cultivating behind closed doors, he also felt a sense of pressure on him.

"I may be the only fourth level spirit realm in the sky quadrant?" Jiang Chen laughed self deprecatingly as a sense of urgency grew in his heart.

Jiang Chen had broken through to the fourth level during the initial selection. He'd spent half a year in the mystic and earth quadrants, and had worked quite hard during this time as well, but his focus had been on training the "Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods". That had occupied a lot of his time.

However, his spirit ocean had continuously absorbed spirit power and he'd spent much time everyday solidifying his cultivation. He'd also had the practical experience from the matches in the two quadrants and his daily spars with Liu Wencai.

Real knowledge came from actual battle experience, and Jiang Chen's level of cultivation had been rising steadily as well.

Although he had yet to break through to the fifth level spirit realm, only a thin veil separated him from that step. He would be able to break through at any time.

"With such a superior environment in the sky quadrant, perhaps I can try to breakthrough. Perhaps I'll receive some inspiration one day during these three months and enter the fifth level."

More accurately speaking, the fifth level was the middle of the earth spirit realm.

To go from fourth level to fifth level actually required a period of accumulation.

However, even though there was but a line between the two levels, the difference was still great.

There were very few fifth level spirit realm candidates in the earth quadrant, the majority were fourth level.

But in the sky quadrant, apart from himself, Jiang Chen could find no other fourth level spirit realm.

"Breaking through to the fifth level spirit realm will happen when conditions are ripe. I lack that final step right now, that juncture for breakthrough. Perhaps it's a moment of enlightenment, or perhaps a match. Or perhaps that inspiration will come when I turn around carelessly one day."

Jiang Chen's comprehension of cultivation was quite profound. He knew that this kind of opportunity was something only hoped for and couldn't be counted on. There was no need to forcefully make it happen. The more he tried, the further away his goal might travel.

The more he kept a calm mindset, the stronger his strength of heart was, the more likely he'd be able to break through when the time arrived.

This was how Jiang Chen spent his first day and night in a new environment. The next day, he presented himself at the main square before the time to assemble had arrived.

The square wasn't particularly crowded even after a hundred candidates had gathered here. They even appeared rather few in this enormous quadrant.

Even though their numbers were few, Jiang Chen had been able to sense the fervent atmosphere in the sky quadrant as soon as he'd set foot inside. The enormous competitive spirit burned white-hot in the square.

Jiang Chen particularly stood out with his mask and unique uniform.

Every candidate knew who he was when they saw his outfit.

The dual champion of the mystic and earth quadrants. He'd swept the matches with several Purple Sun Sect geniuses with his power alone, and had pulled Master Shuiyue off her pedestal in the end as well.

A genius that had bewitched the earth quadrant was nothing in the eyes of the sky quadrant candidates.

However, a genius that even an examiner had needed to cheat in order to suppress, was rather shocking.

Master Shuiyue was exceedingly proud, but she'd even gone to the lengths of employing despicable methods. What did this mean? This meant that Master Shuiyue was wary of this candidate.

Jiang Chen could feel all sorts of complicated gazes sweep all over him.

However, he ignored all of these looks.

Suddenly, he felt a cold gaze pierce at him from the left.

He suddenly had the feeling of having a dangerous animal fix its sights on him.

"Long Juxue?" Jiang Chen's heart pounded for a second. Although he didn't turn his head to look, that gaze was familiar and something he'd never forget.

Long Juxue had left with this sort of gaze that day at the Second Crossing.

"No, why would this woman stare at me with such hatred? Logically speaking, as a secular cultivator, I wouldn't attract her interest even though I've made it into the sky quadrant. Why is it that she looks at me alone with such hatred? Can it be... she already knows my true identity?"

Jiang Chen looked back with neither a humbling nor an arrogant gaze when his thoughts reached here!

Chapter 366: Obtaining Points

They'd already finished an invisible exchange of blows in the instant their eyes met.

The face-off between rivals!

Their hearts were full of understanding in this moment.

Long Juxue was convinced that this secular candidate was Jiang Chen.

Likewise, Jiang Chen was certain that Long Juxue had already identified him.

Long Juxue's killing intent surged, whereas Jiang Chen remained coolly composed.

The clash between rivals was over in a flash, but a victor wasn't clear. Tidal waves of emotions grew in their hearts. *nOVe/1B-In*

Long Juxue was surprised, "Just what kind of lucky occurrences did this dumb animal run into? My eyes had encompassed the formless aura of the azure phoenix, but it wasn't enough to shake his dao heart at all. This dumb animal has such strong strength of heart?"

Jiang Chen was also reflecting, "This scorpion hearted woman seems to be quite treasured in the Purple Sun Sect. It's only been a three short years, but she's already at the peak of the earth spirit realm. This rate of improvement is faster than mine!"

Although Jiang Chen was surprised, he knew this was to be expected. The only advantage he had against Long Juxue was the experiences of his past life.

Long Juxue's advantages were likewise obvious. An innate constitution gave her an enormous head start. Such a constitution would be considered a decent talent no matter what plane she was in.

Her second advantage was resources. Judging from her posture, she was likely the most valued out of the younger generation in the entirety of the Purple Sun Sect. All sorts of resources and items would be earmarked for her. It was likely that all the entire senior executives would come together and tailor a cultivation plan for her.

With such treatment, it would be difficult for Long Juxue's strength to not suddenly improve in leaps and bounds.

"I wouldn't have known had I not taken a look. I'd thought that this woman's cultivation would be at a similar level to mine. Who would've thought that the Purple Sun Sect would be willing to go to such depths and spend so many resources on her? This was absolutely an advantage born of a pile of resources. Her six months in the sky quadrant are also an advantage that I cannot measure up to either. It looks like I need to hasten my footsteps to catch up to her."

Jiang Chen felt an even stronger sense of urgency now that he'd bumped into Long Juxue again and seen her true level of cultivation.

He cleared his mind and stood within the crowd, listening to the examiner's speech.

"The foundation exams are divided into four areas. They are: martial dao, strength of heart, pills, and a combination of them all. Each area has five subjects, and each subject is worth five points. Passing one subject earns you five points, failing doesn't lose you any."

"Alright, the exams begin now."

The main focus of the selection was placed in the sky quadrant. Therefore, there were more examiners than candidates.

There were one hundred candidates in this quadrant, but three to four hundred examiners dancing attendance on them.

Along with the more particular nature of the sky quadrant exams, there was no need for candidates to take turns. Everyone could undergo the foundation exams at the same time.

“It looks like the candidates of the sky quadrant are truly valued. Each candidate can undergo the exams as soon as they arrive and don’t need to waste time in pointless waiting.”

