

Three Realms 371

Chapter 371: Jiang Chen's Plan to Grind Out Points

Jiang Chen had previously guessed that their points were certainly over a thousand. But it looked like he'd still underestimated their speed in grinding out points.

When he saw Jiang Chen remain silent after hearing those words, Tang Hong—someone who had never known how to comfort someone, actually said, "Don't worry boss. With your potential in strength of heart and pills, you'll earn lots of points quickly."

Jiang Chen, however, wasn't worried about this. He was planning on the best way to earn these points.

"Tang Hong, normally speaking, what's the fastest way to earn points in the advanced stage?"

"If your strength is strong and battle abilities astounding, then challenge others. You gain 20 points for every victory and lose 20 for every loss. Those ranked in the top for battle strength challenge others everyday, so they gain points very quickly."

Tang Hong had obviously come up short in this area before and muttered angrily. "To hell with them. Those brutes just have more resources, treasures, and that little bit of superior cultivation. They make use of this to trample others and crazily grind points. How shameless."

They would naturally use this advantage since they held it, Jiang Chen wasn't that surprised.

He asked, "How difficult are the regular missions?"

Tang Hong thought for a moment and responded, "A first level mission is as difficult as our hardest foundation exams. But that's not always the case, it depends on luck."

"Second level missions double in difficulty and so forth as the mission level increases."

"That difficult?" Jiang Chen was surprised. A constantly doubling difficulty level—this wasn't normal!

Tang Hong nodded. "It's very difficult indeed. If it wasn't, that perverse lot would have probably gotten up to three, four thousand points long ago, perhaps even more."

"Are the regular missions divided into various subjects like the foundation exams?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Of course, the exams are meant to uncover geniuses. As long as you're exceptionally strong in a certain area, you can keep taking missions in this area. Of course, there are still some restrictions to prevent cheating when grinding out points." Tang Hong had been here for two cycles and was thus very familiar with all details of the rules.

"What restrictions?" Jiang Chen had already snapped to attention inwardly when he heard that the missions were divided into subjects.

"For instance, let's say you're talented in the area of pills. You can apply for a pill related mission. But you can increase the mission difficulty by a single level each day. For instance, let's say you applied for a level one mission today, then you can only apply for a level two mission tomorrow, and a level three the day after. When you reach the peak of the level five, you must return to level one and can't continue

tackling level five missions. In addition, if you continuously apply for missions in this area, you'll be barred from applying in this area again for ten days should you fail."

"Ten days? Isn't it a five-day ban if you don't complete the mission?"

"That's under normal circumstances. If you continuously apply for missions in the same area, then you'll be banned for 10 days. And that's a ban on all missions. If you want to earn points during that time, you can only challenge other candidates." novel)1n

"I see." Jiang Chen smiled wryly, having finally understood those rules.

Tang Hong chuckled, "However, if you fail when challenging other candidates, you're also barred from issuing challenges for the next five days."

Jiang Chen was aware of these rules.

They also made sense, preventing cheating when grinding out points.

If it wasn't for these rules, those point fiends would likely leave others behind in the dust.

Jiang Chen made a careful estimation. If these people completed a level two mission every day and obtained all the foundation points, they would have at least four thousand points.

The restriction of five to ten days leveled the playing field to a certain degree.

"Boss, are you thinking of grinding out points in the pill area?" Tang Hong suddenly thought of something.

"What do you think?" Jiang Chen smiled leisurely.

Tang Hong grinned widely. "Alright, I fully agree!"

Jiang Chen did indeed have this thought. He'd just arrived and was far behind the others. If he did things slowly and steadily, who knew when he'd catch up?

Therefore, he had to use the craziest speed possible to earn points. Even if he didn't reach those at the top, it'd be great if he could slowly catch up.

He'd have to at least ensure that he wouldn't be eliminated in the first three months. If his score was in the bottom ten in the end, he'd have to return to the earth quadrant. This was the last thing he wanted to happen.

"But boss, you must be careful. I once had the same ambition in the pill area and tried that before as well. I challenged level two after completing level one and level three after level two, but ended up failing the third level. Damn depressing. It was a good thing I was banned for only five days."

Tang Hong couldn't help but voice a warning when he recalled his own tragic circumstances.

"Isn't it supposed to be ten days?"

Tang Hong chuckled. "That's only if you tackle five missions in a row in the same area. I only did that three times and hadn't reached the point of being banned for a whole ten days, or I really would've been in for it!"

The two of them chatted a bit longer. One had to say, Tang Hong and Jiang Chen got along quite well, they actually felt like they'd known each other for a long time after chatting for a while.

Tang Hong's personality was unreserved, and he'd never bowed his head to others. He was a loner within his sect as well. It wasn't that he didn't know how to socialize, but that he couldn't abide by the lifestyle within the sect. The two great families holding up the sect only knew how to play politics everyday. This wasn't the sect life that Tang Hong wanted.

"Boss, let's go to the comprehensive area tomorrow."

When they left, Tang Hong waved his fan-like hands in farewell as he left for his own residence.

When Jiang Chen looked upon this fiercely-built man, traces of a smile appeared on his face. "This fellow is big, but his thoughts are as innocent as a child's. Very refreshing and direct. That such a person could make it to this level in a sect speaks volumes of his potential and personality."

In the world of martial dao, being innocent and direct isn't necessarily a bad thing. Not being embroiled in politics meant that one could focus even more on cultivation.

That was because people like this had simple thought patterns, held fast to reason and were indomitable and resolute. These types of people could often display enormous potential.

Of course, the disadvantages of being unable to play the game were also apparent. Unless his potential was strong enough to crush all other geniuses, he would be ostracized and marginalized amongst peers, unable to receive the focus of attention and resources.

The sects also had their considerations. As opposed to raising an unbridled and uncontrollable genius, it'd be better to raise someone on the same level that was malleable and had a sweet mouth.

When he returned to his residence, Jiang Chen went through the exam contents again in his mind.

"It looks like I can't fail any of the foundation exams at all. Tang Hong is right. To the geniuses with enormous potential, the 100 points from the foundation exams are almost a gift. No wonder they say they're looting points. They're not looting points, but rather time instead."

Even if the foundation exams were of ordinary difficulty, he'd have to complete them as fast as possible to avoid impacting his time to gain more points.

According to what Tang Hong had said, the missions in the advanced stage were quite difficult.

The difficulty of a level one mission was the same as the most difficult foundation exam. When he thought back on things, Jiang Chen recalled that his last exam in the martial dao area had been a face off against an examiner.

And one at the sixth level spirit realm at that.

If the advanced stage missions were that difficult, then the martial dao subject area was not the way to proceed for gaining points.

It wasn't that he was afraid of challenge, but that he needed to be shrewd in his current stage and gain points as fast as possible, making his score rise rapidly.

If he went to attempt some martial dao missions, the level one mission would be on the sixth level spirit realm, much less level two and three.

Although Jiang Chen wasn't afraid, it was obviously not worth the time.

To spend so much effort and undertake the risk, he might as well go to the pill area to easily grind out points.

He only had one chance a day to attempt an advanced stage mission.

Naturally, he should spend it in the area that he was most confident in, and the one that would take the least bit of effort.

Right now, he had the most confidence in the area of pills.

"Mm. Let's not overthink it. Let's take care of the five exams in the comprehensive area tomorrow and obtain all 100 foundation points."

Considering the difficulty of the previous exams, he should be able to obtain the last 25 points with no problem at all.

Having formed a plan, Jiang Chen thought no further and sat down cross legged, continuing to cultivate.

Having cultivated in the Eternal Spirit Mountain for half a year, there were signs of Jiang Chen's spirit ocean finally breaking through in the sky quadrant.

He could feel that he'd reached the critical point in the fourth level spirit realm. He only needed a catalyst to break through.

Therefore, Jiang Chen was trying quite hard now to successfully enter the fifth level spirit realm in one go.

"I may be the only fourth level spirit realm in the entire sky quadrant right now. The others are mostly fifth level, with a small few at the sixth level. There are likely some in the sky spirit realm, but I just haven't seen them yet."

The candidates of the sky quadrant were different from the others. They didn't congregate near the arena everyday, and appeared in different areas as well, so it was normal not to run into each other.

Most importantly, the top geniuses of the sky quadrant all valued themselves greatly and felt that their identities were too grand to show themselves that often.

They seemed to either enjoy playing mysterious, or were worried that revealing themselves in the public too often would allow others to see through their trump cards.

In conclusion, the ones at the apex in the sky quadrant were all as elusive as ghosts.

Jiang Chen trained madly, spending the entire night tempering his spirit ocean, feeling the moment of breakthrough was edging closer and closer. He only needed one last push.

"Mm, it looks like some special development is needed to bring this about. I needn't rush, it will come together when the time is right."

When the next day arrived, Jiang Chen wasn't depressed. Rather, he was filled with fighting spirit.

Tang Hong came to find him not long after he'd opened his eyes, inviting him to go to the comprehensive area together.

This huge man with a wild and rugged appearance seemed to have truly taken Jiang Chen as his boss.

And so, the two traveled together to the foundation testing site.

Chapter 372: Easily Completing the Level Two mission

The exams of the comprehensive area were an assorted collection, but they all had to do with martial dao.

It was as Tang Hong had said; this exam was basically a free ride, nor was it that difficult.

The exams that Jiang Chen selected weren't too challenging, having to do with formations and refining weapons. He was well-versed in this exams of area and obtained the 25 points.

Tang Hong had likewise not met with any problems.

The two of them met in the lobby, and Tang Hong grinned. "Let's go to the pills area?"

"Sure, why not?" Jiang Chen laughed heartily.

Tang Hong had more confidence in the area of strength of heart and pills. But comparatively speaking, he had the most confidence in the area of pills.

Those who'd come to the area of pills were mostly Precious Tree Sect disciples.

They didn't run into that disappointing fellow Iron Dazhi this time, however.

"I'm requesting a level one mission." Tang Hong said.

"I'm requesting a level two mission." Jiang Chen felt that a level one mission wouldn't have any difficulty to it and decided to go straight for level two.

The examiner wasn't the one from yesterday, so he was a bit surprised to see someone directly set their sights on the second level.

Ordinarily speaking, most candidates were quite cautious when applying for advanced stage missions. They usually started off at level one and slowly added on.

There were those who challenged level two right away, but only those who were at the peak level of existence in their sects had enough gall to do that.

Those fellows would also have great confidence in level two missions.

However, the rules dictated nothing of a candidate's limits in selecting the difficulty of their first mission. So, although the examiner was a bit taken aback, he nodded his head after checking Jiang Chen's token and noting that he did indeed have the qualification to request a level two mission. He handed over a mission token to Jiang Chen.

“Examination room 32, level two mission. Come back to reclaim your participant token after you’re finished.”

Jiang Chen accepted his mission token and waved his hands at Tang Hong. “Good luck, brother.”

Tang Hong’s eyes were greatly widened as he murmured, “What a hardcore guy, going for a level two mission from the get-go. He’s my boss alright!”

Tang Hong flung the mission token in his hands upwards and walked towards his examination room as well.

Jiang Chen arrived at the room number 32 and handed over his token to the examiner.

“Go on in, the mission’s inside. You can read the mission content yourself. Completing it in the allotted time means you pass. If not, you fail.”

Jiang Chen nodded and walked inside.

The level two mission was a bit uncommon. nove)IB)1n

There was a partial pill recipe inside, with many of the ingredients already listed but several key ones missing. Candidates had to make use of the other ingredients to extrapolate which ones were missing.

This mission wasn’t simple.

This was different from refining pills. That was done from complete pill recipes.

This was to investigate and fill in the gaps, completing the partial recipe. One had to say, the difficulty of this mission was quite high. If one hadn’t spent a significant amount of effort researching recipes, it would be very difficult for them to complete it.

