

Three Realms 471

Chapter 471: An Eight Star Mission

The missions of the Regal Pill Palace ranged from one to ten star, with difficulty ranging from easy to difficult. To the core disciples, there was nothing hard about any missions below five stars, and the rewards were nothing to them either.

Jiang Chen browsed the five star missions and felt that although their rewards were acceptable, it wasn't tempting enough to someone who urgently needed resources like him. He looked at the six star missions but wasn't quite satisfied with them either.

Their rewards didn't whet Jiang Chen's appetite, and these missions were all very time consuming. If he was going to take up long term residence in the sect, then these missions would be rather appropriate. But Jiang Chen had promised Mu Gaoqi that he would go explore the spiritual spring after three months, so he was unable to accept the lengthier missions.

"Are there any more technically difficult ones that take up less time?" Jiang Chen had already walked to the seven star missions as he murmured to himself.

The one in charge of this area was a middle-aged man. He smiled upon hearing this, "There are naturally missions that have a higher technical barrier to them, but I'm afraid that they may not be suited for you young folk."

Jiang Chen hurriedly responded, "They really exist?"

The organizer was surprised, "Are you truly not joking?"

"Truly. If such missions exist, please introduce them to me, Sir Organizer."

The organizer sized Jiang Chen up and laughed, "I won't be able to introduce a few to you, but there's been a few missions that have hung there for quite a while. Many young geniuses have tried them for the rewards, but no one has succeeded even now."

"Mm yes! I want those missions." Jiang Chen was delighted, just because other people don't know how to do them doesn't mean I don't know how to. I, Jiang Chen, am well versed in handling all sorts of difficult matters and problems.

The organizer laughed, "I know of an eight star mission that was posted by a senior elder. The elder had already gained his position when our previous Palace Head held his position. With Sage Dan Chi at the helm now, this elder is now a venerated elder, a top five position in the elder council.

A high position and seniority, this kind of elder would certainly have stunning amounts of wealth and a strong foundation in the sect. The mission that he posted would certainly come with great rewards.

Jiang Chen was immediately interested when he heard it was an eight star mission. He extrapolated that if he completed it, then resources for himself and his followers would be taken care of for the next two years. There was no reason for him to give up such a mission, and he hastily responded, "What mission is this? I want to request this eight star mission."

“I actually don’t know the details, just that a dozen or so have requested it in the last couple of years, but none of them have completed it.”

“This is the one then.” Jiang Chen considered no further.

“Are you sure? Don’t blame me for not reminding you, but those who didn’t complete the mission had quite a tough time from that elder.”

Jiang Chen chuckled, “I’m sure, I’m sure. Hurry and give me the mission.” That others couldn’t didn’t mean that he would fail as well. If it was a pill related mission, Jiang Chen didn’t think there’d be anything that would stump him. As long as it wasn’t a time consuming mission, what problems would he be unable to resolve, hmm?

The organizer handed over the mission medallion to Jiang Chen. “The elder’s mental mark is on here. You only need to infuse it with your own consciousness in order to read the mission content. The mission location, content, requirements as well as the rewards are all on there.”

Jiang Chen slowly left the Hall of Spring and Autumn after receiving the medallion, infusing his consciousness into it. He suddenly grew inwardly stern when his consciousness slammed into the elder’s mental mark.

Mission: Hexarune Dragon Pill

Mission Location: Regal Pill Palace, Hundred Elders Peak, Yun Nie Residence

Mission Requirements: Increase the quality of the refined pills

Mission Rewards: A thousand Origin Fostering Pills, one half sage weapon, and enormous amounts of spirit medicines

Jiang Chen wasn’t concerned with the content of the mission, what he cared about were the rewards. He was immediately tempted upon seeing these rewards.

A thousand Origin Fostering Pills!

One half sage weapon and enormous amounts of spirit medicines!

“He’s a venerated elder alright, now this is truly generous rewards!” Jiang Chen’s heart pounded when he saw these rewards.

This elder had such a high position and had lived so long that he probably treated something like an Origin Fostering Pill as eating stir fried beans. Even three thousand was likely no pressure for him, much less a thousand of them.

A half sage weapon was even more of a great item. Apart from the nameless saber with an unknown rank at the moment, even the weapon modified from the Redscaled Firelizard bone was only of origin level.

The Firelizard was a saint rank creature, which equated to the human origin realm. Only when spirit creatures reached a true saint rank would they be the same as a human sage realm. Spirit creatures didn’t have nascent souls, so they weren’t called origin rank creatures, but saint rank instead.

As for the elder's reward, a half sage weapon was an existence even more amazing than an origin rank weapon. It was a heavenly weapon for a sage realm cultivator.

There wasn't even a number placed on the spirit medicines, just "enormous". What did that indicate? It meant that one could have as much as they wanted. One could see from the rewards that the elder truly valued the Hexarune Dragon Pill.

"Hexarune Dragon Pill?" Jiang Chen went through his prior life's memories, but found no mention of this pill.

"No worries, the methods for pills may vary, but the principle is the same. I will surely be able to analyze the source of what's wrong as soon as I look at the pill recipe of the Hexarune Dragon Pill." Jiang Chen had spent most of his time on divine and heavenly matters in his past life. The Hexarune Dragon Pill wasn't a particularly renowned pill name. It was normal that he didn't remember it.

However, any extraordinary pill would have an enhanced version of it. "Perhaps I studied the enhanced version in my past life. All is a mystery without the recipe. Forget it, let's make a trip first."

Jiang Chen possessed great skill and courage. He decided that he would take the risk once for that tremendous reward. If all failed, he'll just be in for a yelling and possibly even a beating. He was a Regal Pill Palace disciple at the end of the day, he wouldn't be beaten to death just for not completing a mission now, would he?

Jiang Chen felt even less pressure as his thoughts traveled down this path. Elder Yun Nie wasn't one of the elders who'd tried to recruit him before, so there was no conflict between the two.

He didn't meet with any resistance when he entered the Hundred Elders Peak with the mission medallion. However, when the guards saw that it was Elder Yun Nie who'd issued the medallion, they looked at Jiang Chen with looks of surprise intermixed with pity.

It was apparent that Elder Yun Nie's mission was widely famous throughout the sect. Many young disciples had gone to request this mission, but had been discovered that they were just trying their luck.

Elder Yun Nie had given them all a thorough beating for their efforts, leaving them with momentous of black eyes and puffy bruises. Although it didn't lead to any problems, it was still quite embarrassing.

As time went on, everyone knew that this wasn't a mission to request. The disciple would end up being thoroughly worked over if things didn't work out. So when they saw Jiang Chen walk in brimming with confidence, sympathy was written all over the guards' faces.

"Another young man not afraid of being beaten. Heh heh, Old Li, how do you think this kid will be beaten up? Will there be more lumps on his face or his head?"

Another guard sighed. "Old Yu, your eyes have gone dull. The one who's just walked in is Jiang Chen, the one's who's been so famous lately, the genius that the Palace Head himself as anointed. I've heard that he displayed amazing skills in the pill competition with Yan Hongtu. Perhaps he'll be different."

Old Yu laughed, "So what? Elder Yun Nie's mission isn't something that the younger generation can take care of. In my eyes, the kid's still in for a beating."

Jiang Chen paid no heed to the various discussions behind him. However, he roughly understood the elder's temper from the whispers behind him. "It looks like he's an eccentric old man with a rough temper." That was his initial assessment. "However, I appeal to young and old alike, and specialize in taming ornery folks. The old man wants to beat me? Not happening!" His confidence was unstoppable when it came to pills.

Jiang Chen quickly arrived at the entrance of the Yun Nie residence, and the elder's followers quickly blocked his way, only letting him in when they knew he was here for the mission. However, they all inwardly shook their heads when they saw how young Jiang Chen was. Their expressions clearly said, another one for a beating.

Jiang Chen ignored all the various odd looks and walked in unconcernedly. He was attracted by the residence as soon as he set foot inside. He had to admit, the residences of the Rosy Valley were utter trash when compared to the elders' residences.

An expansive home of happiness was flourishing with advanced spirit medicines everywhere. Order reigned in every area, appearing both luxurious and grand.

"Another one for the mission?" Elder Yun Nie walked out when he heard the news.

Both of them were slightly surprised when they saw each other. In Jiang Chen's imagination, this Elder Yun Nie should be a shifty looking, mean and ugly old man. He hadn't thought that the elder would look like a weak scholar, middle aged and appeared quite lonely in his blue robes. He wasn't the run down old man in Jiang Chen's imagination at all, and less apparent that he was a violent elder who liked to beat others.

As for Elder Yun Nie, he was surprised by Jiang Chen's youth. After his habit of beating others traveled, no more young folks dared come try their luck and treat his residence as a tourist stop. He hadn't thought that a ridiculously young one would come by today!

Chapter 472: The Hexarune Dragon Pill

However, Jiang Chen wasn't mesmerized by Elder Yun Nie's appearance. An elder skilled with refining pills wouldn't have any problem at all maintaining his looks. This young looking elder was at least two, three hundred years old. Otherwise, he wouldn't have the seniority of working for two generations of Palace Heads.

"Elder Yun Nie, disciple Jiang Chen is so bold as to come and accept the mission."

Elder Yun Nie rarely ventured outside and never cared much for matters of the outside world. Even though Jiang Chen's name had spread throughout the entire Regal Pill Palace in the past couple of days, he was completely in the dark.

If one had to find ten people who did as they wished in the Regal Pill Palace, this elder would surely rank in the top three. He wouldn't care even if the whole city had been set aflame. There was only pills, refinement, and pill refinement in his life. In addition, he had a particular habit that no one could disturb him when he was refining pills. He also had a standing gag order on gossip and rumors in his residence.

Therefore, his followers all very much kept the rules. No one dared wag their tongues or speculate wildly here.

Elder Yun Nie didn't care that Jiang Chen had introduced himself. He waved his hand, "I don't care what you're called. Tell me, how certain are you?"

This style that cut straight to the point took Jiang Chen a bit off guard. However, he still said, "I need to understand the recipe first."

Elder Yun Nie snorted coldly and waved his hand again, "Come! Drag him out for a beating and throw him out afterwards."

He comes in wanting to look at the recipe straight off the bat! This fellow is even worse than the others! The ones who came before mostly came to take a tour and observe when I refined pills, wanting to learn a thing or two. This fellow is something alright, wanting to look at the recipe! His appetite is quite large! Will the Hexarune Dragon Pill still be an exclusive secret if you go and memorize the recipe?

Therefore, Elder Yun Nie subconsciously felt that Jiang Chen was here to swindle him, to try and snatch his secrets.

Jiang Chen had quite an innocent look on his face, "Please wait, Elder Yun Nie. You should at least give me a reason if you wish to beat or punish me? How do you know I'll be unable to complete this mission?"

Elder Yun Nie snorted derisively, "You've been harboring some sly schemes about my recipes at such a young age. Why should you not be beaten?"

Jiang Chen couldn't help but laugh when he heard this. He'd asked about the pill recipe at the start because he didn't have the slightest intention of stealing the elder's knowledge. He was the reincarnation of a divine pill master, why would he covet this kind of secular recipe? It was because he didn't have this kind of thought that he hadn't thought Elder Yun Nie would be on his guard like this either. When he thought about it carefully, he felt that he'd been rash.