Jiang Chen felt kindly disposed towards the exams of the sky quadrant.

Martial dao, strength of heart, pills, and a combination of them all.

Jiang Chen gained a thorough understanding of the cultivation direction of the four sects after looking at the exams.

They were absolutely raising strong seeds for the origin realm, and it seemed, with a strong sense of urgency.

Strength of heart—ordinary cultivation wouldn’t emphasize this.

However, if one’s goals were set on the origin realm, then strength of heart was particularly important.

There wasn’t much apparent use for it in the spirit realm because it was both difficult to train, and lacked training methods. Thus, most cultivators weren’t willing to spend an inordinate amount of time on training their strength of heart. They would rather spent it forging their spirit ocean or honing their techniques.

A venerated origin realm cultivator must have a strong strength of heart, a mastery of martial dao, and holistic development in all directions.

Otherwise, a misstep in any of these areas could become a limitation.

There was an all-inclusive range of topics within the four subject areas, including refining weapons, the way of glyphs, taming beasts, formations, mechanisms...

Martial dao seemed simple, but the knowledge held within was as deep as the fathomless sea, without border or boundary.

However, this kind of setting was absolutely good news to Jiang Chen.

His cultivation level in the sky quadrant ranked amongst the last, but in terms of knowledge, there was truly no one who was his superior in this quadrant.

It wasn’t his fault that his cultivation level was low, his start was simply far behind. All of these sect geniuses had been born with golden spoons in their mouths and had received all kinds of training from their sects since birth.

A difference in cultivation level could be narrowed through hard work in the future. Now that he’d reached the sky quadrant, Jiang Chen was as if a dragon returning to the seas and soaring through the heavens.

Jiang Chen decided to participate in the foundation exams first. He wanted to understand first just how difficult the exams in the area of martial dao were.

They were indeed difficult.

However, even though they were challenging, they were aimed at fifth level spirit realm cultivators. With Jiang Chen's cultivation, it wasn't too hard for him to complete these exams.

He quickly completed two of them. They were actually quite similar to the ones in the first selection. One of them was against a golem, and the other against a fifth level spirit rank beast.

That didn't pose too much of a problem for Jiang Chen.

The third and fourth exams had to do with martial dao theory. It was even harder to stump Jiang Chen in this regard.

However, he didn't display an extraordinary performance, but strode steadily forward and completed them one by one.

This made the examiners of the sky quadrant quickly revise their opinion of him.

This secular candidate was indeed uncommon, no wonder he'd been able to pull Master Shuiyue down.

The last exam was of even greater difficulty, as it involved an examiner personally testing him.

Of course, the examiner would only exert the strength of the sixth level spirit realm.

The candidate would pass if he held out for fifteen minutes.

Sixth level spirit realm was already a very decent level of existence in the sky quadrant. There were a hundred within the quadrant, and only a fifth of those had reached this level.

Therefore, many candidates were unable to pass this exam when they attempted it.

The examiner smiled faintly in the ring, "Are you ready?"

Jiang Chen stood coolly in the ring and nodded, "Please grant your instruction."

When the examiner saw that Jiang Chen's demeanor was steady without the slightest bit of fear, his opinion of this young man immediately soared.

"Watch yourself!"

The examiner didn't deploy any fancy moves, simply unleashing a punch as he strode forward. However, this punch embodied within the martial dao logic of distilling the complex down to the simple.

This punch seemed simple, but was much more frightening than the flourishes or fancy footwork of other techniques.

Jiang Chen felt this punch instantly seal off the area, giving him the feeling "I'd be unable to shake off this punch no matter where I went."

"Flowers bloom and fade, spring is ever reborn!"

Jiang Chen didn't dodge as he punched out with both fists, deploying the mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist to the maximum.

The blow that encompassed the mysteries of the yin and the yang formed a boxing intent like taiji, giving rise to its own world and moving against the current as it met the boxing aura coming from the other side.

Bam!

The two auras crashed into each other, making the dust fly through the sky as spirit aura rippled outward.

“Again!”

The impact awoke Jiang Chen’s battle intent, and boundless martial dao inspiration sprang out, akin to a carp leaping over a river crossing.

There were nine cycles of blooming and wilting in the “Divine Aeons Fist”. With the fusion of the “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” into the boxing technique as well, Jiang Chen had an unexpected level of combat ability.

Even though he was faced with the sixth level spirit realm in a test, Jiang Chen was utterly fearless, completely engrossed in his mindset of seeking the martial dao.

Bam, bam, bam!

Fists relentlessly crashed into each other. Jiang Chen was two levels lower, but his spirit power surged and raged, putting him on the same level as the peak of the fifth level spirit realm.

He wasn’t that far off from the sixth level either. Along with his astonishing level of competency in his boxing technique, even the sixth level spirit realm examiner felt thoroughly suppressed.

The mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist varied greatly, and the rhythm of heaven and earth were encompassed in those changes. The cycle of the four seasons, night chasing day as day chased night, flower blooming and wilting, seas changing into mulberry fields and fields changing to seas again...

The examiner felt that although the “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” seemed quite familiar, he seemed to have greatly underestimated its power when he met it with his fist.

The “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” had obviously been greatly improved after being combined with the “Divine Aeons Fist”.

The examiner’s cultivation level was indeed higher than Jiang Chen’s, but his comprehension of martial dao and technique was far below Jiang Chen.

As fifteen minutes passed, the examiner couldn’t see how he’d win at all. He didn’t even dare say that he had the upper hand in the ring.

According to the rules, if the examiner wasn’t defeated in fifteen minutes, then the candidate was deemed as having passed.

The examiner was rather gracious, “Well done young man. Your boxing technique looks simple, but its concepts are deep and profound. What is particularly rare is that your comprehension of the technique has exceeded the level of great perfection and reached the legendary realm. The Obscure Seal of Life

and Death is no longer at its previous level in your hands. I feel quite gratified in being able to pass such a genius as you.”

Jiang Chen also smiled faintly, “I only won through your graciousness.”

“Hahaha, that I didn’t. Good luck young man. Although it’s your first time in the sky quadrant, I feel quite certain that you’ll be able to stay.”

The examiner truly had a gracious bearing as he left the ring with a hearty laugh.

This kind of demeanor also put Jiang Chen in a good mood. Whether it was Master Fang in the mystic quadrant or this examiner, they were all cultivators with thoughtful poise.

It looks like the four sects weren’t filled with the narrow minded. There were also benevolent elders as well as those with uncommon bearing.

Thus passed the five exams of the martial dao area.

By this time, half the day had passed. Jiang Chen was rather satisfied with this efficiency. He’d at least obtained 25 points already.