But for Jiang Chen, he only needed to somewhat think through this level of recipe to easily come up with the right answer.

Although he didn’t know this recipe and had never seen it before, the theories of pill recipes were broadly applicable. Mastering one meant mastering a hundred. For low-level recipes, they were merely an extension of the fundamental principles.

Jiang Chen understood the general gist after a momentary glance.

This recipe was missing three ingredients. There wasn’t only one correct answer, as any one of them could be replaced by identical derivatives.

Jiang Chen restored the recipe in detail and appended it with some explanations.

It wasn’t that he enjoyed elaborating on his answers, but he was simply afraid the examiners would be far too mediocre to even understand the theory behind his answers if he didn’t explain himself. It would be quite depressing if he was judged as having only completed half of his mission because of their incomprehension.

He’d spent only fifteen minutes in the entire process.

When he verified that there were no errors, Jiang Chen walked out of the room. The examiner started to his feet, "You cannot walk around while the mission is underway. Go back inside."

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully, "Can I not walk around even after having completed the mission?"

"Eh? Completed?" The examiner blinked. *How was this possible? Four hours were allocated for a level two mission.*

How long had passed? He'd already completed it?

This fellow had probably given up directly after he saw how difficult the mission was? The examiner walked in with a belly full of suspicion.

However, he was quickly stunned by Jiang Chen's examination scroll.

The answer on the scroll was quite complete, the annotated explanations thorough and detailed. It offered complete understanding in one glance and imparted new inspiration.

Those who could be an examiner in the pill area naturally had deep backgrounds in pills. When he saw how the recipe had been completed, he could tell that it was clear from one cursory glance.

"You... you really compiled this?" The examiner realized that he'd asked a dumb question, regretting it immediately after he said it. Openly questioning a candidate wasn't something that an examiner should do.

"Is there anyone else here?" Jiang Chen's brow knit together.

The examiner hastened to explain, "I have no other purpose. I was just too surprised. Your speed in finishing it is simply too fast and the amount of time you spent so short."

Jiang Chen could see that the examiner didn't have any malicious intent and nodded wordlessly.

The examiner looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen, but the questions in his heart remained unanswered. He drew a mark on the mission token to indicate that it had been completed.

"Take the token and go back to the front to retrieve your candidate token. There are 20 points awarded for a level two mission. Congratulations."

The examiner was quite gracious as he smiled faintly at Jiang Chen, offering his congratulations.

Jiang Chen nodded, took the mission token, and left.

The examiner watched Jiang Chen's back and reached out a hand to slap himself lightly. "Me and my fat mouth. I better have not offended him. But this fellow is truly odd. Completing a level two mission in fifteen minutes is unheard of. Can it be that he's seen the recipe before? Is that why he could complete the mission so easily and so effortlessly?"

This explanation seemed to be the most reasonable.

The first examiner smiled a small, knowing smile when he saw Jiang Chen return. *Returning so quickly? It looks like the mission was a wash. Young men are really hotheaded eh! He's gotten a big head after*

coming here from the mundane world. But this is a good thing. With this time's lesson, he'll understand that a level two mission isn't that easy to do.

It wasn't that this examiner was delighting in the misfortunes of others, but he felt that the young man didn't have his feet on the ground.

However, if he'd been here yesterday and seen Jiang Chen and Tang Hong's competition, he likely wouldn't be thinking this way.

"I've completed the mission and have come to return the mission token." Why would Jiang Chen care about what this examiner was thinking? He walked up and handed the mission token over.

"Completed?"

The examiner had wanted to take Jiang Chen and take this cocky young man down a peg, when he suddenly heard that Jiang Chen had completed the mission.

"Mm, please look it over." Jiang Chen nodded. He'd long since grown used to all sorts of disdain and suspicion from his path in the mundane world to the sky quadrant. He didn't care that another one had been added to these ranks.

The examiner had all sorts of questions in his mind as he accepted the mission token. His heart pounded after glancing at it. It really was complete!

A mission token was only complete if an examiner personally carved his marks into it.

No one was able to forge these marks.

"Not bad, not bad. Twenty points for a level two mission. They've already been added, take a look." Although the examiner was shocked, he still calmed down in the end.

Jiang Chen smiled and accepted his token, leaving after nodding at the examiner.

Time was precious. Jiang Chen couldn't afford to waste any at the moment.

He had to make use of every minute in the sky quadrant and not squander any.

Compared to the sect disciples, his start had simply been too late. He really would be left behind if he didn't try his best.

Another day passed.

Jiang Chen once again came to the pill area. The examiner was a new face. There were many examiners in this area, and it was normal that someone different was on duty every day.

Jiang Chen handed over his token and said, "I'd like to apply for a level three mission."

"Level three?" The examiner had just gotten to work early in the morning, and his hand trembled slightly at these words. He looked at Jiang Chen with a sideways glance, "Are you sure?"

Jiang Chen nodded very certainly, "I'm sure."

The examiner still hadn't regained his senses. He looked at Jiang Chen up and down before taking his candidate token. The examiner smiled superciliously, "You're that secular genius? I've heard that you made quite a fuss in the earth quadrant."

"Does this have anything to do with the sky quadrant exams?" Jiang Chen caught a whiff of something else going on. This examiner was different from the previous ones. There was the faintest traces of belligerence in his words, and he seemed to bear Jiang Chen no small amount of malice.

The previous examiners had been surprised – and had even lost their composure – but they did not bear any ill will. It had been a pure emotional reaction on their front.

But this one held traces of mockery and even suppression in his timbre.

"That there is not, but it's not necessarily a good thing for a young man to be too cocky. Do you know what a level three mission entails?"

Jiang Chen's eyebrow arched. *Are you quite done already?*

He didn't want to waste time and spittle on blathering with this guy.

Jiang Chen said irritably, "Follow the rules if there's something inappropriate about me requesting a level three mission. If not, please also follow the rules. My time is precious and I don't want to waste it in verbal sparring."

The examiner blinked. *This fellow is damn cocky. I'm an examiner, and even those sect geniuses are humble and docile in front of me. Who dares show their temper?*

However, the rules were the rules. He didn't dare actually break them. He well remembered the example made of Master Shuiyue.

This examiner was affiliated to the Purple Sun Sect and had said so much because he disliked Jiang Chen, wanting to annoy him a bit.

However, it was obvious he'd failed and had incurred chagrin for himself instead. When he saw candidates continue to walk into the area, he didn't dare vent his spleen lest he become subject to a protest.

Chapter 373: Divine Class Potential

Repressing a belly full of rage, the examiner gave a level three mission token to Jiang Chen, laughing coldly, "Room 68, go there yourself."

Jiang Chen's expression was remote as he took possession of the mission token, heading for room 68. He could naturally make out from the examiner's malicious attitude that he was likely from the Purple Sun Sect.

With Master Shuiyue as a previous example however, the examiner would only be making trouble for himself if he tried to do anything in the exams.

Others had requested the level three mission in the pill area before, but an instance would only occur once every few days.

When all of the candidates in the great hall heard that the secular genius had requested this mission, they cast sideways glances at each other and put their heads together, thinking that this was incredible.

“This secular genius is simply too cocky! He went for a level three mission? Is he really treating this subject as his own backyard, for him to play around in however he’d like?”

“Level three mission? He’s going to run out in a second with dust on his face.”

“Definitely. How many geniuses have failed on a level three mission? An ordinary kid dares take the challenge? He’s being overconfident like teaching his grandma to suck eggs!”

“Not necessarily, I’ve heard that he completed a level two mission yesterday. He even beat Tang Hong from the Precious Tree Sect previously on the pill foundation exam.”

“What? That foolish muscle guy Tang Hong?” Someone asked in surprise.

A huge roar sounded from outside the hall when that question was asked. “Which bastard is running his mouth about me behind my back?!”

An enthusiastic and vigorous form charged in, grabbing the fellow who’d spoke and threw him out before he’d even had time to react.

“Screw you man. You take me for a sick cat if I don’t show you that I’m still a tiger! Try talking about me behind my back next time, see if I don’t break your bones!!”

Tang Hong had been a bit late because he was still training. When he made it here, he happened to hear someone talking bad about him, that he was a foolish muscle guy.

People talking about others behind their backs was what Tang Hong hated most in this world.

“You, c’mere. What were you talking about just now?” Tang Hong pointed at another candidate who’d taken part in the discussions.

The candidate’s face was ashen as he looked at Tang Hong in fine fettle. He knew that this primitive brute was about to go on a rampage. Fear pricked his heart, but he didn’t conceal anything and gave a full accounting of everything.

“Challenging a level three mission?” Tang Hong’s eyes lit up when he heard this. He slapped his thigh and complimented. “My boss alright! Such charisma!”

Tang Hong laughed heartily and ignored the gossiping candidates. Although these fellows were all part of the sky quadrant, their strength was in the lower echelons. They naturally didn’t dare offend Tang Hong, someone who would rank in the top ten. They all rubbed their noses and shrank to the side.

“I request a level two mission.” Tang Hong seemed to have been affected by Jiang Chen as he also walked up with a heroic, expansive air and slapped his token down onto the table.

The Purple Sun Sect examiner was the type to hate one thing on account of another. He turned his attentions to Tang Hong, but didn’t dare cause trouble for him.

He could inwardly curse that both of them would fail so that they would face the penalty of being barred for five days.

“Foolish brute, wallowing in degeneration to take a country bumpkin as a boss. This brat is throwing away all of the Precious Tree Sect’s face.” The examiner grumbled privately.

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Jiang Chen entered the exam room and started his new challenge.

A level three mission was indeed much harder than a level two mission. However, to Jiang Chen, there was no problem that was insurmountable for him when it came to pills.

The mission requested that candidates select the useful ingredients from a pile of a thousand and put them together to form a base that could be used to refine pills.

The request was that candidates be able to put together ten recipes.

Quite a few ingredients were needed to refine a single type of pill. It could range anywhere from four to more than ten ingredients.

One main ingredient was definitely needed, the amount of the rest of the complementing ingredients could be many or few.

However, it was quite a tall task to put together ten pill recipes from the mess of a thousand ingredients here.

Four hours were given for such a task.

For an ordinary cultivator, a thousand ingredients were enough of a headache. It would take at least an hour to organize them all and finely identify them.

It was even harder when one needed to put them into recipe combinations.

To Jiang Chen however, these pills were all novice level creations. There was nothing difficult about them at all.

He quickly sorted them all and picked out which ones could be useful in refinement, which could be the main ingredient.

He quickly picked thirty or forty ingredients suitable for being the main ingredient in a recipe.

Recipes having to do with these ingredients then rose in his mind. He looked over all of them, and then looked at the other ingredients.

If all complementing ingredients were present, then he could put them together as one recipe.

He proceeded neatly in this manner.

One had to say, this level three mission was indeed complex, but that was only for outsiders. To well-versed experts, the most complicated things were easy, if they attacked the problem with the right methods.

It was said that problems were difficult for those who didn’t know how to tackle them, but those who did wouldn’t find them hard at all.

There were 23 recipe combinations in front of Jiang Chen after an hour. He confirmed them again and again, ensuring that there was nothing wrong with all of these small and large recipes.

Jiang Chen made identifying marks on each of these combinations. He also summarized what pills could be refined, the pills' name, and the general theory behind each pill.

Exactly two hours had passed after he'd completed all this.

When he finally confirmed that all was in order, Jiang Chen walked out and said to the examiner outside the room. "I'm done, will you check please?"

The examiner was also surprised at Jiang Chen's speed, but didn't say anything. He walked into the room and was greeted by the sight of 23 combinations. Detailed, complete, visible at a glance.

"These... these are all your combinations? So many?" The examiner was shocked as he stared dumbly at the combinations. There were 23 of them! Far in excess of the 10 required by the mission.