He laughed ruefully, "Elder Yun Nie, I certainly have no intentions of stealing your recipe. How about this, why don't you hide some of the ingredients on the recipe or give me some refining dregs so I can study them? Even if you are worried about me stealing the recipe, I can't attempt to solve this problem of yours without some clues, no?"

Jiang Chen's words made sense as well. Since the elder had posted the mission, he had to offer a venue for candidates to understand the mission, right? Otherwise, how would they complete it?

Elder Yun Nie swept his sharp gaze over Jiang Chen and spread out an arm, saying to his followers, "You are dismissed for now." He wasn't an unreasonable person. After all, his high status of being a venerated elder meant that he naturally couldn't be bothered to argue with a young disciple.

"Go, obtain some refinement dregs." The elder gave further orders as he vanished into his residence. Soon enough, he walked out with a partially redacted pill recipe, handing it over to Jiang Chen. He spoke no further, standing off to the side with crossed arms with a cold smile. It was obvious he wanted to see just what this kid had up his sleeves.

Usually, when the young disciples came by to attempt the mission, they'd be more or less unsure of themselves. Flaws could be easily discerned in their words and gestures. But the young man in front of him was younger than any of them, with none of their doubts discernible. This slightly surprised Elder Yun Nie.

Jiang Chen naturally had the bearing of a master when it came of the dao of pills. When he received the dregs, he sniffed them a few times and turned them over a bit. He even used a finger to pick up a trace and placed it on his tongue for a taste.

The entire process continued for roughly half an hour. A confident smile slowly began appearing on Jiang Chen's face. He didn't even look at the recipe.

"Elder Yun Nie, allow me to guess. This pill's main ingredients should be the Heavenly Net Ganoderma, with the supplemental ingredients Sweethua Grass, Nine Tribulation Mauve Bamboo, juice from the Ancient Moon Cicada, Buddha Water Fruit, Black Tortoise Crabapple..." Jiang Chen listed multiple ingredients in one breath, as if counting off his family's treasures.

He'd purposefully hidden some materials because identifying them would cause him some problems. If he labelled them, his performance would be too perverse and would actually give rise to suspicion. He also knew that offering up these items was enough to elicit true attention from the other.

Indeed, Elder Yun Nie's expression flickered rapidly before he suddenly started laughing loudly, "Not bad, kid! You're a bit interesting."

It was obvious that Jiang Chen's actions had straightened out his image in the elder's eyes, changing the latter's bias against him. "Elder Yun Nie, can I look at the recipe now?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

The elder laughed. "Yes, go ahead! To think you were hiding your talents so deeply, eh? What did you say your name was just now?"

"Elder, his name is Jiang Chen, a genius of the sixteen kingdoms that Sage Dan Chi brought back personally a while ago. The sage one even allied with the Precious Tree Sect in order to recruit him..." A follower immediately stepped forward and summarized Jiang Chen's background.

"The sixteen kingdom alliance?" The elder was faintly surprised, but seemed to accept things when he heard that Sage Dan Chi had personally been involved. "One who could draw the palace head's attention is worthy of his reputation alright. Very good, very good!"

The trusted follower continued, "This disciple competed with Yan Hongtu in the dao of pills, apparently awakening all twelve flames at once, displaying a high mastery of fire. In the competition of pill inspection, he used a unique method to locate all fifteen flaws in the cauldron."

Elder Yun Nie couldn't help but nod. "Very interesting indeed. Palace Head Dan Chi certainly does act quickly and decisively. With his mysterious ways, he almost always makes a surprising move. It looks like recruiting this young genius will be another one of his trademarks." It could be seen that this elder quite respected Palace Head Dan Chi. There wasn't a hint of disrespect towards the sixteen kingdoms in his words from beginning to end.

Jiang Chen's thoughts were wholly on the pill recipe at this time. He analyzed it briefly after handed it, and almost immediately, one of his speculations jumped out as an answer.

“The Hexarune Dragon Pill. Haha, I understand, I’ve got it. There is indeed an advanced version of this pill in the divine realm called the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill. This pill is the most ideal for weathering tribulations. Almost all cultivators can make use of this when they face tribulation upon important breakthroughs. This isn’t the most outstanding of its type, but certainly a fine product. The Hexarune Dragon Pill should be related, but it’s noticeably a pared down version. It’s shrunk greatly whether in terms of effects or materials.”

“With its name of Hexarune, its effects should be less than one tenth of the Ennearune Pill.” Jiang Chen had come to this conclusion after analyzing the materials.

It was much easier for Jiang Chen to understand this pill once he identified the original that it was based off of. He quickly ran through the refinement process and several important issues of the pill in his mind. When he’d organized his thoughts, he was utterly confident in what he was about to say.

“Elder Yun Nie, this pill should be medicine for weathering tribulations, correct?” Jiang Chen chuckled.

The elder was astonished and looked at Jiang Chen, visibly moved. A thick sense of surprise was in his eyes. “How do you know?”

“According to my analysis of the materials and the structure of this pill, I feel that many materials within this pill aim to clear internal demons, purify the body, resist external disasters, and protect the physical body. When so many ingredients are thus mixed together, this should be the main direction of the pill.” Jiang Chen offered his judgment.

Elder Yun Nie was flabbergasted. A ridiculous notion suddenly blossomed in his mind at this moment. He actually thought that maybe the question that had troubled him for quite some time would be resolved by this young man.

“Have you seen this pill before?” Even the elder found his question ludicrous when he asked it, because there was no possibility such a pill existed in the sixteen kingdoms.

Jiang Chen shook his head. “No, I haven’t.”

The elder continued, “The process always occurs quite smoothly when I refine this pill, but the quality of the finished product is always just a little bit unsatisfactory. The resulting pills are barely up to par, but at most of lower rank. To be honest, calling it lower rank is also a stretch. I just don’t understand why the quality of the pill never improves when I’ve followed the recipe exactly, with no mistakes occurring in the process and no ingredient substitutions?”

This question had troubled the elder for twenty, nearly thirty years. It could be said that this mission had existed before Jiang Chen’s current body had been born.

However, no one had been able to solve it. Elder Yun Nie had tried to refine it five times over the years and always failed. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to keep trying, but that the costs for producing the Hexarune Dragon Pill were too high. Collecting each ingredient required enormous effort and money. It wasn’t an easy task for him even with his status and wealth.

Therefore, although he had the ingredients for a sixth try, he didn’t dare begin. He was too afraid of failure. Repeated failures had deeply impacted his confidence, and although he controlled his emotions well, Jiang Chen could more or less see a hint of anxiety from Elder Yun Nie’s words.

“Elder Yun Nie is so troubled by this pill that he barely pays attentions to sect affairs. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have had no reaction to my name.” Jiang Chen mused. His name was quite famous during this time, and it was tied to Sage Dan Chi. Anyone of the Regal Pill Palace should know of him, but this elder hadn’t the slightest clue. It was apparent that his life had been consumed by this pill.

Chapter 473: Pill Refinement Pointers

Elder Yun Nie’s words gave Jiang Chen a few ideas, but he was in no hurry to express them. He smiled faintly. “Elder, the success or failure of refining pills is determined by the details. As such, I don’t dare jump to any conclusions before seeing your refining process. However, the act of observing your refining is maybe be suspect if I intend to copy your techniques. Therefore, it is up to the elder’s say if this kid can observe your refinement.”

Jiang Chen was neither hurried or panicked. He wasn’t in a rush now that he’d successfully captured the elder’s attention. There was no more need to go banging on the door. All he had to do was pretend to be demure and wait for the elder to come beg him.

If the elder felt that his refining process was a classified secret, then this kind of paranoid person wasn’t worth working with. Jiang Chen naturally didn’t need to beg this elder for crumbs. Jiang Chen believed that as long as the elder still bore a shred of hope for the Hexarune Dragon Pill, he would absolutely be willing to take this risk. Not to mention that Jiang Chen was a Regal Pill Palace disciple after all. Even if he was to learn something from Elder Yun Nie’s refining process, the benefits would stay within the same house.

Elder Yun Nie’s gaze was profound as he listened to Jiang Chen’s words, looking meaningfully into this young disciple’s eyes. He suddenly smiled brilliantly, “Don’t suspect a man you use, don’t use a man you suspect. Palace Head Dan Chi is willing to bet the future of the sect on you. Even if I am inferior to Dan Chi, what harm is there in betting a mere recipe?”

Elder Yun Nie’s easygoing attitude made Jiang Chen’s heart lighten. He was worried that this elder would have an ornery temper and was suspicious of everyone’s motives. He hadn’t thought that Elder Yun Nie would be so forthright and agree so easily.

“It looks like I’ve rather underestimated this elder’s temperament. Maybe those disciples who were beaten had expressed themselves poorly, disappointing the elder?” Jiang Chen could also see that the importance Elder Yun Nie placed on this pill had exceeded everything.

The pill refining room.

Jiang Chen followed Elder Yun Nie in to find that this refining room was on a completely different level than those in the sixteen kingdom alliance. The ones here were already starting to make use of formations.

“Mm, the Regal Pill Palace is a premier sect in the Myriad Domain alright. They’re already begun to introduce formations into their pill refining. Not bad, not bad.” Jiang Chen’s gaze swept across the room, piercing through the mysteries of this formation. However, his face stayed unchanged as he followed the elder serenely.

The elder was rather surprised to see Jiang Chen's calm demeanor. A disciple from the sixteen kingdoms isn't the slightest bit taken aback to see my refining formations? He doesn't even seem to be pretending to understand. Could he possibly know about this formation?"

Now that his thoughts had reached this point, Elder Yun Nie was seized by the urge to test Jiang Chen. "Jiang Chen, what do you think of this refining room?"

How would Jiang Chen not understand the elder's intentions? He smiled, responding, "I've never seen this kind of refining room in my life before. The sixteen kingdoms alliance do not have this kind of resources." His words were precisely chosen, only saying that he'd never seen it in this life before. Elder Yun Nie would naturally not pick up the key point in Jiang Chen's response.

"Do you know what the glyphs around the cauldron mean?" The elder continued to probe. Jiang Chen found it funny. You want to test me with such a crude formation? But he knew it wasn't the time to show off.

He laughed humbly and said, "This is likely a formation glyph used to create a formation that can supplement pill refining. I've only heard of this from the elders in the sect. This is the Regal Pill Palace alright! My horizons have been greatly broadened."

Since you want to probe me, I'll respond by feeding your ego. In reality, this level of a refining formation was far from satisfactory in Jiang Chen's eyes. But how could he say something like this?

Elder Yun Nie was naturally overjoyed at hearing this.

"Elder Yun Nie, shall we begin?" Jiang Chen didn't want to waste any more time.

The elder hesitated for a moment, but nodded, "There's nothing to gain from dragging this on. Jiang Chen, the materials I have on hand can only refine three pills at the most. If all three of these chances fail, then I have no idea when I might collect all the ingredients for the pill again."

Jiang Chen knew what the elder meant. He was telling Jiang Chen that he didn't have many chances to waste! Jiang Chen thought for a moment and nodded, "Elder Yun Nie, if you don't mind, can you describe the previous steps you've taken? Don't leave out a single detail in the process or switch the order of the steps you took."

They'd all ended in failures anyway, the elder wasn't particularly hesitant in sharing his experiences. He summarized what he'd done before, with Jiang Chen interrupting at key moments to clarify things.