He walked down from the ring and headed over to the examination area to report in, discovering he was indeed not the first to complete the foundation exams.

About a dozen others had already completed their exams and left with 25 points.

But Jiang Chen’s appearance still caused an uproar in the examination area.

A secular cultivator had completed five foundation exams so quickly?

Jiang Chen checked in, added his points to his token, and ignored all the looks as he walked over to the next examination area.

Chapter 367: The Betting Madman

When Jiang Chen arrived at the area for testing strength of heart, he noticed that not many participants had arrived yet.

The examination area was a tower.

There were nine levels to the towers, and the way of testing for all five exams in the area was to climb from the first floor to the fifth, finding a jade pendant with the same number as your own token.

Completing this task in the allotted time would win you 25 points. Those who didn’t make it would have their points calculated with where they ended up at.

If a candidate lost their way, they would gain no points. Making it past the first floor would award you five points.

This exam of the heart was a bit similar to the Path of Rebirth that Jiang Chen had experienced in the first selection.

However, the architecture of this tower was different to the Path of Rebirth. More accurately speaking, the tower used space formations to craft all sorts of situations in which dimensions randomly intersected with each other, making it hard for those within to find the real path.

This kind of method that folded space was one that touched on the various divine arts of space.

Jiang Chen went up to the bottom of the tower. As he looked up at the nine level tower, there wasn't a ripple of emotion in his heart. The Path of Rebirth hadn't stumped him, and this tower wouldn't do so either.

"Humph. Kid, you scared? Scram back to the ordinary world if you are and don't block the way!"

An ear piercing voice came from behind just as Jiang Chen was focusing his attentions on studying this tower.

A young man with red hair in a short sleeve shirt that displayed his chest was standing there. His shoulders were broad and his back was thickly muscled, giving one the feeling of a tiger's back and bear's waist.

The most interesting part of this fellow wasn't his mane of red hair flowing in the wind, it was his large feet. It was like they were the feet of enormous beasts, a full size larger than most normal folk's. He also wasn't wearing any shoes. Him going barefoot gave one an exceedingly wild feeling.

A slight furrow creased Jiang Chen's brow. This fellow is quite impudent. I'm just standing here, what business is it of yours?

He froze where he was standing, like a thickly forested mountain, purposefully unmoving.

"Oh? You want to start something?" The red haired youth chuckled and put out a hand the size of a large fan, grabbing at Jiang Chen. "Move!"

Jiang Chen made a shooing motion forward with his hands and he sent a surge of strength forward.

Both of them grunted softly as their bodies wavered.

"Hmm?" The red haired youth seemed to have sparked his interest as he chuckled oddly. "I underestimated you, secular kid. Interesting."

He once again reached a hand out to Jiang Chen.

He'd increased his strength this time and was using seventy to eighty percent of his total strength, projecting a posture of 'I'm not stopping until I shove you out of the way.'

Jiang Chen snorted coldly and he made a circle with his arms. The moon was in his left hand and the sun in his right as he drew an enormous taiji vortex with a light movement of his arms.

The red haired youth once again ended up clutching empty air.

He was even more bedraggled this time as his body pitched forward after he stumbled slightly.

The fellow was completely stunned now. His eyes widened like two brass bells as he stared at Jiang Chen. "Good going kid, I take back what I said before. You have what it takes to travel through the

Divine Maze Tower. Interesting, how interesting! I hear everyday how there's a freak genius of the boulder's heart from the secular world. Everyday and every month — calluses are growing in my ears! It looks like although the rumors have been exaggerated, they're not without reason. Good. very good. You deserve your reputation alright."

The red hair youth rubbed his hands together and grinned. "Your boxing technique and footwork is not bad. It looks like it won't be easy for me to beat you out right. Time is of the essence now and I'm going to head into the Divine Maze Tower. I hope we can have a good fight next time we meet and see if it's your boxing technique that's superior or my fists that are harder."

The fellow gestured as he talked, spittle flying everywhere as he gave one a feeling of powerful domination. He seemed like a person, rough around the edges, who liked to battle.

Jiang Chen had thought at first that this person was purposefully provoking him. It looked like now that he'd misunderstood. This person's personality was likely just this forthright and direct.

He smiled faintly, stepping to the side, "Go on in."

To someone who bore him no enmity, Jiang Chen wasn't so bored as to keep butting heads with them. He stepped to the side to let the fellow in.

"Are you not going in?" The red haired youth started in surprise.

"I will be."

"Heh heh. So you are, huh?" The red haired youth's eyes gleamed as he suddenly thought of something exciting.

"Is there something amiss?" Jiang Chen couldn't help but ask when he saw the other smile bizarrely.

"Haha, nothing, nothing at all. Look, we're going in at the same time. Do you want to make a bet that whoever makes it to the fifth floor and locates their own jade pendant first is the winner? How about that?" The red haired youth spoke with an animated expression.

"So what if I win? So what if I lose?" Jiang Chen had to laugh. It looked like he'd run into a gambler.

"Let's place a forfeit on it. How about we bet spirit stones?"

"Spirit stones?" Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. "I don't have any."

He really didn't have any. In the ordinary world, spirit stones weren't a medium of exchange. Although Jiang Chen had quite a few rare and precious items, he really didn't have any spirit stones.

The red haired youth smacked his own forehead. "That's right, you're a secular cultivator and it's normal that you wouldn't have any spirit stones. Actually, us sect disciples don't have many either. Then what do you say we bet on?"

"Must we?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"Ai, look at how boring these trials are. It's all the same stuff. How boring do you think our lives would be if we don't find something fun to do?"

Jiang Chen was speechless at seeing how much this fellow liked to gamble. However, he wasn't the slightest bit interested.

"Sorry, I don't have anything valuable to bet with you." Jiang Chen demurely declined.

"Do you really have nothing of any value?" The red haired youth was depressed.

"No." Jiang Chen shook his head. He had many nice things, but he'd obtained them with great effort and he didn't want to take them out as a forfeit.

"Depressing, how depressing!" The red haired youth waved his fan-like hands and he lost quite a bit of interest. However, his eyebrow quirked again as he seemed to think of something fantastic and he slapped his thigh. "How about this? I'll bet a spirit stone with you, and it's yours if you win. If you lose, you become my lackey. How about that?"

"Be your lackey?" Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Not interested."

"Man, you're really boring. Do you think that anyone can be a lackey of the great Tang Hong? Are you afraid that I'm exploiting you? Why don't you ask around and see when have I, Tang Hong, ever taken advantage of someone? Humph! If it wasn't for the fact that you seemed a bit interesting, I wouldn't have wanted to waste this time with you at all."