The examiner was thrown into a disarray after counting up the number. It was as if someone had suddenly targeted his acupoint and had petrified him.

"Indeed. According to my calculations, this should be the limit. The rest of the ingredients won't be able to form another recipe."

Of this, Jiang Chen was quite certain of.

The examiner took quite a while to respond as his voice was full of emotion. He tsk'ed in amazement. "Genius, genius... we've also simulated this mission before and 23 recipes are indeed the greatest number of combinations that can be made. But did you know how long we took to simulate this?"

"How long?" Jiang Chen was taken aback. He hadn't thought that the examiner would talk about this with him.

"Eight of us participated, and we spent 32 hours, working day and night, to come to this conclusion and be certain that we hadn't overlooked anything. Indeed, 23 combinations is the limit."

The examiner sighed again. "Genius, such genius. I have to say, this is divine class potential! I have truly learnt something today. It's not difficult for us to complete ten combinations in a short amount of time, but for you to have identified all combinations in such a short amount of time, this is indeed heaven defying potential."

This examiner was completely different from the Purple Sun Sect examiner at the entrance of the area. His tones and words were full of admiration.

It was indeed as he'd said. It was an easy thing for the examiners to complete this mission in a short amount of time, given their potential.

But to use half the allotted time to identify all 23 combinations, what was this if not a freak genius?

This was almost outside the scope of his imagination.

"Young man, you're the youngster gifted with the most pill talent that I've seen thus far. Don't be unworthy of your talents!"

The examiner's tone was grave and earnest. His heart of treasuring talent was quite evident.

Jiang Chen smiled, "Then, have I passed?"

The examiner couldn't help but laugh, "If I don't pass you, then us old men would likely never pass as well. Not only do you pass, but you pass with flying colors for your miraculous completion. If it wasn't for the rules dictating that a level three mission could only be awarded 40 points, I would give you 80 or 160 points if it were up to me! I think that your answer scroll is absolutely perfect."

The examiner was profuse with his praise as he marked the token with his unique sign. "Go and obtain your points. Youngster, I'm certain that there will come a day that you're the most venerated pill master in the sixteen kingdoms!"

This was definitely the highest praise.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. He felt that it was touching that someone was encouraging him so kindly.

"Young man, with your strength, you can absolutely challenge a level four mission. There have only been three instances of a candidate challenging a level four mission up until now. Only one has succeeded. I hope you can be the second." The examiner encouraged.

"There's not much meaning in being second. If I'm going to do it, I'm going to be the first. Has anyone ever requested a level five mission?"

No one thus far had requested a requested a level five mission yet. To be frank, only a sparse few had requested a level four mission up to this point. It'd only be requested three times in the last sixty, seventy days.

And, only one instance had resulted in success. The successful case had been lucky, the mission hadn't been that difficult then.

Ever since someone had successfully passed a level four mission, no one had dared challenge it afterwards. It was too difficult. For any of the candidates to succeed, they would have insane heaven-defying good luck.

However, it was already something to be proud of having completed a level three mission. At least, up until now, there had been only 10 successful instances of passing a level three pill mission in the last sixty days.

Jiang Chen returned with a triumphant smile. When the Purple Sun Sect examiner took Jiang Chen's token, his very face turned green.

He'd been taunting and jeering Jiang Chen before, and now, Jiang Chen had slapped him back in the most thorough way possible.

When Jiang Chen took back his candidate token, the points on it had changed to 160 points.

100 foundation points, 20 from a level two mission, 40 from a level three. He now had 160 points!

Chapter 374: Unprecedented, Level Five Mission

Jiang Chen was rather satisfied by this point accumulation rate.

However, what he didn't know was that his title as a freak genius had made the rounds among all the pill area examiners overnight.

All the examiners had heard of his phenomenal accomplishments by now.

He'd beaten the proud and unbridled Tang Hong in a bet, and the latter was now wholeheartedly become the freak genius' follower.

He'd crashed through a level two mission as if splitting bamboo, completing it in fifteen minutes when allotted two hours, and completed it in stunning fashion, with no flaws to be found at all.

He'd then displayed divine potential in the third mission; Eight examiners had used 32 hours to finish simulating a mission, but he'd used only two hours to thoroughly do so by himself.

What was this if not divine-class potential?

When Jiang Chen appeared again the next day, he was greeted by the complicated gaze from an examiner. There were hints of appraisal in the examiner's eyes, as well as subtle traces of anticipation.

"What level mission? Four?" When Jiang Chen handed over his candidate token, the examiner responded warmly and enthusiastically, without even waiting for him to speak.

Jiang Chen had indeed intended to request a level four mission, but found it rather strange when the examiner asked him like this. The examiners swapped out every day, and their constantly changing reactions threw Jiang Chen for a loop.

The difficulty of the fourth level mission had indeed increased by quite a bit once again.

Jiang Chen returned to the main entrance four hours later and handed over his mission token.

Level four mission, success!

His successful challenge of a level four mission spread throughout the entire sky quadrant in the blink of an eye.

A secular cultivator had accomplished such stunning feats in the sky quadrant, becoming the second to complete a level four mission since the beginning of the exams!

If it were the original person who'd completed a level four mission, people may not have put much thought into it.

But this feat had been achieved by a secular cultivator! This drew quite a bit of suspicion and disbelief in these results.

"What? Level four pill mission?" Long Juxue also thought it incredible when she received this news.

"How could that dumb animal's potential in spirit medicine have increased so much, so quickly?"

Her thoughts traveled back to the Hidden Dragon Trials of the Eastern Kingdom.

She remembered how the Pill King Garden had once attempted to usurp the Hall of Healing's position and held an exhibition, trying to slap the latter's face.

Yet, ultimately the Hall of Healing had hit back soundly in return, introducing a few pills that completely destroyed the Pill King Garden and causing it to disband.

This matter had stunned the capital back then, and naturally Long Juxue had been aware of it as well. However, no one knew what brought that about.

“Could it be that the pills the Hall of Healing had marketed at that time had come from Jiang Chen?” Long Juxue suddenly felt enlightenment dawn on her.

“Why did the Third Hallmaster Qiao Baishi of the Hall of Healing harden his resolve to associate with Jiang Chen, even though he was the successor to the Hall? Was it really because of Jiang Chen’s potential in pills?”

The more Long Juxue thought about this, the more likely she thought it to be.

“That dumb beast has hidden himself rather well. I hadn’t imagined that his potential in the area of pills is so high. Could it be that his mysterious backer truly is spirit king protector Ye Chonglou of the Skylaurel Kingdom?”

Although Ye Chonglou wasn’t someone of the Precious Tree Sect, he had a myriad of connections with the sect. If he had truly started raising Jiang Chen since young and focused on pills, then everything laid out before her would have a reasonable explanation!

Whenever Long Juxue heard Jiang Chen’s name now, it felt like a thousand, nay, ten thousand vipers gnawing on her heart. It was incredibly unsettling.

Her deep, burning hatred made her itch to immediately destroy Jiang Chen and scatter his ashes to the four winds after burning him to the ground.

“Hmph. Talent in the dao of pills is still an unconventional side path in the end. Even if he can deploy this potential to the utmost, it’ll never be able to measure up to my advantage of an innate constitution.”

Long Juxue had great confidence in her azure phoenix constitution. The overbearing atmosphere now present in her bearing was something that had been accumulated over time.

“Jiang Chen, I’ll let you strut around for now. You best not let me select you in the challenges. When that day comes, it will be your last on this earth. Go and have your little fun for a few days!”

Chilling killing intent suffused Long Juxue’s hate filled eyes, akin to the passage of autumn to the arrival of bitter winter as the surrounding temperature plummeted.

“Haha, boss, big happenings, big happenings! You’re now a celebrity in the sky quadrant!” Tang Hong grinned and laughed loudly.

“Is being a celebrity a good thing? Someone’s just trying to set me up as the public enemy. There’s nothing good about it. Haven’t you seen that those preminent sect disciples are all the very epitome of a low profile?”

Tang Hong chuckled, “They are they and you are you. Those fellows like to flaunt a mysterious air and pretend that they’re all that. You’re my boss and so you should be a bit more arrogant. You’ve got the

skills and talent and so you should put those sons of b*tches in their place! They need to stop acting like idiots with eyes on the top of their heads that don't look properly at anyone!"

It was evident that Tang Hong was quite disdainful towards those premier experts. This was the core reason why he'd been unable to become part of the most select social circles.

"Forget it, I have no desire to compete with anyone right now. My most important mission currently is to grind out points. Everything is as fleeting as the winds if I don't raise my score."

There was no point in erupting in full hostility before the moment to battle arrived.

"Boss, are you really going to challenge the level five mission tomorrow?" Tang Hong rubbed his hands and changed the subject.

"Yep." Jiang Chen answered shortly and simply nodded his head.

"Heh heh, then things will be even more fun tomorrow. No one's requested a level five mission in the pill area thus far. Boss, you're heaven-defying! No matter whether or not you succeed, this step will absolutely own all your opponents."

Tang Hong kept rubbing his hands in excitement and his eyes gleamed when he thought about the scenario at hand.

If it'd been anyone else requesting a level five mission, Tang Hong's first thought would've been—an idiot seeking death.

His second thought would've been—the hell does it have to do with me?

But Jiang Chen was different. Jiang Chen was his boss.

Tang Hong had an almost blind faith in Jiang Chen at this point. One had to know that despite with Tang Hong's potential, he'd never challenged a level four mission.

But boss was going to challenge a level five mission and set a new record in the sky quadrant!

Tang Hong wasn't the only one making these speculations. The entire sky quadrant was discussing whether or not the secular genius would really challenge a level five mission.

A level five mission!

This was a mission that that even the most preeminent geniuses didn't dare attempt, despite reward of 160 points upon completion being quite alluring.

However, the same thing applied both ways. If he failed, he would be docked 160 points.

Prior to attempting the level four mission, he'd already had 160 points. Now that he'd completed it and been rewarded with 80 points, he had 240 points.

This score was past the minimum requirement for requesting a level five mission.

After a few days of hard work, Jiang Chen's score had passed the minimum requirement of 160 points.

Tang Hong scratched his ears and head and sat for a bit, then remained there for a bit more. He appeared quite fidgety and brash. He sometimes had a lively expression on his face, and at times mumbled to himself.

It looked like this perverse genius of the Precious Tree Sect had long since grown used to life as Jiang Chen's follower, and would be so worked up about his boss' affairs that he wouldn't be able to sleep.

This night was quite long for Tang Hong.

He arrived early next day to find Jiang Chen and watch over him.

Jiang Chen found it funny when he saw Tang Hong's intensely anxious attitude. Challenging a level five mission was a simple matter for Jiang Chen.

But to Tang Hong, this was an incredible, earth-shaking and heaven-shattering matter.

In fact, it was a monumental event for the entire sky quadrant.

"Boss, take a few deep breaths in and don't be too nervous. Remember, this is a level five mission. It's no joke!"

Tang Hong chuckled.

"The hell am I nervous about? What's there to be nervous about?" Jiang Chen hadn't been nervous at all. Thanks to Tang Hong fooling around, it actually looked like Jiang Chen was putting on a front.

"You're really not nervous? Boss is boss alright. This is a transaction of 160 points! You gain 160 points if you win, but if you lose, you'll be back in poverty when your points are docked."

Having lower than 100 points in the sky quadrant was absolute poverty.

But in Jiang Chen's heart, he'd never even considered failure. The level four mission had still been completed with ease last time.

Then using the difficulty of the level four mission as a barometer, even if the level five was double of that, it would still be no challenge to Jiang Chen.

"If I take home 160 points, then my total score will be 400 points." Jiang Chen's heart was full of longing.