Although the Hexarune Dragon Pill was on a completely different level than the Ennearune Pill, the core principles stayed the same. As such, since Jiang Chen had refined the latter in his past life, he wasn't that unfamiliar with the lesser version of the pill. He had a good idea of the process after listening to Elder Yun Nie's explanation.

This pill was actually less than a tenth of the difficulty of the Ennearune Pill. Jiang Chen thought for a moment and came to an initial conclusion of the elder's problem. Whether it was the Hexarune or Ennearune, the key matter lay in carving runes into the pill. The runes would change the effects of the pill within, and the act of carving the runes would stimulate the medicine effects inside and increase the pill's quality.

Carving the runes required heavenly fire, and the Hexarune Dragon Pill required six kinds of heavenly fire to purify the pill in preparation for rune carving. This was precisely where the elder's problem lay.

The Hexarune Dragon Pill had six supplemental ingredients that melded with the main ingredient to coalesce the essence into one pill. If there was an error in the order of the fires, it would impact the quality of the pill. When it came down to it, the order of each ingredient and fire was highly crucial to the process.

These details were the key to success.

Elder Yun Nie had paid careful attention to the details but had still overlooked the matter of order. He had put all the supplemental ingredients in at the same time when he should have done so successively. The ordering of the fires would depend on how he'd placed in the ingredients.

If something was awry with the order, then the subtle processes within the pill cauldron would be thrown into chaos as well. Once this happened, it would be very difficult to produce an upper rank pill.

It wasn't an issue with the ingredients or the fires, but the core techniques of the pill refiner.

"Elder Yun Nie, I have some thoughts after analyzing this recipe and your refining dregs. They might be of some use to you." Jiang Chen couldn't very well open up with blatant criticism, so he started off with a very roundabout tone first.

"Please, go ahead." The elder had started using the word "please" at some unknown point.

"The Hexarune Dragon Pill conducts in six heavenly fires in accordance with six supplemental ingredients. There is likely a certain precedence that should be observed in this to ensure that the combination of materials and pills reached a perfect level..."

Elder Yun Nie's body trembled with Jiang Chen's words, as if a bolt of lightning had cleaved into his consciousness, opening a crack in the obstacle of his thinking. He had been deeply disturbed by this question because his level of knowledge hadn't reached the step requisite to comprehend the issue. When Jiang Chen pointed things out, the arrival of inspiration offered him spontaneous enlightenment.

"Right, that's right! Why hadn't I thought of this before?" His eyes sparkled with great agitation as he began to start the preparations.

"Elder, your mind and heart are not settled. It's not the most ideal timing to fire up the cauldron at this time. I recommend meditating for a bit and calming your heart before refining the pill."

Elder Yun Nie was slightly startled. This young man had such strong observation skills and his every word encompassed great reason. How was this the breadth of mind a young man was supposed to have?

Sitting down cross legged, meditation, calming the heart, lighting the fire for the cauldron...

Elder Yun Nie had actually gone through the motions many times, so he was well versed with these steps. It was only when he added in the supplemental ingredients that he felt a bit nervous.

This time, Jiang Chen spoke up at appropriate moments and had the elder place in an ingredient every fifteen minutes, conducting one type of heavenly fire each time he did so. These fires had been collected from their source and was being added through the formation.

When Jiang Chen saw this, he was also contemplative, “It looks like the pill masters of the Regal Pill Palace aren’t particularly gifted in controlling fire. Although it’s good to conduct the fire through the formation, it’s best if the pill master can do so himself. This would perfect the details more and enable them to exercise more control over the process. Emergency measures can be taken too in case of accident.”

These were all just asides. If nothing untoward happened, conducting the fire through the formation and with his own hands were all the same. However, a truly genius pill master would never use a formation for something he could do himself.

Time passed slowly.

Jiang Chen slightly called upon his God’s Eye, observing the minute changes in this cauldron. He had a feeling that the elder wouldn’t fail this time. Even if he didn’t succeed in a supreme rank pill, he would at least produce a mid, even upper rank pill.

Elder Yun Nie seemed to have this feeling as well, that things were a bit different from his previous failures. He couldn’t voice his emotions adequately at all.

Smoke finally started pluming from the top of the cauldron as the fire went out. An alluring fragrance of medicine started wafting out continuously from the cauldron.

Elder Yun Nie couldn’t wait and yanked the cover off the pill cauldron. A lustrous and resplendent Hexarune Dragon Pill abruptly appeared.

“Upper rank.” Jiang Chen immediately made this pronouncement after a flick of his eyes.

1. The Chinese characters used for “my life” here mean “in this life”

Chapter 474: Rewards After Pill Formation

Elder Yun Nie was excited beyond words and decided to take advantage of this streak to refine more pills. But perhaps to his agitation at producing an upper rank pill for the first time, he let slip a tiny flaw into his refining and ended up producing a mid rank pill on his second try.

By the time he’d begun the third attempt, he’d regained his equilibrium and followed his tempo from the first refining attempt, producing another upper rank Hexarune Dragon pill.

Although a supreme rank pill hadn’t made an appearance, two upper and one mid rank pill were far beyond Elder Yun Nie’s expectations. Before Jiang Chen’s appearance, his wish had only been to refine a satisfactory lower rank pill. But now, his accomplishments had exceeded his wildest dreams.

“Congratulations to Elder Yun Nie!” Jiang Chen didn’t lust after these pills at all. For one, he had no use for them at his current stage of cultivation. For another, he could easily refine the same if he collected enough materials. Moreover, he had a thirty to forty percent surety of producing supreme rank pills. However, judging from the elder’s delighted, face splitting smile, Jiang Chen knew that the elder was very satisfied with this time’s haul.

Since he was, he should pay up with his rewards? At the end of the day, that's all Jiang Chen really cared about.

"Hahaha, Jiang Chen, you have the honor of claiming the greatest achievement in this task of refining this Hexarune Dragon Pill. I've heard that you are very talented in controlling fire and inspecting cauldrons. Well? Want to hop out of the Rosy Valley and come to my Herbal Hall?" Elder Yun Nie may not usually set foot outside, but he was the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall, the true holder of its reins.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly when he heard this hall's name. His name was likely anathema in that hall at the moment. He really had declined too many elders who'd come to recruit him.

"What is it?" Elder Yun Nie saw Jiang Chen's wry smile. "Does my little friend look down on the Herbal Hall?"

Jiang Chen hastily shook his head. "I would never dare. It's just that my reputation must be akin to mud in the Herbal Hall right now. Heading over there would just put me in the limelight as public enemy number one."

"What makes you say that?" The elder was completely baffled. He'd been at home lately and hadn't inquired about matters in the outside world. As for the Herbal Hall elders failing in their recruiting, it was an embarrassing matter to begin with, so they wouldn't publicize it either. This was why Elder Yun Nie was completely unaware of the ripples Jiang Chen had caused.

Jiang Chen was straightforward and quickly recounted the various visits from the elders seeking to recruit him.

Elder Yun Nie couldn't help but guffaw as Jiang Chen went over his recent experiences. Soon after though, he started to curse vociferously, "Those bastards with an eye to the future! It was a good thing that you weren't recruited by them. Otherwise, you would've never gone to request a mission at the Hall of Spring and Autumn and I would still be sitting here wondering if my pill would ever be refined. It seems the strings of fate work in mysterious ways." Elder Yun Nie's laughter was still ringing through the air as he shouted, "Come! Bring out the rewards I've long left in storage!"

His followers quickly brought out the rewards. A thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills—much higher than Mu Gaoqi's pills. Five half sage weapons that Jiang Chen could have his pick of.

"I uphold my word, Jiang Chen. These weapons have all come from various daoists in the Myriad Domain. I have no need for them, so take your pick."

Jiang Chen didn't bother deliberating, and immediately picked up a bow and its accompanying quiver of arrows. The bow had a vibrant golden body, an almost domineering feeling emanating off it.

"Haha, this is Sunpiercer. Although officially classified as a half sage weapon, its power can easily rival that of a once or twice refined sage realm weapon." Elder Yun Nie smiled.

Jiang Chen quite liked the bow and returned the smile, "Then this disciple will be so bold as to ask for this bow."

Elder Yun Nie was truly in a fantastic mood. "You can come collect the spirit medicine rewards whenever you need them. Take whatever you can find in my storage. As for now, come come come, let's chat for a

while. You can pick out some medicines before you go back.” The successful refining of the Hexarune Dragon Pill had cleared many years worth of the elder’s internal demons. He was naturally in high spirits, feeling that life was just so wonderful.

Elder Nie Yun’s followers were flabbergasted at his generosity. However, when they remembered that Jiang Chen had helped the elder resolve his issue of many years, the seeds of envy that normally would’ve taken root were banished. In fact, they came to the silent conclusion that they definitely needed to cultivate a good relationship with Jiang Chen. Judging from this young man’s position, he was bound to become a frequent guest of the elder. Now, not only did Palace Head Dan Chi look favorably on him, the elder owed him a favor. He was bound to become an influential force in the future. There was no time like the present to fawn up to him. After all, when he truly came into his own, becoming a pinnacle existence within the sect, it would be too late then.

Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t decline the elder’s goodwill after he’d received his rewards and saw that the elder wanted to treat him some more. He accompanied the elder on a tour of his residence.

With his recent actions, Jiang Chen had certainly offended many of the Herbal Hall elders. Although he didn’t know what position Elder Yun Nie held in the Herbal Hall, he was sure it was a position of some clout. Otherwise, the elder wouldn’t have wanted him to join the Herbal Hall.

“Jiang Chen ah, I must thank you for resolving my age old internal demons. With this upper rank pill, I have more confidence in assailing the earth sage realm.” Elder Yun Nie opened his heart to Jiang Chen, sighing emotionally.

“Then this kid will congratulate the elder’s success in advance!” Jiang Chen said sincerely.

“Haha, you’d be the person who’s rendered the greatest service if I can attain the earth sage realm. Oh right, Jiang Chen, it looks like you don’t know that much about the Regal Pill Palace. Has Palace Head Dan Chi not explained the matters of the sect to you?”

Jiang Chen responded seriously, “The Palace Head has given me a general gist, but he may wish for me to personally experience the minor details.”

Elder Yun Nie nodded, “The Palace Head has great vision and ambition. He’s less than a hundred years old, whereas I am almost three hundred years old. But if we look at the history of the Regal Pill Palace in the past three hundred years, the person I respect the most is still Palace Head Dan Chi.”

Elder Yun Nie paused when he finished, then continued to speak, “If you weren’t someone that Sage Dan Chi values, I really might not have been at ease letting you try today.”

Jiang Chen smiled, he knew that Elder Yun Nie was speaking the truth. From his perspective, it was normal to be suspicious of a young man.

“Jiang Chen, allow me to introduce myself. I, Yun Nie, am an elder personally appointed by the last Palace Head. When Sage Dan Chi took the position, he raised me to the position of venerated elder. Currently, the elder council has three venerated elders, and I’m one of them. I oversee the Herbal Hall and Elder Jin Gu supervises the Hall of Spring and Autumn, which leaves the extremely reclusive Elder Lian Cheng in charge of the Hall of Might.”

Jiang Chen was slightly startled to hear this. "So you are the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall! This kid is truly ignorant and hopes that the elder will forgive me for any discourtesy."