So the red haired youth's name was Tang Hong.

Jiang Chen could see that this fellow didn't bear any malicious intent, but he liked to gamble too much.

He smiled. "I don't want your spirit stone. To be fair, why don't you be my lackey if you lose?"

"I... be your lackey?"

Tang Hong blanked as he widened his eyes, looking at Jiang Chen like he was looking at a freak and then suddenly laughing heartily. "Kid, you want me to be your lackey?"

This did sound odd to Tang Hong. He was a top three genius of the Precious Tree Sect, and he was also ranked in the top 10 in the sky quadrant.

Even the most premier geniuses didn't dare say that they'd make him a hanger-on.

Everyone knew that he had a nickname called Death-Defyer Tang Hong. Once this fellow's ire was up, he was known for being hard to shake off.

This was because he had a most death defying spirit. Therefore, all cultivators on similar levels were unwilling to interact too much with Tang Hong. They were all afraid of him suddenly doing something crazy.

This was also why he'd never had many friends.

His stubborn personality was suffused with a mad drive that most ordinary folk couldn't handle.

Jiang Chen ignored his reaction and laughed softly. "If you want me to be your lackey, then to be fair, you naturally have to be my lackey if you lose. What? Afraid to make the bet? Forget it if you're afraid. I'll take my leave now."

Jiang Chen could see that he was an unbridled and wild person.

Tang Hong blanked and then, he smacked his forehead. "That's true, a bet has to be fair. An unfair bet is cheating. What the hell's the point of cheating? Alright, I'll make the bet with you. Kid, don't go back on your word now."

"As long as you don't." Jiang Chen chuckled as he walked into the tower.

Tang Hong wasn't one to easily give up as he called it, "Kid, you want to get a head start on me? Think again!"

It looked like this fellow didn't just have an ordinary love of gambling. An even brighter light was shining out of his eyes now that they'd set the bet and he was incredibly excited.

"Kid, don't blame me for not reminding you. Every level in this Divine Maze Tower will continuously change according to the shifts in formation. Although I've traveled through it twice, it wasn't easy both times. There's also no logic to the space formation either, it all depends on your mental strength. There are many who failed in this area."

Tang Hong seemed to feel that it wouldn't be much to win over a rookie as he purposefully spoke a few reminders.

Jiang Chen chuckled and purposefully provoked him, "Why don't you take care of yourself, hmm? Don't lose your way in the end now."

Tang Hong bawled out, "Kid, you dare look down on me!? How dare you!"

Jiang Chen flashed forward as he vanished from Tang Hong's sight with a whoosh.

Tang Hong chuckled oddly. "Silly kid, do you think you'll reach it first level just by moving faster? Speed isn't the key to this Divine Maze Tower, but strong strength of heart is."

Tang Hong seemed to be quite confident in his strength of heart. He crossed his arms and he took a look around, revealing a trace of a confident smile as he dashed forward in a blur of red light. nD**ve**lb-1n

He traveled through one level in a short amount of time and arrived at the second. He cast his eyes around, but he saw no sign of Jiang Chen.

He couldn't help but grin. "Heh heh, that silly kid must still be wandering around randomly downstairs. Rookies! Ignoring my advice after coming to the Divine Maze Tower. He really didn't recognize my good intentions."

Tang Hong was quite confident in the exam of the Divine Maze Tower as he had his own thoughts about them.

Although there was no pattern to the space formation, his strength of heart was exceedingly strong as he could always find the slightest clues, and ignore the realistic illusions.

He continuously identified various traps and dead ends.

Tang Hong quickly found the passageway to the third level.

“Heh heh, that kid dares make a bet with me in the Divine Maze Realm. He’s too young in the end... too naive!” Tang Hong grinned widely and proudly.

Chapter 368: Admitting Defeat, Calling You Boss

“Fourth level now. I’ll reach the fifth level soon. Haven’t even seen a hair of that kid, he probably hasn’t even made it to the second level yet?”

Tang Hong was even prouder when seeing his victory at hand. He loved to gamble. When he made a bet, he wasn’t looking to gain anything, but purely reveled in the delight brought by gambling.

He loved the feeling of winning, and loved the other’s dejection after losing. That was his greatest joy.

There wasn’t any malice in this, it was just his guilty pleasure.

Of course, this was also brought up because Tang Hong had a good impression of Jiang Chen.

He’d heard of the freak genius of the boulder’s heart in the sky quadrant. And honestly, he’d been a bit skeptical. Was the freak genius really as incredible as rumors made him out to be?

However, he grew quite interested once he heard that the freak genius had pulled even Master Shuiyue down in the earth quadrant.

Someone as haughty and ill-tempered as Master Shuiyue was disagreeable to Tang Hong’s eyes. In the sky quadrant, her disciple Long Juxue threw her weight around as if she was really something, placing herself up on a pedestal and projecting the image of a saint with no one worthy of entering her eyes. To someone as unreserved as Tang Hong, this was really someone who irked him greatly.

So when he heard that Master Shuiyue had been taken down in the earth quadrant, Tang Hong rather admired those actions.

He’d so happened to bump into Jiang Chen today at the Divine Maze Tower, and was of a mind to test this renowned secular genius.

After a bit of probing, he’d discovered that the rumors were indeed true, he hadn’t been able to touch the other two moves in a row. This strength won Tang Hong’s respect.

Tang Hong’s personality was like thus, direct and forthright. If he admired someone, he would express that admiration in his own way.

Betting, for instance, was a method in which he expressed this admiration.

However, Jiang Chen didn’t understand Tang Hong and had no idea what that action had meant.

Tang Hong spent some time on the fourth level. But even once he found the proper passageway, there was still no one behind him.

“Mm, although I spent quite some time on the fourth level, the time I’ve spent has yet to reach even a third of the allotted time. There’s not that many in the sky quadrant who can match my speed, right?”

He was indeed confident in this regard. Although he had yet to enter the ranks of the most elite on the path of martial dao for various reasons, he was confident that his abilities in the strength of heart were enough to place him in the top five, or perhaps even the top three.

He arrived on the fifth level.

“Hoo, finally here. I should hurry up and find my jade pendant so that that kid accepts his defeat. But that kid’s such a rookie, he’s probably still going in circles on the second or third floor? Hahaha!” Tang Hong couldn’t help but cackle when his thoughts traveled here.

“What are you laughing about?” A voice suddenly traveled to Tang Hong’s ears.

“None of your freaking business!” Tang Hong responded irately back, but suddenly froze. Why did this voice sound familiar?

“Ah?” Tang Hong looked in the direction of the voice and jumped up. “You!”