400 points was indeed nothing in the eyes of the higher level candidates. But to Jiang Chen, this was an exceedingly good starting point.

He had to keep grinding out points in the pill area until his points were greater than a thousand. He could even look forward to two thousand points.

Although the other geniuses were also grinding out points in their strong areas, no one was a bigger cheat than Jiang Chen in the sky quadrant.

The others could gain points because of their superior strength and their unique advantages in the sects.

But Jiang Chen's gains were based on using the memories and experiences of his past life. This was something that no one else would have apart from him.

He could use a single move to take everything.

It was evident that the exams of the sky quadrant were used to uncover geniuses in any areas.

The two of them had arrived at the pill examination area as they chatted.

Rumors were flying thickly in the outside world that he was about to challenge the level five mission. There were many gathered to witness the show and take in the means of this challenge.

Therefore, there were at least double the number of disciples here than normally present.

When they saw Jiang Chen appear in the lobby, things became quite lively. The star of the show was here! This was good news for those waiting to watch the show.

Chapter 375: Stunning the Sky Quadrant

“Are you sure that you’d like to request a level five mission?” The examiner asked again.

“Yes.” Jiang Chen nodded his head lightly.

“Haven’t all of you been waiting here to see my boss challenge the level five mission?” Tang Hong cried out on the side.

“Room number 12. Young man, you’re the first to challenge a level five mission. I wish you good luck!” The examiner gave the mission token to Jiang Chen.

Tang Hong waved his big hands, shouting, “Good luck boss! Take down the level five mission, and you’ll be the genius ranked first amongst the sky quadrant then!”

The words ‘first ranked genius’ were quite ear piercing to the candidates waiting around to see a good show.

It wasn’t as if just anyone had the right to be the first ranked genius.

Even of the preeminent geniuses now, neither of them dared self style themselves as number one. This was because no one wanted to become a public enemy at this time.

This title was actually a burden. Whoever dared to call themselves as such thus would become the target of everyone’s attacks.

Of those who could make it into the sky quadrant, who was willing to let someone else take home the title of first genius?

Even those who had no hope of making it to the top felt out of sorts when they heard Tang Hong’s words? Was a secular cultivator worthy of the title of first genius? Aren’t you worried that the wind will hurt your fat tongue after all that boasting!

However, Tang Hong wasn’t thinking that much at all. He didn’t have the intention of raking Jiang Chen over the coals at all. He’d been defeated by Jiang Chen several times in the areas that he was most confident in—strength of heart and pills.

That he’d lost so thoroughly meant that Tang Hong truly and wholeheartedly accepted Jiang Chen as his boss.

Tang Hong was a straightforward guy. He would say whatever was on his mind. He never cared about concealing his thoughts. He didn't care at all that what he was saying was irritating to others.

He only knew that he truly wished that Jiang Chen would succeed in challenging a level five mission.

He thoroughly submitted with good grace to a boss who'd beaten him like this. Completely, and utterly!

The difficulty of a level five mission was indeed great.

It involved the refining of pills, and the requirements it made on the final product were quite high.

Of course, to someone who'd refined the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, this was bit difficult to Jiang Chen, but not too much.

The kind of quality he was being asked to produce was far below the aforementioned pill.

The time allotted was 24 hours, and the required level of quality was to produce an upper rank pill.

The pills were divided into lower, mid, upper, supreme, and even earth and heaven rank.

Of course, it was impossible for the last two to appear in the sixteen kingdoms. There were no pill masters of the requisite ability level, nor were there pill cauldrons and ingredients of sufficient quality.

To refine an earth or heaven rank pill meant that every detail had to be perfect. If even one was insufficient, then it'd be impossible to refine a pill of those ranks.

Jiang Chen observed the pill cauldron when he'd laid out all the ingredients in the right order. Its quality was acceptable for refining a pill of the requisite quality.

As the cauldron heated up, Jiang Chen started to go through each step in a calm, unhurried fashion.

Continued fortuitous circumstances had made it so that Jiang Chen had a fine control over fire. This was the experience that the Lotus of Fire and Ice had brought him. It had absorbed the entire vein of heavenly fire power in the initial selection, so the fire that he could control now was exceedingly strong.

The potential of one's fire talents was quite important to a pill master.

The strongest pill masters were adepts at controlling fire and had to be geniuses of fire. If one didn't possess enormous fire attribute potential, then they could forget about becoming a decent pill master.

Of course, the best potential for someone refining pills was still someone who had great holistic potential, such as Long Juxue's innate constitution.

To innately possess talents in all five attributes meant that no matter what this person did or learnt, they'd be able to do so faster than anyone else.

The dao of pills was thus as well. At the end of the day, it was still regarding one's grasp over the five elements. One's grasp of fire was just an impetus in the end.

Pills were a finished product.

Spirit ingredients were formed naturally and yet to be manipulated. There were those born completely in nature and those raised by humans. Their uses were more single minded.

Pills made use of various spirit ingredients and melded them together to give rise to a bigger effect. This was the profound mystery of the dao of pills.

Therefore, when it came down to the bottom of things, the dao of pills was of the same origin of martial dao.

To understand one was to understand a hundred.

Of course, to someone who was naturally proud as Long Juxue and thoroughly immersed in martial dao, she disdained being a pill master.

Although pill masters were respected, they were only thus and not revered in the end if they didn't have strong martial dao to back themselves up.

Long Juxue liked the feeling of being one on high and being respected and feared by thousands.

She loved the feeling of the masses at her feet and grasping all in her hands.

Of course, this wasn't limited to just Long Juxue. Most bent on martial dao pursued the peak of martial dao, just for the experience of having superiority over all.

This wasn't something that an ordinary pill master could attain.

Even though Jiang Chen had been renowned throughout the realms in his past life for his grasp of the dao of pills, that didn't mean he'd possessed the prestige of being able to awe all those throughout the realms.

This was because he hadn't possessed absolute power.

Jiang Chen looked silently at the cauldron and focused his concentration. Once he entered the state of refining pills, Jiang Chen's heart was as calm as still water. He quickly found the mentality that he had possessed in his past life.

Time passed with the tick of every second and minute.

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Those who had completed their daily mission all converged on the lobby. It was obvious that someone had spread the word that someone had requested a level five mission.

Apart from those geniuses who were cognizant of their status, almost a majority of the hundred candidates in the sky quadrant had arrived. There were forty to fifty people in the lobby.

All of them were whispering to each other and discussing about the secular genius.

Tang Hong had taken advantage of this time to solidly complete a mission. He exited quickly and was now quite agitated.

This was the first time that a level five mission had appeared.

Although Tang Hong was very confident in the new boss that he'd accepted, his heart was still on tenterhooks before Jiang Chen came out.

If he succeeded, that would set off an explosion that would shock even the most preeminent geniuses.

Therefore, Tang Hong had high anticipations for such a scene to appear.

"Boss, you've got to hold out. I, old Tang, finally have someone that I admire. I hope you return triumphantly and smack all the faces of those so-called top geniuses!"

Tang Hong was both anxious and full of anticipation. Because he would occasionally come off worse for the wear from those preeminent geniuses, so he ardently wished that someone even more perverse would appear and thoroughly trample those so-called top geniuses.

It wasn't that he was jealous of them, but that he couldn't abide by their style.

Those who were waiting to watch the show were all among the lower tier in the sky quadrant. Tang Hong took a look and realized that none of the top 20 were here.

"Heh heh, these fellows have their eyes on top of their heads, but they're definitely all dying of curiosity and still won't come personally. However, it doesn't matter that they're not here. They'll be the first to receive the news when boss finishes. Hahaha, I wonder if they'll become uneasy then?"

More people arrived the longer that time went on.

Even Iron Dazhi of the Precious Tree Sect couldn't resist temptation and ran over for a look as well.

Iron Dazhi's expression changed when he saw Tang Hong. When Tang Hong glared at him though, Iron Dazhi knew enough to not come up and greet the former. Resentment filled his heart instead.

"This idiot Tang Hong. He could've latched onto the leg of a direct descendent of the Iron family but decided to call a secular kid as his boss instead. This kid's brain really isn't normal."

Another person walked in after Iron Dazhi walked in. He was tall and wore plain hemp clothes. His eyes were like the stars as a deep look filled them. His bearing seemed a bit desolate, giving one the feeling of an ascetic monk.

This person was Chu Xinghan, Master Shuiyue's second disciple.

He'd heard of what was going on here after he'd completed his mission. He'd been a bit surprised, and had come over for a look.

Honestly speaking, although Jiang Chen and Master Shuiyue were dead set against each other in the earth quadrant, Chu Xinghan had always been one to follow his intuition and not be controlled by emotions.

Logically speaking, he was of Master Shuiyue's faction and as such, he should be hating Jiang Chen. But he really didn't hate this person in the depths of his heart.

When he'd seen Jiang Chen at the Second Crossing, he'd felt warmly disposed towards this young man. This was why he hadn't killed Jiang Chen even in the face of great pressure, and had decided to bring him back to the sect.

In contrast, he just didn't feel much towards Long Juxue, this so-called genius with an innate constitution. He even had a rather bad impression of her.

When he thought of the causes, Chu Xinghan also knew that his honored master was likely suppressing Jiang Chen because she suspected he was Jiang Chen.

The source of all these grudges was Long Juxue.

Since the honored master was erupting in open hostilities with Jiang Chen because of Long Juxue, Chu Xinghan's first thought was that he wouldn't become involved at all. He didn't want to become embroiled in pointless conflict for Long Juxue's sake again.

He'd become involved that time when he saved her life, but she hadn't been grateful at all. The calm Chu Xinghan then learnt that this woman was not worth wasting his efforts on at all.

With the previous examples of third junior brother Hai Tian and fourth junior brother He Yan, Chu Xinghan knew this more clearly than anything else.

In the depths of his heart, Chu Xinghan actually admired Jiang Chen quite a bit and even felt respect for this secular genius. To be able to make it to this step wasn't a product of sheer luck only.

Chu Xinghan even had the faintest premonition that even Long Juxue wouldn't be able to win with confidence over this fellow.

When his thoughts traveled here, Chu Xinghan's gaze couldn't help but look to the front.

Chapter 376: Catching Up At Top Speed

"He's out!" Some sharp-eyed fellow called out.

All gazes shifted over to that direction in unison.

Only ten hours had passed, he was out already?

Tang Hong's enormous feet stomped over, pushing aside the people in his way. He took a look and saw that the person who'd come out was indeed Jiang Chen.

"Boss!" Tang Hong's eyes widened as his heart sank. It wasn't a good sign that he'd come out this early.

What did ending a level five mission early mean?

Jiang Chen also blinked when he saw the sixty or so people gathered in the lobby. He looked at Tang Hong and then pointed at those in the lobby. "What's going on here?"

Tang Hong chuckled, "They're all here to watch the show since they heard you requested a level five mission."

"Well, boss? Didja crush it?" Tang Hong was a quite agitated as his large hands were clenched into fists, light shining out of his eyes.

Jiang Chen nodded, "The level five mission is rather a bit interesting."

“Eh? Whaddya mean interesting? Did you succeed or not?” Tang Hong scratched his head full of straw-like hair and asked forthrightly.

When the others saw that Jiang Chen had nodded and then said the mission was a bit interesting, they too didn’t know if he’d succeeded or not. They all looked at Jiang Chen with gazes full of complex emotions.

Some were anticipatory, some were waiting to watch a joke. There were also those who were disdainful. Jiang Chen caught glimpse of a microcosm of human emotion from those assembled in that moment.

“Mm, I succeeded.” Jiang Chen’s expression was remote as he nodded.

“Fantastic, hahaha!” Tang Hong threw his head back and laughed. “Level five mission, haha! Do you see that? This is a true genius, a real genius!”