Elder Yun Nie waved his hand, smiling, "Don't you put on that act with me. You even dared to decline invitations from eight Herbal Hall elders! Although I'm the Hallmaster, my face is not necessarily more than all of them combined!"

"Elder, you jest." Jiang Chen hastened to say. Then, he spoke seriously, "This kid has a naturally lazy disposition and felt that there would be too many restrictions involved in being a medicine boy for the elders. This is why I declined them."

That was at least part of the truth.

Being a medicine boy honestly meant that he was just an errand boy to be ordered to run hither and thither. Jiang Chen's personality was undisciplined, and he'd never had the habit of running errands for others, not in this life or his past.

"It's right that you declined them." Elder Yun Nie laughed. "One can only blame them for lack of vision, treating a supreme genius as you as a mere ordinary pill genius. I still stand by my words; the doors to the Herbal Hall are always open to you if you wish to come here. I promise that no one will dare suppress, seek revenge on, or even ostracize you for previous matters."

"The most important thing is that your potential in the dao of pills is incredibly high. The Hall of Healing usually has many pill refining missions, with correspondingly rich rewards. If you take on those missions using the identity of a Herbal Hall pill master, it would allow you to amass a great deal of resources quickly. I suspect you're greatly in need of resources, what with your recent arrival to the Regal Pill Palace. Otherwise, you wouldn't have come to request the eight star mission from me, would you?" Elder Yun Nie was indeed taking Jiang Chen into his confidence. It was rare for one in his position to speak so frankly to a young man, but it demonstrated how much he valued the disciple in front of him.

Jiang Chen nodded, "Jiang Chen will surely remember the elder's great favor for me. If I am to join any hall in the future, my first choice will surely be the Herbal Hall." He had yet to clearly understand the intricate balance within the sect, so he wasn't in a hurry to join any halls. Even the knowledge that the Herbal Hall was one of the top three halls in the sect didn't move him.

Elder Yun Nie's gaze was profound as he looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen, nodding slightly a moment after. A true genius was supposed to be like this, not making decisions lightly. He should retain a clear head at all times, unswayed by passing temptations. Jiang Chen's actions lived up to Elder Yun Nie's expectations.

"I am filled with more and more admiration for Sage Dan Chi's eye for talent. Hidden as you were in the sixteen kingdoms, he was still able to uncover a beautiful gem. I am truly in awe! Jiang Chen, do your best not to disappoint Sage Dan Chi. We both share a common goal when it comes to supporting the Palace Head." Elder Yun Nie spoke a few words of encouragement.

Suddenly, one of his followers walked in from outside. "Elder Linghu of the Herbal Hall has come to visit."

Elder Linghu? Jiang Chen immediately thought of the elder who'd tried to recruit him. Linghu Xian had been the first to visit.

Elder Yun Nie waved his hand, "Tell him I'm refining pills and won't be seeing him." The follower nodded and walked back outside.

The elder snorted lightly, "All of them want to make use of a backdoor, how ridiculous! They can put all that scheming to rest as long as I am in charge of the Herbal Hall. Jiang Chen, this Linghu Xian should've been one of the elders who tried to recruit you?"

Jiang Chen nodded, not denying things.

"Do you know why he's come to visit?"

Jiang Chen shook his head, at a loss. Judging from Elder Yun Nie's tone, it was for an important matter. Linghu Xian likely wanted to make use of a personal relationship to accomplish his own goals. However, Elder Yun Nie had his own principles and would never let anyone do that.

Chapter 475: The Allusion of the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage

"Linghu Xian isn't the first to visit, nor will he be the last." Elder Yun Nie sighed lightly. "There are approximately twenty elders in the Herbal Hall, and roughly half of them have been by. This is the second time Linghu Xian has come. Jiang Chen, he must've tried to recruit you for this."

"Oh? What for?" Jiang Chen was rather curious now.

"All of this has to do with the quota for the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles." Elder Yun Nie sighed again. "There a mountain called Rippling Mirage in the Myriad Domain, known for producing spirit herbs. The mountain was previously under royal control, but controversy has arisen over its jurisdiction since the Myriad Domain Empire was destroyed. The various sects have fought endlessly over it, but still cannot settle the matter of ownership. It's remains unsettled even today, but the spirit herbs produced by the mountain sorely tempt all the great factions in the Myriad Domain. They often fight over this resource, resulting in many fatalities and injuries. The sects all felt that things couldn't continue this way, and so came to the agreement that a gathering of pill battles would be held every thirty years, with the results of the battles determining the quota of each sect allowed into the mountain."

Jiang Chen had never heard of what Elder Yun Nie was speaking of. It was apparent that the four great sects of the sixteen kingdoms didn't have the right to participate in such a matter.

"Within the Myriad Domain, the six of us fourth rank sects have always been the strongest and the main force behind the Pill Battles. There are twenty other fifth rank sects with the right to participate, but the quota allotted to them is only half of the fourth rank sects'. As for the sixth rank sects, they have no right to even ask about the happenings, with the same going for those beyond the sixth ranks. Therefore, everyone is keeping a nervous eye on the quota for the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles. Our Regal Pill Palace only has eight slots as well."

Elder Yun Nie smiled, "Eight slots may seem a lot, but the relationships within the sect are complicated and intersecting. It's not as easy task to divvy up the eight slots. The Herbal Hall is in charge of pill refinement and spirit herbs cultivation to being with, so it naturally falls to me to decide who fills the eight slots."

Jiang Chen suddenly understood everything. The list of who would participate was held in Elder Yun Nie's hands. It was up to his say so who went and who didn't. It wasn't hard to understand then why the Herbal Hall elders wanted to call upon their personal relationships.

"Eight slots is a good sum. Although there are many Herbal Hall elders, not all of their strength is the same, correct? Just pick the best ones." Jiang Chen responded.

"Only four of the eight will be given out to the Herbal Hall elders, the remaining four must go to the younger generation. The elders must've wanted to bring you along to the Pill Battles to increase their chances of victory. However, they have yet to actually obtain a spot, so wasn't at leisure to tell you some things. It can be seen from this point that they still think highly of your potential in the dao of pills."

"This is to say that the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles is conducted via one elder bringing one younger disciple? Four elders pairing off with four younger pill masters?"

Elder Yun Nie creased his face into a smile and nodded, "What do you say, are you interested? My Regal Pill Palace has always been amongst the top when it came to this, and as the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall, I'm bound to participate. If you're willing to go, I'll leave my partner spot open to you."

Elder Yun Nie spoke interestedly, hints of encouragement and anticipation in his eyes. "Jiang Chen, you must know that if your ranking veers towards the front in the Pill Battles, you'll be able to enter Mt. Rippling Mirage to pick spirit herbs. You can pick as much as you want in ten days, with half of it going to the sect, and the other half to you. What do you think? Think about it some."

Since Rippling Mirage was the most sophisticated land producing spirit herbs in the Myriad Domain, there was bound to be plenty of treasure in it. Jiang Chen knew that Elder Yun Nie was tempting him, but still couldn't keep his heart from pounding with temptation.

"Jiang Chen, I had planned on reserving this spot for other young geniuses in the sect before you'd appeared. The spots are limited, hmm?" Elder Yun Nie's expression was like he was holding a lollipop and trying to tempt a little child.

Jiang Chen sighed. "Alright, Elder Yun Nie, I confess I've been persuaded. When will the Pill Battles be held?"

"Once every thirty years, so that makes it another seven to eight months before the next one takes place. Competition for the slots wouldn't have been so fierce otherwise."

Seven to eight months? Jiang Chen made some quick calculations and felt that there was no problem to make it to the Pill Battles if all went well with his exploration of the spring with Mu Gaoqi. "Jiang Chen is beyond grateful for the elder's great favor." Jiang Chen's intentions were to accept this spot with his words.

Elder Yun Nie waved his hand, "I don't like to hear polite words. What you are to do is to deploy your abilities to the utmost and bring glory to the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. I've heard that the other fourth rank sects have recruited and emphasized the training of many pill geniuses over the past thirty years, preparing to make a stunning showing in this time's Pill Battles. Although our sect has always performed well and taken the lead, many unknown factors exist in the younger generation. If

those sects particularly emphasize the cultivation of the young disciples, fierce competition may arise in this time's Pill Battles. My Regal Pill Palace was established on basis of pills, and if we lose our advantage in this area, that will greatly affect our development plans in the future.”

The Regal Pill Palace's greatest advantage lay in the dao of pills. If the younger generation of another sect outstripped them in this area, then their advantages would be continuously whittled away until the other sects overtook them. This was what the Regal Pill Palace never wanted to see.

Elder Yun Nie was most worried about this. Because the Regal Pill Palace had always led the pack in the area of pills, many of the senior executives were used to this kind of advantage. The long accustomed psychological advantage had caused the young disciples in the Regal Pill Palace to constantly think themselves superior in the arena of pills. They no longer had the motivation and drive as they did before, placing more emphasis on martial dao.

Although this wasn't a bad thing, it also wasn't good thing for the Regal Pill Palace to maintain its advantage in pills. The other sects in the Myriad Domain have greatly valued the development of the dao of pills in the last hundred years, obviously not wanting the Regal Pill Palace to have a monopoly in this field. The development of pills was like other matters, one must forge ahead against of the current or be driven back.

If the Regal Pill Palace remained complacent in its past glory and advantages, continuing to make its daydreams of the top sect in pills, then one day, it would be surpassed.

Jiang Chen understood Elder Yun Nie's concern as well. He had only just entered the Regal Pill Palace, but he too could tell that the younger generation of the sect was far more infatuated with martial dao than pills.

It wasn't a bad culture to have, but something that had to be paid attention to in a sect that valued their expertise with pills such as the Regal Pill Palace. But of course, these were all matters for the senior executives to worry about. Jiang Chen knew that he didn't have to express any opinions on this matter.

However, he was quite interested in this Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battle. To be able to have his pick of resources for ten days straight! The very thought set Jiang Chen's blood boiling. And to think he was worrying about resources. If he could ravage the mountain for ten days, then maybe he wouldn't have to worry about resources for the next ten, twenty years!

The various sects wouldn't be so crazy over Mt. Rippling Mirage if its resources weren't that rich either. Jiang Chen could absolutely imagine that it was a cornucopia for spirit herbs.

“Alright Jiang Chen, keep the Pill Battle slot a secret for now. Let's go haul your spirit medicines.” Elder Yun Nie was something alright. He didn't say pick or grab, but used the word haul. That meant that whatever Jiang Chen wanted, he would have.

A few more traces of respect grew in Jiang Chen's mind towards the elder when he heard this. Those who could become a great personage like a Hallmaster had uncommon bearing indeed. One could see from this reward and the slot for the Pill Battles that the elder was truly “trusting those he used, and not using those he didn't trust.”

Jiang Chen was stunned by the heaps and piles of spirit medicines and herbs when he visited the residence's storage. Even though Elder Yun Nie had told him to take what he would, Jiang Chen wouldn't have really cleaned the place out. He targeted his efforts to taking a portion that would be enough for him and his followers to use for a year.

Having resolved his resource shortage for a year after leaving the Yun Nie residence, Jiang Chen was in great spirits and felt that life in a sect was rather interesting after all.