Jiang Chen was standing not too far away from him. He smiled faintly at Tang Hong and swung the jade pendant in his hand. “Sorry about that, I was just a bit faster than you.”

“You... how is that possible? How did you get up here?” Tang Hong was petrified as he was stunned senseless, completely unable to believe his eyes.

“I got up here the same way you got up here. Who told you to only be thinking of how to win along the way and thus waste time?” Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. “I’ll go down first, you take your time in finding your jade pendant.”

“...” Tang Hong had a dumbfounded expression. His mouth hung open so widely, several large mantous could almost fit inside.

Having obtained the 25 points in the trial of heart, Jiang Chen now had a total of 50 points on his hands.

“Mm. All things are difficult before they become easy. The beginning was smooth, and at least I’m not penniless with the current 50 points.” Jiang Chen smiled and was about to head towards the next examination area.

“Wait.”

Tang Hong had also exited the Divine Maze Tower at this time. “Don’t go yet, wait for me to get my points.”

Jiang Chen halted his footsteps when he saw that Tang Hong looked quite serious. Judging from the look of this fellow, he’d probably go on a rampage if Jiang Chen didn’t wait for him.

He was the winner anyways, he wasn’t afraid of the other not owning up.

Tang Hong walked over with a depressed look after getting his points. “What are you smirking about? I am willing to admit my defeat. I’ll call you boss if it comes down to that. But I’m going to win next time! You’ll have to call me boss then!”

“Alright, I’ll wait for you to win.” Jiang Chen smiled dashingly.

“The next area is the five pill exams. Do you dare make a bet?” Tang Hong chuckled. “Let me introduce myself, I’m a Precious Tree Sect disciple, pills are my forte. If you don’t have the guts to make a bet with me, you can tell me now.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “Then let’s not bet.”

Tang Hong smiled proudly. “Mm. You’ve got some brains after all. I would want to win fair and square. Humph humph, who would dare compete with us Precious Tree Sect disciples regarding pills in the sixteen kingdoms?”

Tang Hong’s words were suffused with strong confidence.

“Mm, it’s not a matter of having brains, but that you’d lose even more badly if we bet on the dao of pills. You wouldn’t be able to make a comeback in this lifetime at all.”

“What?!” Tang Hong yelled. “Kid, don’t be so cocky! Do you know who you’re talking to? You still dare boast about your pill abilities in front of a Precious Tree Sect disciple?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “What now, is this how you admit defeat?”

Tang Hong chuckled and scratched his head. “Boss. Alright, you’re my boss now. But I still have to say, don’t boast about the dao of pills in front of me.”

“I’m really not boasting.”

“Then what do you mean?” Tang Hong’s expression grew a bit stiff. He felt rather put out that his opponent wasn’t even looking at him properly. Him, a Precious Tree Sect genius!

“I just don’t want you to lose that badly.” Jiang Chen shrugged and smiled.

“Me, losing?!” Tang Hong leapt up. “I was careless just now and accidentally lost to you. If you dare bet with me on the dao of pills, I’ll be able to beat you even with my eyes closed.”

One could see that Tang Hong was quite confident in the dao of pills.

“Haha, it’s a good thing to be confident.” Jiang Chen didn’t continue the conversation as he turned to leave after a few casual words.

“What are you laughing about? Do you think I’m blustering?” Tang Hong was even more surprised. He really couldn’t handle being taken lightly in the area of pills.

“Mm. You are indeed blustering.”

With Jiang Chen’s potential in pills, everyone in the sixteen kingdoms was blustering when they said they could beat him. Although he hadn’t been able to cultivate in his prior life, his skills had reached a heavenly existence with the dao of pills. He truly did have the confidence to voice such words in a tiny little place of this mundane world.

“Then let’s make another bet.” Tang Hong’s self respect had been completely provoked.

“You’ve already lost one bet, what else can you bet?” Jiang Chen chuckled.

“Let’s go another round. If I lose, I’ll be your lackey for the rest of my life. I’ll never go back on my words or make trouble for you. Do you dare?”

“Rest of your life?” Jiang Chen laughed. “Isn’t that too much?”

Tang Hong pounded his chest. “Those who know me know that I never change my mind. If you can truly beat me in the dao of pills, I’ll even call you grandfather without a frown, much less boss.”

“Let’s forgo calling me grandfather, I don’t want my life to be shortened. You’re the one who said boss for a lifetime, are you sure you won’t regret this?” Jiang Chen felt that this fellow was quite cute in his stubbornness and had his interest peaked as well.

“Regret? I, Tang Hong, have never known regret in this life!” Tang Hong yelled loudly. “I won’t take advantage of you either. If you lose this bet, we’ll call it even and continue to bet next time.”

“I won’t lose.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

Tang Hong had made many bets in his life, and had seen many who boasted of self-confidence.

But he’d never been as serious as he was today. His desire to win was fully awakened when he saw Jiang Chen calm and confident.

“Alright, you think that you won’t lose, I also feel that I definitely won’t lose. Let’s see just who’s going to lose!”

Tang Hong was already making large strides for the pill examination area as he spoke.

For such an interesting opponent to appear all of a sudden, the dry and humdrum examinations become a bit more exciting.

Jiang Chen treated this as entertainment and walked towards the examination area.

He might not have been so certain of victory in other areas.

But he dared say so in the area of pills, and there was no room for accidents at all.

The pill exams were varied and creative.

The five exams were completely different. The first one was to identify spirit medicines. They had to sort through and organize 81 medicines with the fastest speed possible, no mistakes allowed.

“Begin!”

When the examiner learned of their bet, he too seemed to approve of it and aided them, giving them the same testing content.

These spirit medicines were as ordinary as eating and drinking to Jiang Chen. Particularly the lower level medicines, they were even easier to identify.

He hardly even needed to use his eyes as he could organize them appropriately with a slight sniff. Some didn’t even need to be sniffed as he could sort them through touch alone.

He raised his hands after a few breaths of time and said, “Done.”

Tang Hong was startled. He'd only completed about half! However, he was a Precious Tree Sect disciple after all and had enormous concentration. He wasn't affected, and quickly finished as well.

"Candidate number 91 completes the first test first." The examiner was a fair person and announced Jiang Chen had taken the first victory.

Tang Hong was a bit skeptical as he walked over to take a look at Jiang Chen's sorting. It was all neat and orderly. His expression changed from skepticism to bafflement. Tang Hong flicked a few glances at Jiang Chen, as if looking at a freak.

However, he still talked tough.

"Humph. Crude methods. Your hands were just faster. Whoever wins the three out of five exams first is the true victor."

Jiang Chen smiled. "This should indeed be the case."