Jiang Chen walked forward as the crowd of onlookers all parted in twain in front of him. A mix of emotions played across their faces as they looked at Jiang Chen.

“Master examiner, this is the mission token, please inspect it.” Jiang Chen did not become full of himself just because he’d completed a level five mission.

He also ignored the reactions of those around him. Whether they were envious or jealous, he, Jiang Chen, walked only his own path.

The examiner’s hand spasmed slightly as he accepted the mission token, murmuring, “I hadn’t thought... hadn’t thought that the first to succeed in a level five mission in the sky quadrant would be a secular candidate. Our four great sects should truly reflect. How many gems have we missed in the ordinary world over the years?”

The examiner sighed and took Jiang Chen’s mission token, awarding 160 points to him after checking it.

In this way, there were 400 points on Jiang Chen’s candidate token.

This score was just enough to ensure that he wouldn’t be eliminated from the sky quadrant.

“Brother, let’s get to know each other. I’m Iron Dazhi of the Precious Tree Sect. I hadn’t thought that a genius like you would exist in the ordinary world. This really is an eye opener for me. I’ve come because I’d like to personally witness a secular genius’ glory. Would you be interested in gathering at my residence? In terms of the dao of pills, if my Precious Tree Sect dares call ourselves second amongst the four great sects, then there will be no one who dares say that they’re first.”

Iron Dazhi was the first to come over and greet Jiang Chen enthusiastically.

Jiang Chen stared blankly. He hadn’t thought that Iron Dazhi would have this side to him. He still remembered when he’d bumped into Iron Dazhi with Tang Hong that day. They hadn’t seemed to get along.

The fellow had seemed to forget the matters of that day already and was greeting him warmly.

Tang Hong also blinked. He walked up and shoved Iron Dazhi aside, “Bugger off and don’t block the way here.”

Iron Dazhi was incensed but managed to restrain himself, and said coldly, "Tang Hong, you and I are of the same sect. I wouldn't be kicking up a fuss if I were you. I'm recruiting a genius for the sect now, so what are you messing around for?"

Tang Hong wasn't kindly disposed towards Iron Dazhi. "What the hell are you? Do you think you represent the sect? You only represent the Iron family at most. Do you understand?"

Iron Dazhi snorted coldly, "I can't be bothered arguing with idiots like you."

He proceeded to smile apologetically at Jiang Chen, "Brother, Tang Hong is a fool. Don't take him seriously. I have some superior wine in my residence and it makes me feel anguished that I have no one to share it with. Good wine and geniuses are a match made in heaven, no? Are you interested in having a drink?"

Jiang Chen's brow furrowed when he saw Iron Dazhi kick up a fuss in front of him. "Not interested. Move."

He didn't pause after saying these words and walked past Iron Dazhi as if he was air, heading for the door.

Tang Hong chuckled oddly, "Iron Dazhi, don't think you're actually a genius just because you have a good ancestor. You're really unworthy."

With this bout of self-humiliation that he'd brought down on himself, a streak of killing intent flashed through Iron Dazhi's eyes.

The others also started laughing uproariously. Their look at Iron Dazhi was full of mockery and sarcasm. It was obvious that they were delighting in the fact that Iron Dazhi was being shamed.

It wasn't that they were enemies with Iron Dazhi. They were competing with each other, so it was natural for them to feel delighted at seeing someone else unlucky and making a fool of themselves. They were only one step away from kicking Iron Dazhi when he was down.

Chu Xinghan stood at the door, and the two flicked a seemingly noncommittal glance at each other when Jiang Chen passed through the door.

"It's him alright!" Chu Xinghan already had a preconceived notion in his mind. When he saw that meaningful look, the familiarity coming from his previous interaction with Jiang Chen surged to the fore again.

Standing at the door, Chu Xinghan sighed to himself as he watched Jiang Chen vanish into the distance. "Am I destined to be enemies with such a character?"

Chu Xinghan shook his head and warned himself again. "No, I cannot become involved in this morass of a conflict. He is the fated rival of Long Juxue, and that's between the two of them. I, Chu Xinghan, am loyal to martial dao. I've already saved Long Juxue once due to my gratitude to the honored master. I have no need to become involved again. There is a power on him that makes my heart palpitate. I have a premonition that he won't be that easily suppressed."

Chu Xinghan warned himself repeatedly with a calm heart.

After the clash between gazes just now, he was even more certain of his notions. The secular genius wasn't someone who'd be that easily oppressed.

Although Long Juxue had talent that surpassed all, if she were to underestimate her enemy, she would suffer quite a bit at the hands of this person.

Chu Xinghan even had the vague feeling that there was a formless bearing to this secular genius that even Long Juxue lacked.

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"Boss, boss, you're famous now! I firmly believe that your name will be listed alongside those top geniuses. They'll probably even list you as one of their competitors in the future." Tang Hong chuckled.

"Competition?" Jiang Chen chuckled. "Is that important? I walk my path. What do the top geniuses have to do with me?"

"Alright, that's my boss alright! Damn awesome!" Tang Hong sighed.

Completing a level five mission did indeed cause great ripples in the sky quadrant. Almost everyone was discussing the secular genius who'd appeared out of nowhere. They were all quite curious about him and also kept uncovering his glorious feats.

Champion of the first selection. Champion of the mystic quadrant. Champion of the earth quadrant.

He'd swept over almost all his opponents on this victorious march to championship. The number of people who'd tasted defeat at his hands exceeded even that.

Guo Ren had been scared to the depths of forming an internal demon and spitting out blood without Jiang Chen even making a move.

He Yan, fourth disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, had been easily trampled.

Hai Tian, third disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, had appeared all that but had been slain.

Master Shuiyue, the keeper of the earth quadrant, had lost two disciples in a row and had been pulled off her station, losing all face in front of the senior executives of the four great sects.

When these glorious feats had been unearthed one by one, the secular genius' prestige in the sky quadrant was even more amplified. He was immediately listed as one of those who could make it into the top 64.

There were even those who optimistically felt that the secular genius had hopes of vying for a spot in the final 16, becoming one of the four venerated forefathers' personal disciple.

Everyone was curious now, just where had this secular genius popped out from? Just what was his identity?

Apart from some of the geniuses in the Purple Sun Sect knowing the truth behind the matters, many could guess, but they had no clues. The premier geniuses of the Purple Sun Sect would naturally be disdainful of gossiping like this.

Although a level five mission in the pill area was a bit more eye-catching, it still didn't register much in these genius' line of sight.

"A genius in the dao of pills, utter trash in martial dao. Even the strongest potential in pills is but fleeting winds in the ring." These were the disdainful thoughts in a great majority of them.

"In the world of martial dao, martial dao is king in the end. The dao of pills is but a supporting way." These were the thoughts of the more peaceful, objective factions.

"This secular genius possessed such a heaven-defying dao of pills. If his martial dao potential is just as amazing, then he will be a formidable opponent." This was the calm minority who had yet to lose their reason.

However, the surprise Jiang Chen brought to everyone didn't end here. He fell into a routine after this, grinding out points in the area of pills in going from level one to level five and repeating this over and over again.

He was able to gain 310 points in one full cycle.

With such a perverse point accumulation speed, his score had exploded to an astonishing 1,640 points after a month!

This speed made the entire sky quadrant sink into a strange atmosphere.

This almost insane speed in grinding out points had patently formed a latent threat to those preeminent geniuses.

If one were to say that they had been slightly dismissive in the beginning, they could feel that the secular genius was catching up to them at top speed a month later.

Although things had yet to reach the level of a fire licking at their behinds, at this rate, even if the secular genius' score didn't surpass theirs at the end of the cycle, it would be on par with theirs.

In that moment, even the preeminent geniuses couldn't help but feel a certain sense of urgency.

They'd never thought that there would be such a pill genius in the mundane world. He'd never failed once in his repeated attempts!

This was able to be so easily summed up with a mere title of "pill genius". Even the words of "perverse genius" was insufficient to describe him.

Even the examiners were flabbergasted, much less the candidates in the sky quadrant. They'd never thought that such a dark horse would suddenly appear in the area of pills. His momentum was so fierce that all the other premier geniuses felt uneasy in their positions.

Indeed, if this rhythm was maintained, even the preeminent geniuses would likely have to start taking some risks and increase the number of times they request a level four mission.

They would even have to attempt a level five mission. Otherwise, with this speed, being surpassed would be inevitable!

Chapter 377: Too Much of the Limelight, Time to Suppress Him a Bit?

The secular freak genius quickly became the sky quadrant's hottest topic. Almost everyone managed to talk about it sometime each day.

There were even candidates starting to complain that the secular genius' actions were disrupting the balance of the quadrant.

"Breezing through everything with just a single move? I admit his potential in pills is astounding. But we're martial dao geniuses! We still need to make use of our fighting strength to emerge from the masses in the future. He's deviating to a side path, like walking on the edge of a blade, when he furiously grinds points like this. He's completely destroying the ecosystem of the sky quadrant!"

"Yeah, this isn't fair. Letting him grind points like this, won't all the other geniuses be forced to just gaze at his back in a few months? Who can take care of him then?"

"Indeed, there's no difference between this and cheating. He should go test his skills in other areas if he has what it takes. He only knows to freeload in the pill area; what kind of skill does he possess?"

"I think we should sign a petition in protest. This rule is too unreasonable and should be modified. A candidate can't keep accumulating points in the same area. Otherwise, his advantage is too obvious. Even the most preeminent of geniuses will be eating his dust in a few months."

"Well said. We need to start a petition that proposes an amendment to the rules. Otherwise, we'll go on strike! We can't let a secular cultivator use such despicable methods to sit on top of our heads."

"Makes sense! How can us sect disciples be overcome by a nameless nobody? How depressing is that?"

All of the fellows kicking up a fuss were quite radical, spewing incredibly shameless words. What cheating, grinding out points, or amending the rules? All of them spoke with such self-righteousness but failed to understand that their lack of skill was what led them to overlook such a method that abided by the rules.

Of course, some disagreed with those words.

After all, everyone was competition in the entire sky quadrant. Human hearts were difficult to predict, and it was impossible that they all shared the same opinions.

Some folks were hollering shamelessly, while others scorned their actions.

"What's wrong with breezing through everything in one move? Anyone who has what it takes can do the same as well. Since the rules are set thus, he's not doing anything wrong. Which one of us isn't picking our most confident area when we request missions? Or is it that people should use their weaknesses to challenge someone else's strengths?"

"The organizers are doing things in this fashion in order to unearth geniuses. This secular genius is absolutely a genius in pills. If he doesn't make use of this overwhelming advantage, then he's truly an idiot. Calling a bunch of grapes sour just because they can't have any, how narrow minded!"

"He's accumulating points reasonably and properly. And they accuse him of cheating? These fellows are completely shameless! What ecosystem? Must the top geniuses be ranked first in order for them to call this shameless? Is it that a genius from the mundane world can't rank at the top?"

These were the two camps of thought.

Of course, there were also those who were neutral. They neither supported nor protested the developments, merely watching the proceedings with indifferent eyes.

But overall, those in favor of suppressing the secular genius' rise still held the upper hand.

This included those top geniuses. Although none of them voiced anything in public, they exerted a lot of pressure privately and strongly hinted their feelings to the organizers.

It was obvious that Jiang Chen's rise was giving them a lot of pressure, forcing them to take risks and further stressing them.

If they didn't take some chances to challenge level four or even level five missions, then they were destined to be flung far behind Jiang Chen as time passed.

Which of these geniuses didn't have their sights set on the top? Would they be willing to see a secular cultivator use these sorts of methods to rise to the top and leave them far, far behind?

Of course not.

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Elsewhere, the examiners that held authority in the sky quadrant gathered together. What had happened lately simultaneously gave them excitement and headaches.

They were stunned by the rise of this pill genius and racked their heads as to how they would recruit this genius for their sect.