"Sage Dan Chi, Elder Yun Nie... I can tell that the two are very much alike. The Regal Pill Palace didn't climb to its current position through luck. With these kinds of characters holding down the fort, the Regal Pill Palace won't have to worry about its fortunes for the next hundred of years."

One had to say, Jiang Chen had a great impression of the elder after spending less than a day with him. The outside world was rampant with rumors of how mean-spirited and vicious he was, how much he would beat people, but it seemed that those were only baseless rumors after all. One who was able to give him one of the Pill Battle slots the first time they met, possessed a kind of demeanor and charisma that was worthy of Jiang Chen's admiration.

When he walked out in glory from the Hundred Elders Peak, the guards all looked at each other with skepticism on their faces. He naturally knew the reason behind their reactions, but just smiled and passed them by.

The guards were completely baffled by Jiang Chen's carefree figure. "No way! Did this kid not go to Elder Yun Nie's residence?"

"That's impossible! If he didn't enter any residence and just strolled around in such an important place as the Hundred Elders Peak, the patrol would have caught him a long time ago."

"That's true. Since he went in and requested Elder Yun Nie's mission, how would he not have suffered a beating? He even looks really happy?"

Old Li, who'd been on duty when Jiang Chen had first entered the Hundred Elders Peak, smiled with pride. "Look at that, I've got the true eye for talent here! I told you guys that Jiang Chen is a pill genius, and that things may be different this time. It turns out I was right! Hahaha, I admire myself more and more!"

The other guards were speechless, they really didn't understand what was going on. Could it be that Jiang Chen really finished the mission? But why did this all look so unreal? An eight star mission that no one had completed in twenty, thirty years had been taken care of by a young man who'd just entered the sect?

Chapter 476: Breakthrough, Peak of Second Level Origin Realm

Jiang Chen immediately entered closed door cultivation to refine pills when he arrived back at his residence. The resources from Elder Yun Nie temporarily allowed him to cast off poverty, bidding a fond farewell to being poor.

He was refining Spirit Consolidation Pills for Gouyu this time. Although Mu Gaoqi had given him quite a few, Jiang Chen wasn't satisfied with their quality, and truth be told, they didn't come in enough quantity either.

When he saw how the geniuses of the Regal Pill Palace treat the Spirit Consolidation Pills like one would rice, and the comparative poverty of his followers as they struggled through the sixteen kingdoms, Jiang Chen had realized how his new sect raised geniuses. Those who specialized in the civil subjects were poor, and those in the martial, rich. The gap between the poor and the wealthy in this world of martial dao wasn't just an ordinary gap at all.

Take Gouyu and the others for instance, their potential wasn't low at all. They weren't the least bit inferior to most of the geniuses in the Regal Pill Palace. The only reason their cultivation level was far below their peers was due to their lack of resources. This time, Jiang Chen would thoroughly take care of this gap in resources.

He emerged from closed door cultivation after half a month, bringing out a thousand Spirit Consolidation Pills. At minimum, they were upper rank pills, and a tenth of them were even supreme rank pills.

Jiang Chen doled them out according to each person. Gouyu, Xue Tong, and all the other followers received two hundred each, as did Tang Hong. As for Lian Canghai and the others, he only gave them ten.

As the saying went, do not reveal one's wealth. Those who weren't his closest friends naturally wouldn't have the right to enjoy these benefits. If it wasn't out of consideration for Lordmaster Ye Chonglou, he wouldn't have spared a thought on those three.

With these two hundred Spirit Consolidation Pills, Jiang Chen believed that his people wouldn't have to worry about resources until they reached the peak of the spirit realm. Particularly Tang Hong, he had already reached the sky spirit realm, and these pills may allow him to enter the ranks of spirit king and assail the origin realm.

Jiang Chen had to admit that compared to the Regal Pill Palace, the Precious Tree Sect had simply pathetic levels of resources! Even that Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn was at most worth twenty Spirit Consolidation Pills, and only the preeminent geniuses being worthy of using them. In the Regal Pill Palace, any elder could easily refine several thousand Spirit Consolidation Pills, with any young genius of talent possessing the ability to refine their own.

One had to say, a seventh rank sect such as the Precious Tree Sect was more than ten times inferior than the Regal Pill Palace in terms of resources.

When Gouyu and the others received the pills, it was like a fish introduced to water. Their cultivation exploded into action. Gouyu even started her assault on the sky spirit realm.

Jiang Chen didn't relax either. There were still two months or so until his agreement with Mu Gaoqi. He would naturally not fall behind on his training.

"Only when I entered the origin realm did I learn that my distance from the top geniuses of this world is still that broad. I will never be weaker than others in this life!" Jiang Chen tossed a crystal core from hand to hand. He decided to start refining the core of the Redscaled Firelizard. An origin level core was enough to make his cultivation level fly forward in a short amount of time.

He estimated that the Firelizard had been of the earth origin realm when it was alive. This core would allow him to charge into earth origin realm in a short amount of time. Add the Origin Fostering Pills into the mix, and Jiang Chen could realistically set his sights on attaining the sky origin realm in three years. Although he was only first level origin realm now, he was confident that his predicted time frame was all he needed to overcome six levels of cultivation.

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Refining the Firelizard core was a long and arduous process, taking over a full month of Jiang Chen's concentrated effort. As he refined the core, the Firelizard's powerful origin power surged through his body, surrounding and nourishing his nascent soul. The film that lay over first level origin realm was torn apart as Jiang Chen soared to the peak of second level origin level!

"The Firelizard core actually holds more than ten times the energy of the Raven King's! What a pity that he was past the prime of his life and was dragged down to death by a flock of spirit realm Fire Ravens." Jiang Chen sighed, thinking that if it wasn't for the Firelizard having lost most of his cultivation as a result of him nearing death, even ten times the number of Fire Ravens wouldn't have been able to take him down, much less that pitiful flock.

Even a tiger would be bullied by dogs when it descended the mountain.

Jiang Chen had no time to rejoice when he broke through. Even though he'd achieved this in a short amount of time, he knew that this was an advantage brought to him by the Redscaled Firelizard core. It would continue to add to his cultivation for a year until he reached earth origin realm. Only then would the power within the core be fully consumed.

"It looks like I should identify an archery art after receiving Sunpiercer from Elder Yun Nie." The half-sage weapon that Jiang Chen had received was destined to become a lethal weapon. God's Eye combined with the bow would make Jiang Chen a lethal foe to face. Its power would be even more frightening than the Moonshatter Flying Daggers.

After all, although the Moonshatter Flying Daggers art was strong, he didn't have throwing daggers with the requisite strength. The ones he'd crafted from the Fire Raven tail feathers didn't possess as much power in the origin realm as they had in the spirit realm. But he didn't deny the technique's strength, especially as he had yet to even train its accompanying arts to their peak.

The God's Eye and Ear of the Zephyr were both at the twentieth level, a far cry from the peak of the thirty second. He'd only progressed to the sixteenth level for the Boulder's Heart, with latecomer Psychic's Head up to the ninth level.

"I've only excavated one tenth of the mysteries of the Moonshatter Flying Daggers. When I train all four arts to their peak levels and possess throwing daggers that complement them, that will be when I truly shatter the moon and stars!" Jiang Chen would also naturally continue to focus on the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice and the magnetic golden mountain. These two treasures had enormous potential and were far from being used to their utmost. They weren't even displaying a tenth of their abilities yet.

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He'd had several visitors when he was in closed door cultivation, with Mu Gaoqi being the most frequent. The latter had never sought to disturb Jiang Chen after he found Jiang Chen had entered closed door cultivation. But as the date of their agreement drew ever closer, he became more and more anxious, worried that Jiang Chen would forget their agreement amidst his training. If that happened, Mu Gaoqi would certainly be in hot water. He hadn't made any backup plans after inviting Jiang Chen. If the latter couldn't make it, then finding emergency help would be very difficult. Ordinary helpers wouldn't be as suited as Jiang Chen either, nor set Mu Gaoqi at ease like his new friend could.

It was good thing that Jiang Chen finally emerged three days before their agreed upon date. "Brother Jiang Chen, you've finally come out. I was getting really anxious!" Mu Gaoqi's heart settled back in his chest when he saw Jiang Chen.

"Daoist Gaoqi, I would've never gone back on my word after making a promise to you. When do we go?"

"Three days from now!" Mu Gaoqi had chosen the date long ago. "I've prepared everything, we just need to depart in three days."

"Alright then, we go in three days." Jiang Chen sent him off after agreeing to the time, then summoned the Goldbiter Rat King. "Ole Gold, I've been thinking of ways to help you evolve your bloodlines. We have a chance to right in front of our eyes."

The Rat King had broken through to the origin realm ever since eating the flesh of the Firelizard last time. However, the overall evolution of his tribe was what he was most concerned with. He was delighted to hear Jiang Chen say so. "Young master Chen, what chance?"

Jiang Chen went over the information concerning the spiritual spring brimming with wood energy. "Ole Gold, exploring this spring will definitely not go that easily. However, I will give you a chance when we enter. You need to first identify a pack of elites amongst your tribe, a group with superior bloodlines, and stand ready."

The Rat King had been willing to follow Jiang Chen and leave the maze realm because the latter had promised he would help elevate the Goldbiter Rat's bloodlines. This was something to do with the future and fortune of their entire tribe!

In their years of following Jiang Chen, they had accomplished many things for him and was a great aid in times of need. Jiang Chen also knew that the key to their continued loyalty lay in whether he would be able to help their bloodlines ascend.

He'd kept this matter on his mind, and had finally located a clue this time from Mu Gaoqi. If Mu Gaoqi's intelligence was right, then that spring was a natural place of spirit power. If the Goldbiter Rats were baptized in such a place, it would greatly increase their chances of bloodline evolution.

If this tribe really possessed the bloodlines of the ancient Goldbiter Kingrats, the bloodline would certainly show up in certain tribe members. If they could awaken more of their heritage memories, the strength of their tribe would increase multifold.

Jiang Chen still needed helpers, and the Goldbiter Rats were currently his best card.

The Rat King was extremely agitated, “Young master Chen, if our tribe can ascend back to the ancient bloodline, you will be the greatest savior of our tribe. I swear that I will always be loyal and serve the young master!”

The Rat King was very smart. He had followed Jiang Chen for so many years and long since observed how extraordinary this human was. This human was his tribe’s destined one. If they wanted to change their fates, the only correct choice was to follow him.

“Miss Huang’er, I might need to go for a short while. How are you feeling lately?” Jiang Chen had nothing to worry about when it came to his followers, but since Elder Shun had left Miss Huang’er in his care, he had to do his best to take care of her.

Even though he too knew that she was no ordinary person, in his heart, no matter how mysterious she was or how much power she hid, Miss Huang’er was still a patient who Elder Shun had entrusted to him.

Miss Huang’er smiled, “Huang’er feels much better since Sir Jiang has started your treatment. I play the ‘Ethereal Soothing Melody’ everyday and bask in the joy of life. That is all.”

“That puts my mind at ease. I can only hope that Elder Shun finds the Requiem Wood sooner rather than later to set all worries to rest.” Having spent some time with Huang’er, Jiang Chen was rather appreciative of the genteel and kind young girl. He only felt that a fairy in the mortal world shouldn’t be tormented by such affliction.

Huang’er nodded lightly, thinking to herself, If the Generation Binding Curse is dispelled after the Requiem Wood is located, I must return home. Is life there really better than what it is here?