The examiner seemed to enjoy watching the clashes between youngsters, particularly when one was a secular genius and the other a Precious Tree Sect genius.

This kind of clash would absolutely give rise to many fireworks, making things exceedingly fascinating.

Chapter 369: Lackey for Life

"The second exam, matching spirit medicines. As we all know, there are medicines that naturally counteract or complement each other. A qualified pill refiner must have sophisticated knowledge in the area of matching. Otherwise, if he doesn't even know how to match spirit medicines, or doesn't even understand whether medicines are a good fit for each other, then it will be impossible for him to become a strong pill refiner."

The examiner smiled. "There are 32 kinds of spirit medicines in the second exam. Please match them accordingly. Remember, they won't necessarily be matched in pairs. This exam tests your knowledge of medicine effects and the understanding of how they might complement each other or not."

This were all basic knowledge that a pill refiner would know. It wasn't unfamiliar to either Jiang Chen or Tang Hong.

Tang Hong had a look of eagerness on his face. After his loss in the first exam, his battle spirit had been fired up and he was filled with even more competitive spirit.

This was a person who battled even more fiercely in adverse conditions.

Jiang Chen was noncommittal, maintaining his unrushed and unhurried attitude. There was nothing for him to grow anxious about in the field of spirit medicines.

There was also no one who could give him pressure.

"Begin."

Tang Hong started almost as soon as the examiner finished speaking.

Jiang Chen smiled and he walked to the pile of spirit medicines for a close, individual look after he'd performed some chest stretches.

He looked them over three times. His fingers then suddenly flew like he was a most adept magician performing a wondrous piece of magic.

He matched all 32 medicines in the span of two breaths.

In pairs or triples, he made 13 matches total.

"Finished again?" The examiner was surprised to see Jiang Chen raise his hand. Jiang Chen's previous speed in identifying spirit medicines had already greatly stunned him.

The difficulty level was without a doubt, even greater this time. It wasn't just a matter of identification, but also applying one's knowledge.

Even the examiner felt that he'd be hard pressed to match Jiang Chen's speed.

Jiang Chen nodded and walked out. The examiner was a bit skeptical, but his expression shifted slightly when he drew close.

The matching had been done completely correctly, without the slightest error.

Tang Hong on the other side, scratched his head and pulled on his ears for quite a while before finishing. When he walked out however, he found that Jiang Chen had led the way by quite a margin again.

"One victory left." Jiang Chen extended a finger and grinned slyly.

Dejection was written all over Tang Hong's face. He was already performing above his usual level! He thought that he'd be able to win for sure this time. But alas, reality is cruel.

"Hot damn, did you dream about this exam, kid?" In Tang Hong's understanding, he couldn't imagine a secular disciple displaying such perverse abilities. Just how familiar would he have to be with the spirit medicines to have such speed?

He couldn't think of any other reasons anymore.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Even if I dreamed of it, I would still win."

Tang Hong snorted. "Don't be too proud just yet. It's not over!"

Only two exams had been conducted. There were three more left, and so Tang Hong felt that he still had hope to turn back a disadvantageous situation.

As long as he won the remaining three, it would still be a walk in the park in the end.

"The third exam, identification of pill recipes. There are ten recipes here. Some are correct and, some are erroneous. Leave the correct ones alone and point out the errors in the ones that are wrong."

"Remember, your identification rate must reach six recipes to count as having passed. Your bet is one thing, don't just pursue speediness and impact your efficiency."

The examiner gave them a kind reminder.

Identifying recipes was delicate work. If a candidate strived for speed above all else, it would be very easy to make a mistake. They would be put down as having failed as soon as their identification rate dipped below sixty percent, and lose all five points.

Jiang Chen smiled. The thought of failing had never crossed his mind.

The four foundation missions of martial dao, strength of heart, pills, and the combination.

He was most confident in the area of pills.

Even though he was equally confident in the other areas, if he dared say he was number two for the dao of pills however, no one would dare say that they're number one!

All ten recipes were placed in front of him.

He looked over each of them one by one. None of them were particularly complicated recipes.

There were eight that had errors. Some had only a few mistakes and others had riddled with them.

Jiang Chen checked off the two correct pill recipes and he began writing on the other eight.

He didn't perform above his usual level. In fact, he used the simplest language possible to point out the mistakes.

He'd finished the exam in about fifteen minutes.

Beside him, Tang Hong was obviously not finished. There were two recipes in particular that he was unsure about. He considered them for quite some time and he barely managed to squeeze out an answer at the end.

When Jiang Chen handed in his recipes, surprise flashed through the examiner's eyes. He pursued the submission with a furrowed brow and he became more shocked the more he read.

He thought that the secular genius had been too cocky and was sure of himself in handing in his answers so early. He was bound to not have any good answers.

But when the examiner took a careful look, this questionnaire was completely perfect with full marks.

The examiner looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen, shocked to the core. He also threw a sympathetic look at Tang Hong at the same time, feeling an inexplicable surge of pity for him.

When Tang Hong gleefully handed in his answers, he noticed that the examiner giving him a pitying look, whereas Jiang Chen was standing off on the side and smiling faintly.

"He... was faster than me again?"

The examiner smiled wordlessly and nodded.

"No worries, what if his identification rate wasn't 60%? It's still his loss if he didn't pass." Tang Hong felt that Jiang Chen must've been pursuing speed in handing in his exam so early, and forgoing correctness. Haste made for waste.

The examiner continued with the pitying look, "His identification rate was 100% without a single error. Let me take a look at yours."

An explosion went off in Tang Hong's mind as he was thrown in disarray.

He'd lost, again? How could he have failed utterly in all three exams?

"H-how is this possible?" Poor Tang Hong's mind was finding it difficult to operate at the moment. He felt that he'd been utterly defeated.

"However strong you may be, there's always someone stronger. Tang Hong, do you fully concede this time?" The examiner also laughed.

Tang Hong's large fan hands kept scratching at his red hair. Dejection was written across his face as he looked at Jiang Chen and he couldn't help but mutter, "What a weirdo."

After being depressed for a moment however, Tang Hong smiled. "I, Tang Hong, have never conceded to anyone. But today, I truly do. You're the first to make me concede in the area of spirit medicines. Alright! I call you boss willingly and wholeheartedly. I, Tang Hong, am willing to accept my defeat. I will be your lackey and follower life from now on!"

"However, the bet hasn't ended yet! Although I've lost, I'm going to do so gloriously. I'm going to fight to lose 2:3, and not by 0:5."

There were still two exams left out of the possible five. Although Tang Hong had already lost, if he could win the last two, his scores would look not that bad at least.