In many ways, this pill genius wouldn't lose to a top tier martial dao genius.

Martial dao geniuses could be replaced, but a superior pill genius often couldn't be.

There were many martial dao masters in the world of martial dao, but pill masters were few and far in between.

A pill master was quite important in the world of martial dao, and held even greater strategic meaning to a sect.

"Everyone, let's discuss without inhibitions. If this continues, the hearts of the sky quadrant will waver, and all will be thrown into chaos." An examiner sitting in the middle laughed wryly.

"What's there to talk about? This can't be allowed to continue. I recommend changing the rules or restricting him personally. He can't be allowed to proceed like this. The heck! This is clearly deviating from the correct path, and certainly not the actions of a noble gentleman!"

However, those who were aware of the speaker's identity were greatly dismissive of these words. This fellow was Master Shuiyue's junior brother. The two were on exceedingly friendly terms. Such a proclamation was obviously not speaking out for justice, but on behalf of his own personal grudges.

Indeed, someone sprang immediately to respond. "Are you kidding? He's following the rules in requesting missions and is also taking on a great deal of risk. What do you mean by the wrong road and

not the actions of a gentleman? Is he not to focus on the area of his strength and to aim to excel in areas of his weaknesses? Does this measure up to the original intentions of our selection?"

The Purple Sun Sect examiner was immediately offended. "Hey! What do you mean by this? Are you purposefully singing an opposite tune from me?"

"An opposite tune? Heh heh, I rather think it's you who's doing so. I recommend not bringing personal feelings into this, otherwise it'll become very easy for you to be biased. What happened in the earth quadrant is an example to us all." The examiner sighed.

He was obviously talking about Master Shuiyue being removed from her position.

The Purple Sun Sect examiner slammed the table when he heard this. "What did you say?! Who's bringing in personal feelings? You, give me a clear explanation now!"

"You raise your voice because you're in the wrong. Who are you scaring by slamming the table?" The examiner sniffed disdainfully and laughed coldly.

"Alright, alright, everyone calm down. Remember, this is an examiners area, can you all maintain some composure? With the outside being such pandemonium, how will we placate the candidates if we lose our calm?"

"Indeed, our duty as examiners is to maintain order and prevent chaos. The selection this time has to do with the future of our four sects. We cannot take this lightly."

Others kept stepping in to smooth things over. The two examiners glared at each other a few times but kept their tempers in check. However, the eyes they used to look at each other were full of disgust.

"I'll say one thing. There's nothing wrong with what the secular genius is doing. Personally, I admire him. However, whether he's right or wrong, he has indeed caused great ripples in the sky quadrant, making everyone uneasy and uncertain. The results of his actions have caused a negative impact in this quadrant. We should think of a way to resolve this. We would lose far more if the premier geniuses are disheartened."

"Mm, the candidate has done nothing wrong from the perspective of the rules, but taking the greater picture into account, we should restrict him a bit. Otherwise, we'll be unable to soothe the emotions of those top geniuses."

"Right, let's restrict him a bit for the bigger picture."

"Alright. The four great sects know of his potential in pills anyways. We have already accomplished the goal of unearthing geniuses. We should let him spend some time in the other areas. After all, carving a place in the area of pills alone isn't the way forward." n(-o./v.)e(l..B(-l-)n

Most opinions were surprisingly in accordance. They all felt that Jiang Chen should be restricted a bit for the greater picture.

"Humph. Is this how we choose talent? Is this fair? We set the rules, and now that someone hasn't broken them but instead used them to rise with unprecedented momentum, he deserves to be suppressed? If this is the case, then those geniuses with high cultivation should also be restricted. After

all, they're furiously grinding out points by challenging other candidates!" An examiner with a frosty expression stood out in protest.

Winning a challenge would result in 20 points each time. This was a requisite daily mission for those top geniuses.

This was why the top geniuses had been able to streak ahead in points.

"That's not what's going on here. Martial dao geniuses engage in a conversation of martial dao when they challenge other candidates. This is a good thing for them. Why are we holding a selection? To choose martial dao geniuses, no? I think there's nothing untoward in increasing their battle ability."

"Mm. Martial dao is king in this world. The dao of pills is but supplementary."

"Indeed, a preeminent genius must have this kind of advantage."

Many people immediately stood out to rebut the cold faced examiner. The latter was one of upright personality, but it was difficult for him to make a stand against everyone alone.

He could do nothing when faced with his brethren's attitude. He could only laugh coldly, "Your suppression can appease those premier geniuses, but have you considered the feelings of the secular genius?"

"This may be a bit unfair for him, but in consideration of the broader view, we can only ask him to give way."

"Mm, if he's smart enough, he'll understand that this was a function of the circumstances. Truly, I trust that he'll be able to understand."

"Indeed. If not, it simply means his mind isn't bright and he doesn't understand how to analyze the situation. If he insists on doing things his way and makes himself a public target, then that's also very disadvantageous to his growth."

The examiners all spoke righteously and pretentiously, making the cold faced examiner snort in cold laughter.

"All of you posture so self righteously, and can speak so dutifully about your domineering actions in suppressing others. Hmph, at this point, one's original sin is none other than being born of a humble background. If this secular genius had a mighty background, do you all think that you would suppress him in such a righteous manner?"

The other examiners could only smile wryly when faced with this sharp questioning. They all understood this logic, but in order to appease the rage of those top geniuses, they could only sacrifice those deemed lesser.

A secular genius' feelings could be smoothed over easily, but if a group of preeminent geniuses all grew dissatisfied, then the sky quadrant would be thrown into chaos!

Chapter 378: I'll Make the Rules One Day

Word of the examiners' accord quickly traveled out.

One of their representatives came to find Jiang Chen at his residence, explaining everything to him.

Jiang Chen was taken aback, and his tone suddenly dropped when he finished listening to the examiner. "Master examiner, to make things simple, you mean that I can't continue requesting missions in the pill area in the future, is that so?"

"Indeed. You'll be able to spend only a week out of a month in the pill area in the future. This is an decision reached by all the examiners after thorough discussion." The examiner nodded and was quite forthright about things. He didn't worry that this secular genius would have any backlash. Since it was a decision by the collective whole, there was nothing to be done even if he felt strongly about it.

Jiang Chen smiled coldly, "So even though I haven't broken the rules, you can just suppress me whenever you want to, is it?"

"Don't think too much about it. Although it's a bit unfair to you, this is also for the greater picture. Besides, it's a sort of protection for you as well."

"Protection?" Jiang Chen laughed. "Judging from this, I might actually be in trouble instead if you all hadn't done this?"

"Think about it from the long-term perspective. Do you want to become the hated enemy of all geniuses? Do you wish to be public enemy number one? I trust that your goal is to join one of the four great sects. You don't want to offend all the geniuses of your future sect before you even join it, right?"

The examiner was also displeased to see that Jiang Chen hadn't accepted his words with good humor. You're just a mere secular cultivator, how can you be so insensible?

Jiang Chen laughed jeeringly in his anger and nodded lightly. "I understand, so if anyone surpasses the so-called geniuses, that means they've given offense? This is the highest criteria of the four sects' selection in that those so-called geniuses mustn't come off worse in any exchange, huh?"

"Think whatever you want to think." The examiner's expression hardened. "Remember, you are but one of many, and going along with the flow is the wise choice in the face of the greater picture. My words end here, you digest them yourself. Regardless, you can only request seven missions in the area of pills in the future. No one will give you any missions if you go beyond this number. Whether you accept this or not, this is the final result."

These words were the final ultimatum.

The examiner turned to leave after he finished.

Jiang Chen's eyebrow arched as his projecting voice transformed all the qi throughout his body into a surge of fury to the heavens. "Remember, there is no so-called greater picture. Those so-called geniuses that all of you are incessantly scheming to protect will be under my foot one day in the future! Whether you accept this or not, that will be the final outcome!"

Jiang Chen felt that he had a good temper, but he'd been thoroughly enraged this time.

He'd always kept a low profile and tried to not attract any trouble, silently commencing his great plan of farming points.

Sadly, the trees may prefer the calm but the winds will not subside.

His low profile had earned him all sorts of bullying and oppression instead.

The examiners were even publicly restricting him with these ludicrous reasons.

To be honest, if the examiners had modified the rules and applied them to everyone, Jiang Chen might not have been so angry then.

But these modifications were being applied to him exclusively. This obviously meant that they wanted to suppress him. How could he possibly take this lying down?

Even a Buddha made from clay would possess some temper, much less Jiang Chen.

The examiner's body halted slightly as he heard these words and responded faintly without turning his head, "If you really do that one day, then the rules of the four great sects will also be able to change for you."

"Change for me?" Jiang Chen laughed coldly. "You're wrong. When that day comes, I'll be the one to make the rules."

Although Jiang Chen was burning with rage, he'd yet to lose his reason. He knew that the examiners dared to so blatantly suppress him because he was just a secular genius. Compared to the emotions of all the sect geniuses, it was apparent from a glance what direction the scales should tip in.

The examiner started and smiled coldly, mentally relegating Jiang Chen to a lunatic voicing nonsense out of a daydream. Secular cultivators are country bumpkins alright, they only know to puff themselves up and overestimate their abilities.

Word of the examiners' restrictions on Jiang Chen made the rounds at first light.

Fervent discussion immediately arose in the sky quadrant once again. Most candidates were all baying with praise, thinking that the examiners were unparalleled in their justness.

There were a few candidates who retained their rationality however, and felt pity for Jiang Chen. This was the harsh world of the sects.

Rules were often used to only restrict the weak and favor the strong.

"Haha, this is to all of our immense satisfaction! Let's see how he farms points now. He'll be slapped back to his original form now huh?"

"Absolutely. Secular cultivators have limited potential in the end. Taking such an unorthodox path, he won't amount to much in the end. At the end of the day, the selection is still a game in which only sect geniuses like us are allowed to play."

"Heh heh, they'll all be able to sleep easily tonight huh?"

"I pity the secular genius, I bet he probably wants to hang himself right now, hmm? Hahaha, he was just a mere shooting star in the end, vanishing after a flash."

All sorts of similar talk suffused the sky quadrant. There were all sorts of delight in Jiang Chen's misery and kicking him when he was down formed an atmosphere of excitement after successfully suppressing him.

"A bunch of cowards, despicable!" Chu Xinghan viciously slashed down in the empty air in a residence somewhere, giving rise to vicious spirit power ripples.

"Unable to defeat others and resorting to threatening the examiners to change the rules with the intent of suppression instead, this kind of selection is truly ludicrous." Rage also burned in Chu Xinghan's heart.

He too felt it odd. As a disciple of Master Shuiyue, he should be standing in the camp of oppressing Jiang Chen.

However, a flame of fury burning in his heart not only made him not feel proud about this, but the hot fires of anger all of a sudden made the entire selection seem pointless and boring.

"However, I'm truly curious. Will Jiang Chen be finished for good, or will he rise again in the face of adverse circumstances?" The light of deep contemplation shot out from Chu Xinghan's eyes, ones that were as bright as the stars.

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"Shameless, despicable, contemptible, filthy!" Tang Hong rushed to Jiang Chen's residence immediately after hearing of the happenings and started cursing loudly, indignant on Jiang Chen's behalf.

"Boss, these people are ridiculous! They're afraid that your score will catch up to them and so they pressured the examiners. This is absolutely oppression!" Tang Hong's face was beet red with outrage.

How would Jiang Chen not know that this was oppression and true persecution?

However, his emotions had long since returned to the state of being impervious to desires and passions. Oppression? Persecution? That's right, but can this break me, Jiang Chen?

Absolutely not!

Jiang Chen swallowed his rage and laughed coldly. "Don't be agitated Tang Hong. This at least proves one point."