Ripples of emotion grew in her heart as she sank into quiet contemplation of her dilemma.

Chapter 477: Geniuses Converge on Bluesky Mountain

Huang’er and Elder Shun had traveled around the world these years, living an extremely simple life that could almost be termed boring beyond belief. But even so, Huang’er felt it to be a marked improvement over her previous life. At the very least, she didn’t have to be submerged in daily plots and scheming. She had been surrounded from birth by intrigues and machinations.

She was thoroughly sick of those crazy struggles.

Ever since Elder Shun had brought her out from the shadows to meet Jiang Chen and the others at the Eternal Spirit Mountain, her life and mindset had changed drastically, as had her heart.

Gouyu was forthright and passionate, loving and hating with equal fervor. Jiang Chen’s bearing was profoundly extraordinary, both just and aboveboard. Xue Tong and the others were all stoutly loyal to Jiang Chen. Each of their personalities were vibrant and frank, with no ulterior motives about them. She could completely open her heart around them, not needing to be on her guard at all.

This kind of life was simple, happy, and full of light every day. She’d unknowingly fallen deeply in love with this kind of life some time ago. This simple and happy time had also been unblemished by the torment of the Generation Binding Curse due to Jiang Chen’s temporary treatment. She’d almost forgotten her cares and worries.

She wished things would never change.. If only this could continue forever.

So when Jiang Chen mentioned the Requiem Wood and the matter of dispelling the curse, she wasn't filled with delight, but rather a faint sense of loss. She even quietly hoped that that day would never come. She'd grown used to this ordinary and real lifestyle.

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Three days later, after Jiang Chen had made the appropriate arrangements for those left in his residence as well as specially visited Sage Dan Chi to let him know, Jiang Chen left the Regal Pill Palace with Mu Gaoqi. With the numerous disciples entering and leaving the Rosy Valley every day, neither Jiang Chen nor Mu Gaoqi elicited much attention, since neither counted as the most preeminent disciples in the Valley.

Jiang Chen summoned the Goldwing Swordbirds soon after leaving the sect. Although Mu Gaoqi had his own steed, its speed was obviously far below Jiang Chen's advanced Swordbird. When Mu Gaoqi saw Jiang Chen's Goldwing Swordbird, he was also filled with admiration.

Jiang Chen was also quite generous as he immediately gifted one to Mu Gaoqi. "Daoist Gaoqi, this Goldwing Swordbird has an exceedingly finicky appetite. The more pills you feed it, the faster it will break through."

Mu Gaoqi nodded continuously, "Of course, that's a given."

The trip to the outskirts of the mountain still took a full four days even on the back of the Goldwing Swordbirds. Many peaks and knolls, wreathed by mist, could be glimpsed in the depths of the mountains as they flew above. It was impossible for the Swordbirds to follow the curve of the land.

When they alighted, Mu Gaoqi reminded Jiang Chen, "Brother Jiang Chen, this is the Million Range Bluesky Mountain. There are many monsters and beasts here, as well as all sorts of frightening bugs. Various strange lifeforms exist here too, such as fatal trees, vines, and flowers. You must be careful when walking around here."

Jiang Chen nodded, "Where did you arrange to meet the others?"

"We agreed upon a place inside the mountain. Brother Jiang Chen, if they ask about you, don't reveal your true name. Just make up a fake one." Mu Gaoqi was being quite conscientious as he reminded Jiang Chen over and over again of the important details.

Jiang Chen naturally had no particular opinions. He was here for the spring with wood spirit energy. Everything else were just minor details to him. He would do what Mu Gaoqi told him to do as long as it didn't exceed his bottom line.

Jiang Chen activated his God's Eye and Psychic's Head along the way, striking out cautiously. Although they met with many tests, nothing became a threat with Jiang Chen taking proactive action to resolve them.

Mu Gaoqi led Jiang Chen to a rock outcropping after roughly an hour. There were all sorts of oddly shaped, enormous stones around this place. Some were upright, but others flat on the ground. Some protruded diagonally, with the assorted forms giving onlookers quite the visual impact.

“This is the place.” Mu Gaoqi looked around and murmured to himself. “It looks like we’re the first ones here.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and didn’t refute his words, when in reality, his Psychic’s Head had already sensed three groups of people hidden in the rocks. They only walked out when they saw it was Mu Gaoqi.

All three groups had come in pairs. It seemed that they’d agreed on allowing everyone one assistant each. No one had broken the agreement in this area.

When Mu Gaoqi saw these people walk out from the shadows, he immediately became a bit nervous. “I thought I was the earliest; I hadn’t thought that you all were even faster,” he stammered.

“Gaoqi, we’re all depending on your pills this time, did you bring enough of them?” One of the cultivators was attired in a golden robe, the longsword slung across his back making him look quite fierce.

“I did, I did!” Mu Gaoqi chuckled.

“And this is?” The golden clad cultivator sized up Jiang Chen with a measuring look.

Mu Gaoqi hurriedly responded, “This is one of my peers in the Regal Pill Palace. He put a lot of effort into the pills I’ve refined, so I brought him with me today.”

Jiang Chen could see that Mu Gaoqi’s tone was quite humble. Clearly, his first level origin realm status was one of the lowest in the group. If it wasn’t for the others needing his pills, he likely wouldn’t have had the right to participate.

Jiang Chen paid silent attention to those around him. The duo containing the golden-clad, longsword wielding man was likely from the Sacred Sword Palace.

The other two had the moon, sun and stars embroidered on their robes. They were likely from the Tristar Sect.

The remaining two were wearing inky black robes, marking them as Dark North disciples.

Jiang Chen hadn’t seen their faces before, but he’d seen the clothing during the alliance ceremony between the Precious Tree Sect and Regal Pill Palace. It seemed like those participating in this venture were cultivators from all the first rate sects in the Myriad Domain. Apart from the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect, the rest of the six great sects were all accounted for.

The golden-clad one from the Sacred Sword Palace frowned, “Is the Great Cathedral so arrogant? Why aren’t they here yet?”

“Feng Wanjian, 1 is your mouth always this foul?” An angry shout sounded through the empty air as soon as the Sacred Sword Palace cultivator had finished complaining. Following the bellow, two stocky silhouettes swiftly flew down from the rocks.

The two were wearing robes made of animal skins, revealing sturdy arms and thighs, giving off a primal aura. Their hair was in messy disarray, giving them a distinct touch of a wild lion. The one walking in

front was tall and well-built, seemingly to crush the rocks with each stride he took. His gait was oddly graceful, like that of a tiger on the hunt.

When this person appeared, Feng Wanjian of the Sacred Sword Palace went white and shut his mouth appropriately.

“I’m not late, am I?” The Great Cathedral disciple flashed a toothy grin. A noticeable scar on his right cheek became even more fierce looking with his smile. “Allow me to introduce myself. I am Yue Pan of the Sacred Lion family in the Great Cathedral. My junior brother has invited me to meet all the various geniuses in the Myriad Domain here today.” The disciple behind Yue Pan was also from the Sacred Lion family, named Xu Gang.

Feng Wanjian glared at Xu Gang with dissatisfaction. “What do you mean by this, Xu Gang? Didn’t we agree that we’d bring helpers on the same level? We’re all of the minor origin realm, so what the heck do you mean by bringing along an earth origin realm helper?”

Xu Gang’s words were steady as he explained, “When I first invited senior brother Yue Pan, he was only at third level origin realm. Then, two days before we left, he broke through to earth origin realm. I couldn’t exactly go back on my word after I’d invited him, could I? If I’d invited him but didn’t bring him in the end, he might’ve told others and thus attract the attention of some of the stronger disciples. At that point, would there be a spot left for any of us for the spring?”

Xu Gang’s words made quite a bit of sense, at least to the point where the others couldn’t refute him.

Jiang Chen also took a look. Out of the six from the Sacred Sword Palace, Tristar Sect and Dark North Sect, they were all of the minor origin realm. The strongest of them were but third level origin realm, with none in the earth origin realm.

The Great Cathedral disciple showing up with an earth origin realm comrade broke this careful balance.

Mu Gaoqi actually smoothed over the situation at this point. “In my opinion, so what of an earth origin realm. We all decided on exploring this area together.” However, Mu Gaoqi held a bare minimum of status in the group, and was easily ignored when he spoke. Feng Wanjian flicked a glance at Mu Gaoqi, snorting coldly as he did so. His gaze flicked towards Jiang Chen, and unconcealed disdain appeared in his eyes. It was apparent that Mu Gaoqi had no right to speak at all in this group. When they saw that his helper wasn’t even third level spirit realm, this gave him even less of a right to speak.

Xu Gang chuckled and walked towards Mu Gaoqi, “Daoist Gaoqi, we agreed that you would supply the pills last time. Are you ready? If so, now would be a good time to hand them over.”

Mu Gaoqi bobbed his head. “I’ve prepared them.” He took out a great deal of flasks and bottles from a storage ring, “These are Vitality Pills that clears and cures poison, these are Jade Iceheart Pills that will soothe burns, these are Yang Coalescence Pills that will dispel frigid air, and these are Immutable Profound Heart Pills that will clear internal demons.” He distributed out a portion into everyone’s hands, not forgetting to include Jiang Chen as well.

It was obvious that he’d spent quite some effort in preparing these items and had fulfilled his responsibilities to the letter.

But these folks weren't polite or considerate at all. They immediately began inspecting the pills after receiving them. It was apparent that they had a suspicious mindset, and although Mu Gaoqi was as honest as could be, they were still worried that he had done something to the pills.

When Mu Gaoqi saw their actions, he didn't dare say anything even though he felt a bit aggrieved.

By the time they'd finished checking the pills, the meeting time had long passed. Xu Gang looked below, "Those pussies from the Walkabout Sect probably didn't have the guts to come. The time has come and gone, let's head in."

Even though everyone was quite dissatisfied that Xu Gang had brought an earth origin realm cultivator along, this proposal was met with general approval. This meant that they would have one less set of opponents.

Only Mu Gaoqi spoke timidly, "How about we wait a bit more? We all agreed on moving together, wouldn't it be bad if we don't wait for them?"

Jiang Chen sighed internally when he saw Mu Gaoqi act so subservient. Mu Gaoqi was likely used to being the good guy and didn't want to offend anyone. However, when this kind of weak personality was combined with a lack of strength, who would pay attention to anything he said?

1. The latter two characters of his name mean "ten thousand swords", very appropriate given his sect

Chapter 478: Fists Determine Reason

Indeed, Xu Gang laughed heartily, "How about this, Daoist Gaoqi, you two stay here and wait. We'll go in and scout ahead first. You can bring up the rear when the Walkabout Sect shows up."

"I think that will do. Daoist Gaoqi is highly principled and most suited to wait here." Feng Wanjian also concurred.

Mu Gaoqi may be cautious and wary by nature, but that didn't mean he was a fool. It was obvious that Xu Gang and Feng Wanjian's spectacle that they wanted to ostracize him. Mu Gaoqi's lips twitched, but even so, he remained silent, just remaining in place with a reddened face, like a wife who'd been angered.

Jiang Chen could tell that each of these people all had their own schemes. None of them viewed Mu Gaoqi as an ally. Now that his pills were divided amongst them, his value was just about over. Judging from their posture, the four sects wanted to leave him out in the cold.