The fourth and fifth exam had to do with practical application, which was refining pills.

Tang Hong had even less of an advantage in this area, but Jiang Chen had discovered that although Tang Hong liked to gamble, his attitude upon losing wasn't poor and so he wasn't a bad sort.

Jiang Chen purposely stayed his hand and lost one of the two pill refining exams. He did so very deftly and naturally, leaving not a trace of evidence.

With the final score of 1:4, although Tang Hong had lost, he hadn't lost everything.

The examiner seemed to have guessed something, but he didn't say anything. He awarded 25 points to both geniuses.

"Today's bet was a sight to see. I wish such amazing performances could be seen everyday in the pill examination area." The examiner spoke with some emotion.

If he hadn't been the one in charge of these exams, he almost wanted to suspect if someone had leaked the contents of the exams to the secular genius.

However, he'd been the one to random select all the exam topics. It wasn't that easy to leak them and thus, no matters of cheating possible.

"Boss, where are you going? Wait for me! Hey!" Tang Hong started chasing after Jiang Chen when he saw the latter was leaving.

Someone walked in just as they'd reached the door. This person started when he heard Tang Hong call him boss, then started laughing oddly. "Tang Hong, have you finally submitted to me and are calling me boss?"

Tang Hong blinked. *Who the hell is this shameless person?*

When he took a good look at the person in front of him, Tang Hong started cursing loudly, "Get the hell outta my face! Keep dreaming your idiotic dreams! I call you Boss?! Who the hell do you think you are?"

Jiang Chen also paused when he saw the newcomer, but he actually knew this person. It was Iron Dazhi, heir to the Iron family in the Precious Tree Sect.

This fellow had wanted to cause some trouble for Jiang Chen in the Skylareland Kingdom and he had been thoroughly ripped off instead. This fellow was a walking moneybag in Jiang Chen's eyes.

Therefore, when he thought of those happy memories of swindling the Iron family when he saw Iron Dazhi, he actually didn't look at Iron Dazhi with an irritated gaze. Who would dislike someone bearing gifts?

Jiang Chen dearly wished that such opportunities would come a few more times. The Iron family was simply too rich, they were almost swimming in their wealth.

However, he didn't forget his current identity. He was the freak genius of the boulder's heart, not Jiang Chen.

Iron Dazhi obviously didn't think much of secular cultivators as he swept a careless glance over Jiang Chen, halting on Tang Hong's face.

Iron Dazhi sniggered, "Did you call me boss just now? Apart from us of the same sect here, who else is worthy of being your boss?"

Iron Dazhi was a few years older than Tang Hong, and both were sect geniuses.

However, Tang Hong's potential was actually a bit better than Iron Dazhi's. But, Iron Dazhi had been born to a good station in life and he had reincarnated well.

After he'd had his butt handed to him by Jiang Chen last time, his grandfather Iron Long had shut him into closed door cultivation after he returned and Iron Dazhi had gained quite a bit.

After exiting from closed door cultivation, he'd gone from fifth level spirit realm to sixth level with a shake of his body, the peak of the earth spirit realm.

Therefore, he had quite a bit of confidence in front of Tang Hong.

Although he was a direct descendant of the Iron family in the Precious Tree Sect, he didn't have many quality confidantes or followers.

Guys like Zhou Yi were his best lackeys.

However, compared to Tang Hong, Zhou Yi paled far in comparison. Therefore, Iron Dazhi had indeed wanted to pull Tang Hong into his camp and have this follower advise him.

Chapter 370: Always Ready for a Beating Huh?

Although Tang Hong now recognized Jiang Chen as his boss, the irritation in his heart had yet to be placated after losing a competition. He naturally wouldn't do so in front of his boss.

Iron Dazhi, however, had suddenly barged in out of nowhere. Judging from his foolish demeanor, he wanted to make Tang Hong his underling!

This made Tang Hong feel deeply offended. This Iron Dazhi was a good-for-nothing who depended on the protection of his family's elders. He was complete trash in Tang Hong's eyes!

This kid dared throw his weight around in front of Tang Hong?

He kept cracking his knuckles audibly.

"Iron Dazhi, you're always freaking ready for a beating, huh? Don't think I'm too wuss to hit you just because you have a powerful grandfather."

Iron Dazhi blinked. He'd come storming out of his closed-door cultivation with quite a strong momentum. He'd always felt himself somewhat weaker than Tang Hong before.

But this time's training had seen him break through sixth level spirit realm and receive the Iron family legacy. When compared to Tang Hong now, he would only be stronger than him and not weaker.

This brat dares talk back to me like this?

Iron Dazhi's face darkened immediately. "Tang Hong, do you understand the notion of precedence? What kind of position do you have, what kind of position do I have? In terms of background and cultivation, in what way am I unfit to be your boss?"

Tang Hong sneered and advanced closer, "Why the feck would I care what your background or cultivation are? Why don't you keep strutting around? Do you believe that I'll slap the shit out of you with one blow?"

Tang Hong had lost his bet and was ticked that he had no place to vent his ill will on. Iron Dazhi hadn't recognized the situation he was in and charged straight in. What an idiot.

One had to say, Tang Hong's stocky body and his head full of red hair scattered like straw gave others a very fierce feeling.

Add to that his extraordinarily large feet—he was indeed rather frightening when he started walking.

Iron Dazhi also regretted his bit of mouthing off when he saw Tang Hong start to go on a rampage. This wasn't the way to bring him into his camp!

Everyone knew that Death-Defyer Tang Hong would put in an appearance when he was provoked enough.

Seeing that Tang Hong was about to lose his composure at any time, Iron Dazhi hastily said, "Forget it. I'm participating in the exams today and won't bother myself with arguing with you today. The other sects are all united in this great selection, so what do you think you'll gain in arguing with me?"

Jiang Chen couldn't help but laugh inwardly at Iron Dazhi when hearing this.

This guy chickened out in the critical moment! No matter what his reason had been, he was absolutely finding a way out of the situation and didn't dare conflict with Tang Hong.

Tang Hong snorted, "Bullshit! Unity is just a surface act. I also warn you that you better not be hoity-toity in front of me in the future."

Iron Dazhi was livid. "Alright, alright! Tang Hong, you're cocky now. But one day, I'll make you dance in attendance to me!"

Tang Hong laughed in cold succession and flicked his middle finger at Iron Dazhi, leaving with a flourish.

His emblematic big feet pounded on the floor, creating a large ruckus.

Jiang Chen chuckled and flicked a glance at Iron Dazhi, preparing to walk out as well. The results were quickly apparent when two geniuses faced off.