"What is that?" Tang Hong started when he saw Jiang Chen able to chat so leisurely and in such good spirits. He seemed to be wholly unaffected. Tang Hong was quite baffled by this.

"It's very simple. The more they do things like this, the more uneasy they feel. The so-called geniuses aren't nearly as confident as they're projecting."

Jiang Chen's tone was calm as he smiled elegantly. "Perhaps they think that they can keep me down with actions like these, but their uneasiness will leave a crack behind in their fragile hearts. When they realize that all sorts of methods will be unable to suppress me, those cracks will turn into internal demons and consume them, disturbing their dao hearts."

Tang Hong was stunned. He felt that these words made a lot of sense. However, he didn't seem to quite understand them either. He was a direct guy and didn't have so many twists and turns in him.

“Boss, does this mean you’re alright with accepting this?” Tang Hong was a bit dejected.

“I accept it, but I’m not alright with it. I accept the current situation, but there will come a day that I will return it back to them tenfold in spades!”

Jiang Chen said to Tang Hong after this, “Go back first, I’m going to train now.”

He suddenly felt that he should actually thank these idiotic examiners. Thanks to this round of suppression, they’d transmuted into motivation for him that helped him find a slight sliver of inspiration.

This inspiration actually caused the shackles of his fourth level spirit realm to exhibit great signs of cracking open. These were the omens of breaking through to the fifth level spirit realm!

When Tang Hong saw this, he looked at Jiang Chen with bloodshot eyes and took his leave. He cursed all along his way back.

His voice thundered up to the heavens, and his aura was astounding.

Since he was unable to salvage anything for Jiang Chen, he could only use this kind of method to vent some ill temper for his boss. His curses were very ear piercing and direct.

“Geniuses? Bullshit! Tattling and crying like a snot nosed kid to the examiners when they can’t beat someone. You are all cowards! Vermin!!”

“Hahaha! It turns out that these so-called geniuses are all cowards afraid of competition. Interesting, how interesting! Chicken-hearted yet pretending to be deep and mysterious. What geniuses? Absolute shit! No wonder the four great sects are besieged on all sides and the position of the sixteen kingdom alliance hanging by a thread! Is it all because of these wusses that there are no real geniuses here?”

Although Tang Hong was a direct guy, he was quite talented when it came to insulting others. He was raging down the path like a harlot shrieking on the streets. Add to that his naturally loud voice, he only felt somewhat placated when he’d loudly circled the residence area three times.

None of those geniuses were deaf, they could all hear him clearly. But they were indeed feeling guilty, and whoever jumped out to refute him now would be testifying to that fact.

Therefore, although they burned with rage, no one dared jump out.

Jiang Chen on the other hand, remained oblivious to the happenings of the outside world. He had already fully immersed himself into the world of the fifth level martial dao. **novel**.1n

He’d charged through the shackles of the fourth level spirit realm like a collapsing dam. Endless power surged into his spirit ocean as he finally broke through and entered the fifth level.

Hoo!

He opened his eyes a few hours later as a beam of wisdom shot through his clear eyes. “It seems that this suppression isn’t without benefit, hmm? It provided me an opportunity to break through in one go. It looks like all matters have a cause and effect. Disaster and fortune go hand in hand, and all is naturally ordained in the heavens.”

Inspiration regarding all his various divine arts flowed after his breakthrough endlessly, making Jiang Chen engross himself further into training with satisfaction.

Chapter 379: I'll Slap Whoever Dares Show Their Face

Jiang Chen stayed in his residence for the next three days, not setting a single foot outside. He turned a deaf ear to all the occurrences and furor of the outside world, and declined all guests.

After breaking through to the fifth level, his martial dao inspiration geysered forth, forcing him to spend a great deal of time to digest the explosive changes after this breakthrough.

The God's Eye and Ear of the Zephyr broke through continuously, stopping only at the 15th level.

Boulder's Heart became even more stable at the 12th level.

Under his undying efforts, Psychic's Head also entered the seventh level.

His increase in level also continued to bring inspiration for the boxing techniques of the "Divine Aeons Fist". There were vague signs of him entering the great perfection realm of the nine cycles of blooming and wilting.

The eight styles as well as interpretations of the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" also bubbled forth as well.

The explosive flood of inspiration made him incredibly excited. If he wasn't in the secret chamber, he probably would've started practicing right then and there.

However, even simulating techniques in one's mind was a type of consolidation.

Jiang Chen immersed himself in the world of martial dao and unleashed his inspiration to the utmost, digesting what his breakthrough had brought him.

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However, he was the subject of intense discussion in the outside world as his closed door session lasted for three days. All sorts of rumors and gossip kept surfacing.

"Do you see that? The so-called secular genius is so weak and fragile. A little setback is enough to do him in and make him give up on himself."

"It looks like he truly was just a shooting star, burning out in a fleeting second. Is this kind of psychological strength worthy of being called a genius? What a joke!"

"Has this fellow killed himself because he couldn't take the blow? Hahaha, it's not easy for a mundane ant to make it to this step. Do you think we've been too cruel?"

"Cruel? Please. Having poor strength of heart makes him utterly unfit for the world of martial dao. If he wants to make it in this world, he must be able to accept this harsh reality."

"He probably hasn't committed suicide, but he'll be finished for good after this. Forget it, it's not worth talking about an ant with subpar strength of heart."

Those so-called geniuses were all making critical remarks and putting on an air of noble aloofness.

“Pathetic.”

Chu Xinghan could only shake his head internally when he heard those words. These so-called geniuses were putting on too crude of a sham. With this kind of personality, they were destined to become cannon fodder for others on the path of martial dao.

Chu Xinghan didn't believe that with Jiang Chen's personality, he'd be knocked down permanently by this. He'd even wanted to take the risk of being killed in order to kill Long Juxue that day at the Second Crossing.

A man with that kind of determination wouldn't be defeated so easily. This little setback was likely nothing in his eyes.

“Not emerging for three days, can it be that he's converted fury to motivation and has decided to immerse himself in cultivation?” A thought flashed through Chu Xinghan's mind.

It made sense to him. Jiang Chen had farmed almost two thousand points by now. He was solidly in the 50th percentile with his score and didn't need to worry about demotion.

Perhaps he was making use of this opportunity to quietly immerse himself in training and reappear with renewed vigor after his humiliation.

Tang Hong arrived outside Jiang Chen's yard at least ten times over the three days of seclusion. He paced back and forth outside the doors each time but didn't go in.

He'd always swing by after he finished his day's missions.

Although he wasn't afraid that Jiang Chen would want to take his life, he still felt a bit unstable that his boss hadn't showed his face for a few days.

“These despicable petty characters all talk about someone behind their backs. Hmph, how is it possible that someone I've taken for a boss is defeated so easily?” Tang Hong was wholly dismissive of the gossip circulating around the outside world.

He didn't think that his boss was the sort to give up on all hope after being knocked down.

His boss' strength of heart was enough to even solidly triumph over Tang Hong, how could he possibly be defeated by this minor matter?

“When boss told me to leave that day, he said he wanted to train. Can it be that he's broken through in his cultivation?” Tang Hong stood outside Jiang Chen's yard and paced back and forth.

He wrung his large hands and appeared a bit agitated. He would occasionally tug at his straw-like hair and completely mess it up.

Despite his appearance, all the geniuses passing by avoided such a fierce fellow standing outside of Jiang Chen's residence, deathly afraid of provoking this harbinger of trouble.

Everyone knew that Tang Hong was someone not to be provoked.

Those who'd talked about Jiang Chen behind his back was even more scared to bump into Tang Hong. They might very well be hauled in for a beating.

He'd never been the sort to just stick to himself.

No one would be able to withstand him if he went off into one of his moods. Who would dare irritate him, especially during circumstances like these?

However, those folks also muttered inwardly, Tang Hong isn't right in the head, is he? He doesn't latch onto the leg of the Iron family, but has taken some nobody from the mundane world as his boss instead.

This was as if a prince in the ordinary world refused to build friendships with noble sons and ran to call ordinary citizens his brothers instead.

To many, these actions were so idiotic, it was like his brain had been thoroughly smashed by a door.

Except, while these self-styled smart folk may indeed be stronger than Tang Hong in using small tricks and schemes, how many of them possessed his wisdom?

Tang Hong may have a direct personality, but that didn't mean he didn't know how to read people.

He'd formed a friendship with Jiang Chen after fighting him that day. Otherwise, why would he be willing to take Jiang Chen as his boss? It obviously wasn't just because of the bet.

It was because Jiang Chen had easily trampled him in the areas of strength of heart and pills.

He'd even probed him twice in the area of martial dao before entering the Divine Maze Tower and had still failed to gain the upper hand.

This also meant that the secular genius' potential in martial dao was absolutely not inferior to his, and his strength of heart and the dao of pills was far beyond his own.

And this kind of person had come from the mundane world!

A candidate from the ordinary world had easily defeated him in the areas that he was most confident in. Just how strong would he be if he'd been born in the sects?

Tang Hong was forthright, but that didn't mean he was a fool.

His personality may be a tad bit crude, but he had a positive quality in that he wholeheartedly accepted and gave precedence to those truly stronger than him.

Therefore, his acceptance of Jiang Chen as his boss was an action brimming with the truest sincerity.

Aiya!

The door suddenly opened. Taken by surprise, Tang Hong, who was leaning on the doorframe, almost toppled inwards.

"Eh? Boss? You're finally showing your face!" Tang Hong neatly ignored the fact that he'd almost planted his face on the ground and chuckled as he steadied himself, revealing a look of concern for Jiang Chen.

"The outside world is saying that you're done for after being beaten down. What fucking bullshit. Boss, you should go, take a walk, and slap the faces of those sons of b*tches."

Jiang Chen chuckled heartily, "Face slapping, is it? I happen to like that a lot. Come, let's go slap some!"

Tang Hong had been partially joking, and blinked when he saw Jiang Chen taking it seriously. "Slap some faces? Whose?"

"Let's slap whoever shows their face." Jiang Chen was in a great mood.

After a breakthrough and three days of closed door cultivation, he need a place to vent his feelings after such enormous gains.

Slapping whoever shows their face! This was something else alright! Tang Hong was infected with the emotion in Jiang Chen's words and started laughing heartily as well.

"Come, make a trip to the mission area with me."

"Boss, you want to request a mission?" Tang Hong asked.

"Of course. My score won't go up if I don't do a mission." Jiang Chen spoke the truth. Although his plan of grinding out points had been unscrupulously interrupted, that didn't mean that he would give up.

"But they said that they would only let you request seven mission in the pill area each month." Tang Hong still had some anger and frustration in his voice when he mentioned this, plainly still holding a grudge.

"Let's not go to the pill area this time. Let's go to strength of heart." Jiang Chen smiled leisurely.

Tang Hong's eyes lit up as he slapped his thigh. "Yeah, boss! Your strength of heart is even stronger than mine. I don't think there aren't that many in this quadrant who can rival you in terms of strength of heart. Come, I'll keep you company. Are you planning on making trouble in this area now, boss?"

A hint of cold intent flashed through his eyes as Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Hmph. They blacklist me in the pill area, I'll go smack their faces in the strength of heart and let them know that the truly strong have no weaknesses!"

Since you've restricted me in the area of pills, I'll go to the area of strength of heart instead. What can you do about that? Blacklist me again?

It would truly be the greatest joke beneath the heavens if Jiang Chen was blacklisted again.

To use underhanded methods twice because of the rise of a secular genius, those preeminent sect geniuses would really have no face left after that.

"Hells yeah, boss! I'm really looking forward to what expressions the guys who moved against you will have when they find out that you can still farm points in the area of strength of heart."

"I haven't the slightest clue what expression they'll have, and I have no desire to find out. All I know is that they'll have to swallow, mouthful by mouthful, all the shit that they spewed out."