Jiang Chen followed quietly behind Mu Gaoqi. He decided to wait and see first. If this group really planned on leaving Mu Gaoqi out of the spoils, he naturally wouldn't agree.

The five pairs walked into the depths of the rock outcropping and soon arrived in front of a deep cave at the end of a narrow stone corridor. Mu Gaoqi and Jiang Chen were at the rear and about to enter when a golden-clad silhouette suddenly blocked the way in front of them.

It was that Feng Wanjian.

“Daoist Gaoqi, didn’t we agree that you’d wait outside for our friends from the Walkabout Sect? In that case, I think you shouldn’t go inside, hmm?” Feng Wanjian’s tone was faint, yet full of an overbearing presence.

Mu Gaoqi quibbled, “Everyone should enter and leave together. If we wait, then everyone should wait together.”

Feng Wanjian jeered and gave a shout of laughter, “Only you proposed waiting, so naturally you’re the one who waits. Doesn’t everyone agree with me?”

The other three pairs all burst into uproarious laughter. One less pair meant two fewer opponents. This would be more for them to share when they reached the spring. It was obvious that since Mu Gaoqi was the weakest, there was no pressure at all in ostracizing him. In addition, his main value lay in pills. Since he’d handed them over, there was no point in him entering the cave. He wouldn’t be of any help apart from dragging them down.

“See, you waiting here is what everyone hopes for.” Feng Wanjian shrugged and extended his leg to carve a long line on the hard, stone ground. He commanded coldly, “Wait beyond this line and don’t go past it. Don’t blame me for treating you unkindly if you do!”

As good an upbringing as Mu Gaoqi had, he too was a bit enraged at this moment as well. However, he was weak and was accustomed to giving way in front of others. He didn’t know what to do even though he was mad and could only hold everything in with a beet red face.

“Daoist Feng, you... you go too far in bullying others!” This was the only thing he said after trying for a good long while.

Feng Wanjian laughed heartily, “Haha, this is everyone’s opinion! Too bad you had to be such a loudmouth.”

Jiang Chen had made no move or sound up until now. He suddenly walked in front of Mu Gaoqi and stared at Feng Wanjian with a remote look. He asked casually, “Do you mean to forget about past favors and dismantle the bridge after you’ve crossed the river, thereby ostracizing our Regal Pill Palace?”

Feng Wanjian hadn’t thought anything of Jiang Chen because the latter hadn’t said a single word or expressed any opinions since showing up. He also only looked to be second level origin realm. With the social skills of such trash as Mu Gaoqi, he likely wouldn’t have invited anyone strong, so the others had also ignored Jiang Chen.

Feng Wanjian had been the same. When he saw Jiang Chen speak, the former smirked arrogantly and flicked a glance at Jiang Chen. “And who are you? Do you have the right to speak here?”

Jiang Chen didn’t say a word, merely walked up, stuck out a foot, and erased that line in the ground. The carving instantly smoothed over.

“Go to hell!” Feng Wanjian was incensed by Jiang Chen’s actions. How dare someone erase the line he’d carved! This was a great challenge to him!

He threw a punch directly towards Jiang Chen’s chest, but he’d yet to touch his opponent’s chest when he suddenly felt his wrist go numb.

His wrist hand landed in Jiang Chen's hands in the next moment. Jiang Chen pulled, yanked, and flung Feng Wanjian out like a broken kite, making him slam fiercely into a large tree ten meters away.

Bam!

Although this collision wasn't fatal, it was an undoubted loss of all face for an origin realm cultivator.

Jiang Chen walked past like there was no one there.

"Does anyone else have an opinion?" His gaze was deep as he swept it in a circle across the faces of those present.

Feng Wanjian was a disciple of the Sacred Sword Palace, and although his close combat skills weren't as proficient as his skill with the sword, it was still rather incredible that he'd been casually thrown out like this.

The atmosphere at the scene instantly grew quite interesting. Everyone's gazes involuntarily looked towards Yue Pan, the only earth origin realm present.

When Yue Pan's gaze met Jiang Chen's, he immediately laughed heartily. "You have hidden your skills well and masqueraded as a pig to eat a tiger. I am quite in awe." He swept his gaze around the scene after speaking, "The more of these kinds of strong comrades, the better. Anyone opposed to them is also opposing me, Yue Pan!"

Yue Pan was tall and buff, appearing quite brutish and savage. Who would've thought that he'd change tack so quickly? The ones from the other sects all looked at each other, askance for the moment.

When Feng Wangjian scrambled to his feet, his hand was already on the handle of his sword. But his heart sank when he heard Yue Pan's words and he glared fiercely at Jiang Chen, finally suppressing his anger in the end.

It was apparent that Feng Wanjian could also see that if even Yue Pan didn't dare offend the person that Mu Gaoqi had invited, then this newcomer's strength wouldn't be too far off from Yue Pan's. The latter had made this kind of proclamation. If he, Feng Wanjian didn't realize what situation he was in, he'd be going head to head against the Regal Pill Palace and Great Cathedral then.

Feng Wanjian may have been arrogant, but he didn't have this level of confidence.

The other Great Cathedral disciple, Xu Gang chuckled. "That was just a small misunderstanding. We are all still close comrades since we've cleared things up. Our cooperation is needed to investigate this cavern."

Jiang Chen watched the quick about faces from the two Great Cathedral disciples. Each had been more ludicrous than the other. This Xu Gang had even planned on taking down Mu Gaoqi a moment before, but now it had all turned into a misunderstanding and they were close comrades.

This kind of person was much more frightening than a cocky fellow like Feng Wanjian, one with eyes at the top of his head.

Those from the Tristar and Dark North Sect had kept a low profile all along. They naturally wouldn't step forth to be a villain when they'd just seen how strong Jiang Chen was.

When Mu Gaoqi saw that Jiang Chen had exerted control over the situation with one move, he too was quite agitated. Traces of gratitude appeared in his eyes as he looked at Jiang Chen. This spring of wood spirit energy was simply too important to him. If he'd been ostracized and couldn't enter, then all the efforts he'd conducted in the past couple of days and his dreams would all be completely decimated. The minor conflict just now had given him a great psychological blow.

Strength was king. What use was refining pills if he had no strength? He'd given them the pills, but they'd still erupted in open hostility just like that. All of his pills hadn't been as useful as Jiang Chen's single move. Fists determined reason alright!

The group walked into the entrance and was greeted with the sight of a cave with an extremely spacious entrance. It was pitch black, like a black curtain was hanging across everything. Even Jiang Chen's God's Eye could only extend to one tenth of its usual range.

"The darkness of this cavern isn't normal. My God's Eye should be able to see through the night as if it were day, but I can only see a tenth of my usual in this dark cave. It looks like there's something special about this cavern that can restrict all light."

Xu Gang halted his footsteps and said to a Tristar Sect disciple. "Gao Yi, we said that your sect would prepare the night pearls¹. You prepared them, didn't you?"

The thinner of the two chuckled, "Of course." He flicked his fingers as he talked, shooting the pearls to those present. Everyone held one, including Mu Gaoqi.

Their vision was a bit more illuminated with the pearls in hand. But the pearl didn't have much use for Jiang Chen. Vision wasn't the most important sense in the cavern.

"There are all sorts of earthen fire attacks in this cavern, and they're triggered if the area is illuminated with torches. The pearls are relatively better." Mu Gaoqi said quietly.

"Let's go." Xu Gang waved his arm and took the lead, striding forward first.

Yue Pan however, smiled, "I'll bring up the rear." The two from the Great Cathedral were both in the lead and rear, patently very distrustful of the others and also demonstrating the domineering style of the strongest sect in the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi walked in the middle, the former fully calling upon his Boulder's Heart and Psychic's Head, following behind the group and heading into the depths of the cavern.

The cavern was dim and quiet, sloping downwards the more one went in. Jiang Chen's wariness was seven parts for this cavern and three parts for Yue Pan behind them.

Although the two from the Great Cathedral weren't uncommonly strong, they were the type to quickly turn on you, so one had to exercise the utmost of cautiousness when working with this kind of person.

The group felt the cold air become heavier after roughly an hour.

"The hell? It seems colder here than it was last time." Gao Yi of the Tristar Sect complained a bit.

"Hmph, look how far we've gotten, you're complaining already?" Xu Gang glared at Gao Yi with displeasure.

Gao Yi chuckled, "I was thinking, will those from the Walkabout Sect show up behind us?"

Xu Gang snorted derisively, "They won't get anything even if they show up because they were late." Gao Yi murmured obsequiously to that.

Jiang Chen heard none of this. He'd felt that something was off the moment they'd entered the cavern. There was actually a faint trace of a presence in the air. It was very faint. If Jiang Chen hadn't trained the Psychic's Head, he never would've captured this presence. When his thoughts travelled here, he sent a silent message to Mu Gaoqi, "Be careful Gaoqi. Someone's been here before our group."

Mu Gaoqi grew inwardly stern when he heard this, but didn't say anything. He had learned from his lesson and had seen through these fellows. He would never speak up out of kindness even when he knew danger was ahead.

Chapter 479: Danger Emerges

There seemed to be no end to the inky depths of this cavern. Their footsteps gradually slowed down as the chilly air continued to grow heavier. Apart from the sounds of their scattered footsteps, the cavern was eerily quiet with no sound at all.

This feeling was as if they'd been suddenly thrown into an independent world, completely cut off from the outside world with no end to the darkness of this cavern.

Jiang Chen suddenly shoved something at Mu Gaoqi, "Gaoqi, take this." It was the spirit pearl of fire and ice that the tenth rank inspector Feng Beidou from the Sky Sect had given to Sunchaser, before Jiang Chen and Sunchaser had fought during the Precious Tree Sect alliance. When Sunchaser had been crushed by the Lotus, it had swallowed the pearl as well, coming into Jiang Chen's hands. Although Feng Beidou was pained at the loss of this treasure, he wasn't so thick-faced as to demand it back. After all, his sect had lost in that match. Now that Jiang Chen was sensing the eeriness of this cavern, he gave the pearl to Mu Gaoqi in case he was unable to save his fellow sect disciple in the event of an emergency.

Being Feng Beidou's treasure, the pearl was a sage realm level item. Mu Gaoqi immediately felt a wondrous sensation suffuse his body when he laid hands on it. His senses instantly returned to an equilibrium that was neither felt too cold nor hot, as if he was immersed in the most gentle of spring.

The feeling of extreme cold also affected the speed of the others to certain degrees, slowing down their circulation and numbing their limbs. It was a good thing that Mu Gaoqi had prepared many Yang Coalescence Pills beforehand, they now proved quite useful in dispelling cold. Everyone took one, driving out much of the chill in their bodies.

A feeble light suddenly appeared in front of the group at this point.

"That's it!" Gao Yi grew excited. "Look! That light marks where the lava area begins."

The group had been unable to resist the scorching heat from the lava last time, which was why they'd stopped. Now that they'd reached the place they'd left off last time, everyone began to agitate.

Jiang Chen's footsteps suddenly paused at this point. He turned his body ever so slightly, as if he was going to turn around. Behind him, Yue Pan suddenly laughed heartily, "Are we there? Fantastic!" He walked quickly towards the front after speaking, seeming to want to be the first to enter the next area.

Jiang Chen's heart hardened slightly, killing intent flashing through him when Yue Pan had passed by them. This was because when he'd paused, he'd captured that Yue Pan was surreptitiously brewing the momentum to ambush him!