Iron Dazhi was born of a good family and had many resources, but he was still a good-for-nothing in terms of personality and schemes who couldn't be saved.

Tang Hong on the other hand had an obviously resolute dao heart, and a spirit that never accepted defeat.

"Secular ant, what are you laughing about?" Iron Dazhi had been depressed already and flew into a rage when he saw that mask wearing secular ant also laughing. *You pathetic ant, a character the same as a dog, dare laugh in front of me as well?*

Jiang Chen had long since grown immune to names such as secular ant and ordinary kid. He laughed coldly and imitated Tang Hong in raising his middle finger.

"What business of yours is it that I laugh?"

Jiang Chen also left with a flourish after these words, ignoring the black lines running down Iron Dazhi's face.

He was about to respond when someone suddenly walked out of the pill refining room. She said with a furrowed brow, "This is the pill examination area, who causes an uproar here? Do you understand the rules?"

The examiner also walked up with a smile when he saw this person. Another heaven-defying genius had emerged. "Long Juxue, you've completed the exams?"

This lovely figure was indeed Long Juxue. She'd completed the pill exams and was exiting from this direction when she heard the noise.

Nodding, Long Juxue frowned and raked a faint glance over Iron Dazhi. "You're a Precious Tree Sect disciple, do you not know that quiet is needed for refining pills? Have your elders not taught you even this bit of knowledge?"

Iron Dazhi had been depressed to begin with, and this was heightened with Long Juxue's lecture. "This... this is my fault as well?"

Of course he knew her background. An innate constitution, and the undertones that she would become first in the Purple Sun Sect. As proud as Iron Dazhi was, he too knew that this woman was not one to provoke.

Otherwise, with his personality, how would he stand for being lectured by a woman?

Long Juxue averted her face with disdain. Apparently, a character like Iron Dazhi was unworthy of her sight.

The examiner hastened to smooth things over when he saw that the scene had taken an awkward turn. "Alright, the noise just now wasn't only Iron Dazhi's fault. The matter arose because Tang Hong of the Precious Tree Sect bet against the secular genius. What do you think the results were?"

"What?" Long Juxue and Iron Dazhi were in unexpected accord this time as they asked the same question at the same time.

It was obvious that the two weren't really on the same wavelength. They'd blurted out this question because Iron Dazhi was paying attention to Tang Hong and Long Juxue had picked up the ear-piercing words of the secular genius.

"Tang Hong was very confident in betting with the secular genius. Whoever lost would be the other's lackey for life. In the end, the self-assured Tang Hong lost three exams in a row, and he lost them in a manner with no hope of winning at all. Tsk tsk. The secular genius is truly amazing. Tang Hong's gift for spirit medicine is at least top three in the Precious Tree Sect. To think that he would lose so utterly."

The examiner was patently the sort that liked to disseminate all sorts of gossip. His face grew animated as he spoke of thus, completely forgetting that the secular genius harbored an enormous grudge with Master Shuiyue from the earth quadrant.

Master Shuiyue's prized disciple was standing right in front of him.

"That secular genius beat Tang Hong?" Iron Dazhi was immensely taken aback. "When did Tang Hong become such trash? This completely throws away the face of my Precious Tree Sect!"

Quite a bit of edge had been taken off from Iron Dazhi's spirit just now, so he couldn't help but complain now. It was as if this kind of complaining would help him regain his confidence and the face that he'd lost earlier.

Long Juxue's face was frosted over as she laughed coldly, saying disdainfully. "Is an unorthodox little dao worth showing off about? Crude and pathetic indeed."

She floated away with a wave of her snow-white sleeves afterwards.

The examiner suddenly recalled something. His expression changed as he laughed ruefully. "Look at me running my mouth, I forgot about the grudge between the secular genius and Master Shuiyue."

Having been quite upset just now, Iron Dazhi didn't have any good feelings towards the secular genius or towards Tang Hong. He said irritably, "I request to take the exams."

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Jiang Chen had completed three major areas and fifteen exams in one day. He now had 75 points in hand.

Examination time was drawing to a close. Jiang Chen didn't continue towards the comprehensive subject area, but he doubled back and prepared to return to his residence.

There were three months to a cycle anyways. There was plenty of time.

"Boss, why aren't we going to the comprehensive subject area? If we go now, we still have time to loot some points."

"Loot?" Jiang Chen was astounded.

Tang Hong ruffled his messy red hair and chuckled, "There's no difficulty to the foundation exams. To us, it's just grinding out points, so everyone jokingly calls it looting points. Truthfully speaking, it's a given that those who rank in the top 20 always obtain these 100 points every month."

"A given?" Jiang Chen was surprised. "Top 20?"

Tang Hong nodded very affirmatively. "A given. I've never heard of anyone slipping up thus far. In addition, the twenty exams of the four subject areas are usually completed within a day to a day and a half. If anyone takes more than two days to complete this, then even if they obtain all 100 points, they won't think they've succeeded because they've delayed obtaining points in the advanced stage."

There were one hundred guaranteed points in the foundation stage.

The advanced stage was where the true division between candidates in the sky quadrant was demarcated.

"How many points do you have now?" Jiang Chen asked out of curiosity.

Tang Hong answered loudly, "I have 1,500 points. I'm a far ways off from those perverts."

"What's the highest?" Jiang Chen had always wanted to know this answer, but he hadn't found the appropriate person to ask. Who would've thought that he'd gain a follower today, and one for life!

"There's not much difference between the highest candidates, they're definitely over 2,000. I wonder if they've reached 2,500 yet." Tang Hong shook his head and sighed. "These fellows enjoy the most resources in the sect. I, Tang Hong, am top three in the sect, but compared to them, my position in the sect is quite awkward. It's one as if my grandmother doesn't like me, and my uncle doesn't love me."

The Precious Tree Sect had always been one of overt struggles and covert plots between the Xie family and Iron family.

Tang Hong was a genius with an outsider's surname and didn't have a particularly strong backing in the sect. Therefore, he truly didn't have much of an advantage in terms of sect resources.

In addition, his personality was wild and unrestrained. He hadn't fallen under the Xie or Iron family banner.

It was because he hadn't joined either camp that his resources were much fewer compared to the geniuses of those families.

Even so, he didn't lose heart this way but tried even harder, training and learning even more furiously.

Due to this, the bone-deep drive to win and his unrestrained personality had forged his spirit of never giving up, a strength of heart that wouldn't falter even if Mt. Tai collapsed in front of him, making him stronger than any Precious Tree Sect disciple.

Jiang Chen was gravely awed when he heard these numbers.

Who would've thought that the highest numbers would be over two thousand. It looks like he would have to stride forth with great footsteps to make up for his late arrival.