Jiang Chen's tone was icy. He wasn't an easy target for anyone, and wasn't someone who wouldn't be able to live without the four sects.

He was only treating the four sects as a springboard with his participation in the selection. It wasn't that he couldn't do without them, and he certainly wouldn't stop living if he was forced to part with them!

Therefore, having been provoked, Jiang Chen wouldn't play by their rules anymore.

When Jiang Chen once again appeared in the sky quadrant, those gossiping with rumors and speculations all shut up. They discovered that they'd sadly been seedy characters for nothing.

Look at this fellow's aura and spirit! Did he look like he'd been knocked down? Was there any sign of him being done for?

"Hmm? That kid's going to the strength of heart area?"

"Heh heh, he needs to gain some points. After all, he's been banned from the pill area. He needs some points, eh? Otherwise, how ugly will this look?"

"The strength of heart area? Haha, that's the hardest area to farm points."

"Whatever, let's wait for him to make a fool out of himself."

Jiang Chen ignored all those murmurs. Using the truth to slap faces was much more convincing than any length of verbal sparring.

When he arrived in the strength of heart area, no one thought that this point fiend would once again draw back the curtains on the opening act of grinding out points.

Everyone thought it was normal when he finished the level one mission on the first day.

Folks thought his strength of heart wasn't bad after he finished the level two mission on the second.

Some couldn't sit still anymore on the third day because he'd once again completed the mission, easily gaining the forty points of a level three mission.

Many pairs of eyeballs were staring at him from behind on the fourth day, wanting to see him fail. Instead, they lost their eyeballs in shock when he passed.

A level five mission on the fifth day was once again a success.

To the consternation of all who witnessed it, this cycle repeated itself again and again in the strength of heart area. After disappearing for three days, Jiang Chen the point fiend had once again appeared to test the mentalities of the top geniuses, once again testing the psychological pressure they could endure.

Chapter 380: A Meeting of the Most High

Jiang Chen completed three cycles of challenges in a short half month. He could reap 310 points from each advancement of level one to level five. Three cycles of these challenges meant that he'd farmed 930 points. In this way, his scores kept shooting up. Add to that his original 1,640 points, this meant that he had an astonishing 2,750 points a month and a half after setting foot in the sky quadrant! *no ve(LB)1n*

Although this score was still a bit off from those premier geniuses, the difference was within a 1,000 points.

This meant that if Jiang Chen continued with this momentum, his score would reach an eye popping 5,000 points.

This score was absolutely enough to crush all the top geniuses.

The entire quadrant sank into a bewildering atmosphere of panic in an instant.

They felt that this secular genius was a natural shit-stirrer, making everyone quail with fright inside.

“This fellow is here to purposefully kick up a fuss, isn’t he? Will he only be satisfied when he throws the entire sky quadrant into an uproar?”

“Sigh, why would you say this? The pill area has banned him, so it’s normal for him to go to the strength of heart area instead. Your words are a little out of line.”

“What words did I say that are out of line? He’s a secular cultivator, so what right does he have to cockily prance around like this? He’s just purposefully slapping the faces of us sect geniuses!”

“I don’t think he even knows who you are, how would he be able to slap your face? Who the hell are you anyways? Not to mention that he’s farming points whilst keeping a low profile, making use of only his own talents. If you’re that good, you take the field then. Stop mouthing off when you’ve got no abilities yourself.”

If one were to say that Jiang Chen had elicited quite a lot of enmity with his crazy actions in the pill area, then his heaven-defying performance in the heart of strength area had won him a lot of supporters who’d remained neutral before.

A genius who’d exhibited such insane results in both areas was a true genius.

In the world of martial dao, the strong were venerated and respected.

Jiang Chen’s crazy performance had slowly won him respect.

However, this kind of respect mostly came from the candidates ranked in the 50th percentile. Those ranked towards the front, and even the premier geniuses loathed Jiang Chen even more for his performance.

In their eyes, this secular freak genius was absolutely flaunting his abilities at them!

If he was allowed to proceed like this, then everyone’s names would be beneath his feet after a month and they would all be resigned to being left behind in the dust.

In the sky quadrant, Long Juxue stood in her residence with a cold light dancing in her eyes.

“This dumb animal thinks it isn’t enough that he’s been suppressed once? He doesn’t seem afraid of death as he’s stood out once again to claim the limelight. He is seeking death indeed!”

Although those were her thoughts, she vaguely felt that if Jiang Chen was allowed to develop like this, he would become a threat.

“This filthy swine has astounding potential in pills, but what is going on with his strength of heart? What right does the son of a second rate duke have to be possessing such strong strength of heart and farming points in the strength of heart area with ease?”

Long Juxue knew herself that although with her innate constitution, she would at most challenge a level four mission in the heart of strength area. The risks would be great if she took on a level five mission.

For a premier genius at Long Juxue’s level, the differences between each of their rankings were exceedingly small. No one wanted to take the risk to challenge a level five mission.

This was because a level five mission was so difficult that if she accidentally failed it, she would be docked 160 points. This was absolutely unacceptable to a premier genius.

Their rankings would be swiftly left behind if 160 points were deducted in one go.

Therefore, no one had wanted to bring so much strength to bear given that it was only the third cycle of the twelve cycles in three years.

They all wanted to keep their reserves and keep adding to their foundation, bringing it all to bear later on in a sprint.

The premier geniuses had an unspoken accord between them previously, a balance that no one was willing to stand out and break. It wasn’t that they didn’t want to, but that no one had the particular confidence to do so.

However, the appearance of new factor Jiang Chen had completely stirred up the situation of the sky quadrant.

It would be difficult for them to continue holding much in reserve. It was only a matter of time before Jiang Chen surpassed them if they didn’t exert themselves.

There existed differences between the geniuses and there were often small changes in their rankings. This was within a range acceptable to all.

But if Jiang Chen’s insane speed in grinding out points was allowed to continue, he would likely leave everyone far behind in the dust in another three months. By then, it would be impossible to catch up to him.

“Mm? What’s this?” Long Juxue reached out a hand and snatched out a message glyph. A trace of a cold smile appeared on her lips after she opened the glyph. “It looks like that bastard has already aroused public anger. A meeting of the most high? It looks like even the most preeminent geniuses of the sky quadrant can’t continue sitting idly by anymore. This gathering will certainly have something to do with that dumb animal Jiang Chen. I must go and participate!”

A meeting of the most high was a gathering between the most preeminent geniuses in the sky quadrant.

To be frank, it was just a gathering in which the top geniuses came together to shoot the breeze.

However, the requirements necessary to enter this gathering were quite high. Only the top sixteen ranked in the sky quadrant had the right to enter.

The top sixteen mapped to the final sixteen from the selection.

This meant that this gathering of the most high was one in which they'd hardened their hearts to solidify their grip on these top sixteen spots.

Four spots on average were divvied out to each sect, but the actual numbers that fell to each sect weren't that even.

The Purple Sun Sect for instance, occupied a full six of them.

The Precious Tree Sect had four, and the Flowing Wind Sect and Myriad Spirit Sect only had three each.

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Tang Hong had also received an invite to this gathering in his residence.

"A gathering of the most high? The feck is this about? This group of bastards likely can't sit still again and are probably cooking up some scheme against boss."

He still decided to go take a look and discern the situation however. His personality was the sort of being unafraid of the heavens and earth. Even though he knew that it was very likely he'd be ostracized by others if he went, he was still wholly unafraid. He had the mindset of I will still proceed forth boldly even in the face of mountains of blades and oceans of fire, even to cave of a tiger or the lair of a dragon!

Tang Hong ranked solidly in the top three amongst the Precious Tree Sect.

His strength was firmly in the top twelve in the entire sky quadrant, and was sometimes even able to make it into the top ten. Therefore, even if he was a complete jerk, he was someone who wouldn't be ignored in this gathering of the most high.

Otherwise, this gathering would fail to live up to its name.

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In the examiner's area, the examiners had once again gathered together. It was obvious that Jiang Chen's perverse performance had handed them a thorny problem again.

"To think that this secular genius would be such a well-rounded talent. He can grind out points so easily even in the strength of heart area. It looks like we've underestimated this genius."

"Humph, given how things have developed, so what if we've underestimated them? We've already done so once, why worry about doing it again? Just blacklist him again. What can a secular disciple do?" The Purple Sun Sect disciple, Master Shuiyue's junior brother, once again jumped up to hoist high this particular flag.

"Heh heh, such noble words of blacklisting him again." An examiner with a cold expression laughed frostily. "It was already beyond bounds to commit such a shameless act once. How do you plan on stoppering the mouths of all those beneath the heavens if you do so again?"

"Stopper? Is there such a need? The word of the four sects has been the law in the sixteen kingdom alliance since ancient time. Their mouths? The feck is that."

“Alright, your Purple Sun Sect has always been domineering. Since you have so much confidence, blacklist him again then. I opposed this matter before and I still oppose it now. I must say that you’re killing a rising genius.”

“What bullshit genius? If he’s a real genius, why doesn’t he request a mission in the martial dao area? The pills area and strength of heart—only martial dao triumphs in the end. Since he’s unable to display his prowess in the martial dao area, that makes him a fake genius!” Master Shuiyue’s junior brother had a look of disdain on his face.

“There is sense in these words. In the world of martial dao, only strength is the true way. If he cannot prove himself in the area of martial dao, then I feel that he still does not possess enough ability to set foot into the ranks of the top geniuses!”

“Indeed, we cannot dishearten all the top geniuses just for a mere unorthodox genius. It’s said that they’ve even summoned a meeting of the most high this time. It looks like they plan on allying together to suppress this secular freak!”

“This candidate’s potential is indeed astounding, but it’s a pity that he was short sighted and didn’t know to hide his shine in light of the greater picture. He is destined to fall after offending all the top geniuses. What a pity, such a pity.”

The examiner with the cold expression obviously held different opinions from everyone else. He smiled faintly, “You think that he will fall, but I happen to think that he will become the bane of all geniuses.”

“Alright, let’s stop arguing. The key issue we have to decide upon now is just what should we do?” An examiner sitting in the middle asked with a frown.

“No need for further discussion. Blacklist him! Continue to blacklist him!”

“Yes, his actions are an obvious mockery of our authority. We cannot allow this to continue!”

“Just blacklist him already!”

Apart from the examiner with the cold expression, all the other examiners all seemed to share the same opinions. Some of them were dead set on blacklisting Jiang Chen, whereas although a few others felt that it was inappropriate, they still chose to blindly follow the rest.

The examiner’s face was livid and he didn’t speak a word.

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Jiang Chen had also received word from Tang Hong in his residence and knew that the premier geniuses were holding some sort of meeting of the most high.

However, this was of no consequence to Jiang Chen.

Having trained the “Boulder’s Heart” to the twelfth level, he was easily able to handle all varieties of change. His dao heart was as strong as iron and impervious to external interference.

“Humph! A meeting of the most high? A bunch of frogs at the bottom of a well. A mere sixteen kingdom alliance with a tiny bit of holding, and they dare call themselves the most high? What a joke!”

From Jiang Chen's perspective, this was indeed the laughable actions that only a bunch of people with limited outlook were capable of.

"If my speculations are correct, those so-called examiners will be blacklisting me in the strength of heart area as well. Heh heh, it looks like I should make my preparations to go to the comprehensive area next to farm points soon."

He was purposefully evading the martial dao area not because he was afraid, but because he wanted to take a walk through all the other areas before going to the martial dao area.

The moment he deigned to descend upon that area was the moment that all those geniuses would cower beneath his feet!

A beam of bright light suddenly shot out from his eyes.

All sorts of unfair treatment had transformed into an explosive bout of energy, waiting to be released from his body. Once it did, it would turn this sky quadrant upside down!