Jiang Chen's Psychic's Head imparted on him immense mental strength, allowing his senses to be far in excess of the others. No matter how well Yue Pan had hidden his intentions, that had still been insufficient to escape Jiang Chen's observation. It was only Jiang Chen's sudden pause that had disrupted Yue Pan's rhythm, startling him into not taking risky action.

However, Yue Pan's reaction had been exceedingly fast. He'd immediately changed his attitude and spoken those words, attempting to hide his ulterior motives. But, how could those moves possibly hoodwink Jiang Chen?

Jiang Chen sent a silent message to Mu Gaoqi, "The two from the Great Cathedral bear us ill will, you need to be careful."

Mu Gaoqi nodded lightly. He'd finally seen through these people after all that had happened and no longer possessed the same illusions as before.

The faint light was as if a bright lamp that led them the way forward. Earth origin realm Yue Pan in particular kept charging at the fore, with the others fighting for places as well, dashing ahead.

"Don't rush." Jiang Chen's tremendous observation skills caused him to pull Mu Gaoqi back, preventing him from charging ahead with the others.

Mu Gaoqi responded, "We walked this path before, and there's no danger between here and the lava area."

Jiang Chen said faintly, "No danger before doesn't mean there's no danger now." A ghastly scream suddenly rang out from the front as they conversed.

"Who comes?"

"Who?!"

"Ah! Ambush!" Several terrible shouts rang out in quick succession, indicating that chaos had engulfed the front. When Jiang Chen looked over, he could see that four people were already down—the two from the Dark North Sect, one from the Tristar Sect and one from the Sacred Sword Palace.

Ten had entered the cavern from the five sects. Apart from Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi walking in the back, eight had charged to the front. But now, four were suddenly on the ground. This scene made everyone openmouthed with astonishment and horror.

Yue Pan suddenly roared, "Someone's there. Over there! Halt!"

A crisp collision sounded in the air as he spoke.

Clang!

Sparks flew everywhere as his weapon blocked the ambush of a crossbow bolt. His counter attack also slowed because of this. He shot a cold glare to the front, but didn't have the courage to follow up. It was

then that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi finally slowly caught up, still trailing at the back and not approaching too closely.

Feng Wanjian roared angrily, "Mu Gaoqi, you're a pill master! What the hell are you doing dragging your feet at this time? Get over here and attend to their wounds!"

Mu Gaoqi was indeed a bit nervous after Feng Wanjian yelled at him, but he immediately recalled that Jiang Chen was standing next to him, so even though his mouth twitched, his feet remained firmly planted in the ground.

Jiang Chen flicked a dismissive glance at the people on the ground, "What are you yelling about? A strong poison already took effect, they're dead. Even the gods won't be able to save them, what are you looking at now?"

Feng Wanjian was immensely startled. Someone from his sect was one of those attacked! If something happened to him, then he'd be fighting a lone fight from here on. The one down from the Tristar Sect was Gao Yi. His peer had been the lucky one to escape disaster.

"Mu Gaoqi, come take a look first regardless of whether or not they're dead."

Mu Gaoqi shook his head. "I'm not doing that, this poison is very evil and will possibly spread if I come any closer. Whichever one of you unafraid of death can go take a look yourselves."

The expressions of those remaining all changed drastically when they heard this. They unconsciously moved away, taking another seven, eight steps further away from the four down. Mu Gaoqi was utterly disappointed in them. If it hadn't been for Jiang Chen earlier, he wouldn't even have had the right to enter earlier. He sure as heck wouldn't risk his life for them now.

Feng Wanjian howled, "Poison? Is it the Walkabout Sect?"

The Walkabout Sect was the one most skilled at using poison out of the six premier sects in the Myriad Domain. Therefore, when Mu Gaoqi mentioned poison, everyone's first thought was that they were the ones behind this.

Xu Gang of the Tristar Sect still had a pounding heart. "No wonder they didn't show up! It looks like we were too naive. They showed up a long time ago and have laid a trap here, waiting for us to jump in!"

The Tristar Sect disciple suddenly glared viciously at Xu Gang. "Xu Gang, you despicable person! The concealed weapon was heading for you earlier, but you used my junior brother as your shield! I will be sure to report this to my sect head when I return. We will want an explanation from your Sacred Lion family!"

Xu Gang smiled casually, "Lin Feng, don't you slander others now, hmm?"

Lin Feng retorted angrily, "Xu Gang, confess to what you've done!"

Xu Gang laughed lightly, "Vision here is so poor, did you see me use Gao Yi as a shield? Besides, since we've come here, everyone has an awareness of how dangerous things will be. We hold our life and death in our own holds. I will die without complaint if you have the ability to use me as a shield." His tone was as shameless as a bandit's.

Lin Feng was tongue tied, actually at a loss for words by such shameless words. Feng Wanjian had a darkened face as he first looked at Xu Gang, then at Jiang Chen. It was apparent that subtle changes had occurred in the situation after this disaster.

The pair from the Dark North Sect was gone, there was only one left from both the Tristar Sect and his Sacred Sword Palace. Only the Great Cathedral and Regal Pill Palace still had a full team with no injuries.

“Daoist Lin Feng, you and I are alone now. It seems that we would be wise in forming a team.” Feng Wanjian spoke silently, “This Xu Gang and Yue Pan are all the domineering sort. Mu Gaoqi has no opinions, and the fellow he brought is really weird. It’s best if we can make the dogs fight amongst each other.”

Lin Feng had also calmed down. He knew that erupting in open hostility with the Great Cathedral at this time meant only certain death. Ignoring Xu Gang, that earth realm cultivator Yue Pan had yet to say anything. If Yue Pan was willing to, he could absolutely wipe the ground with Lin Feng’s face. When his thoughts traveled here, Lin Feng sorted softly and locked gazes with Feng Wanjian. The two of them surreptitiously moved a bit closer.

Yue Pan suddenly smiled, “Alright, the true killer is still loose even as we keep arguing here. It looks like all of our plans combined haven’t been as devious as those laid by the Walkabout Sect.”

Feng Wanjian also nodded. “The most important issue is that the Walkabout Sect has a head start on us. The more we stand here blathering, the more time they’ve had to make it to the spring.”

Even though this was the case, no one wanted to walk in the front after being ambushed. It was Yue Pan who laughed loudly, “Looks like I’ll have to be the vanguard since none of you want to walk in the front. However, I’ll say this first, if everyone arrives at the same time, I have first priority to anything good.”

“Hmph! Based on what?” Lin Feng was unwilling to accept this.

Yue Pan chuckled, “Then you walk ahead. I’ll give you first priority that way then.”

Lin Feng’s heart quailed as he looked down at the dead Gao Yi. He wouldn’t take the lead even if they beat him to death!

Xu Gang smiled easily, “Since no one wants to walk in the front, then no one has the right to dispute senior brother Yue Pan’s suggestion.” Thanks to the changes in numbers, Xue Gang’s domineering style was beginning to slowly reveal itself as well.

“Does the Regal Pill Palace have any opinions?” Feng Wanjian looked nonchalantly over, obviously wishes to start up conflict between the two sects.

Jiang Chen smiled noncommittally, “Daoist Yue Pan runs the highest risk in walking at the front, so he naturally should have first priority. This is also only just and fair.”

Yue Pan laughed heartily, “This daoist makes quite some sense. Ah yes, I haven’t asked your name yet.”

“My surname is Chen.” Jiang Chen remembered Mu Gaoqi’s reminder and offered up a fake name.

“Haha, Daoist Chen is deeply conscious of what is right and wrong. Yue Pan has great admiration!” Yue Pan took the lead and started walking forward again after these words, whereas Xu Gang kept abreast

with the others in an unhurried fashion. It could be seen that the two from the Great Cathedral had great cooperation between the two of them. If one walked in the front, the other would always trail at the back. Both were able to support each other and prevent ambushes.

Things were quiet this time, with no more surreptitious attacks. The group quickly arrived at the lava area. It was as if they'd instantly gone from a winter wonderland to the mouth of an active volcano, immediately shifting from the dead of winter to a harsh summer.

Chapter 480: Chaos in the Lava Region

The Walkabout Sect disciples would naturally not stick around after launching an ambush. After all, even though they were gifted in using poison, they would still die without a doubt if the group managed to catch up and mob them. Even so, Jiang Chen remained on guard. He wasn't afraid of not being able to detect hidden weapons, but there was no detriment to Yue Pan taking the lead.

That so-called first priority was just a verbal agreement. Who would follow that when push came to shove? Besides, would Yue Pan really make it to the end? No one knew that for sure either.

The boiling lava frothed like boiling pot of water, constantly bubbling and churning. Occasionally, enormous waves several meters long, would crash onto the shores of the lava lake.

Even though those present were of the origin realm, they could still feel the heat of the lava. If they were knocked about by the waves and caught by the lava current, they would most likely die in agony.

If they wished to cross, they had to pass over the enormous lava lake in front of them. It looked several hundred meters wide and wouldn't be difficult to cross this distance with their skills of flight. However, continuous plumes and waves of lava rose fiercely from the center of the lake. If they couldn't make use of another force when they flew and was hit by a rogue wave, then they would be in deep trouble. There were also lifeforms crouched within the lava and danger would be even more heightened if they revealed themselves and attacked.

The two from the Great Cathedral looked at each other, smirks playing about their lips. They simultaneously activated a yellow slip that appeared in their hands, covering each disciple in a strange light.

"Folks, we'll be going on ahead first. Catch up with us at your leisure." Yue Pan and Xu Gang flew swiftly ahead as if they'd sprouted wings, turning into streaks of light and making for the opposite shore. Their speed was so fast that they seemed to land instantly on the other side like meteors.

"Flight glyphs! The Great Cathedral was truly willing to spare some wealth on this!" Lin Feng grumbled, disgruntled, as he seemed to remember something. Mu Gaoqi's scalp also grew numb when he looked at that raging lava and the heat waves coming off it.

Feng Wanjian cursed noisily, "Fucking assholes! They could've given us a ride with the flight glyphs too!"

"Brother Feng, we must hurry. Those two Great Cathedral scum will absolutely not wait for us if they arrive first." Lin Feng offered.

The two looked at each other and Feng Wanjian nodded, "Brother Lin, follow me!" He murmured an incantation, suddenly spreading out his arms and radiating out approximately thirty beams of harsh light in front of him.

The thirty beams of light were his throwing swords. They hovered over the lava lake, forming a rainbow bridge in midair. There was only sixteen meters between each sword. This distance was akin to walking on flat ground for origin realm cultivators.

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng blurred into streaks of light as well, using the floating swords as platforms as they charged towards the other side. Their speed, while not quite as meteoric as that of the Great Cathedral disciples, was also quite fast.

However, just as they were halfway across, an enormous air bubble suddenly exploded from the center of the lava lake, bursting open with a loud roar.

Bam!

More than ten gouts of lava shot up like a fountain spurting into the air. Like a lesser-dragon erupting from the seas, the lava was directly in Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng's path.

When Lin Feng saw this, he knew that Feng Wanjian wouldn't be able to spare any effort to defend against the lava when wholly focused on manipulating the swords. He was also all too aware that both of them were done for if either of them were injured. If Feng Wanjian fell, then he too was dead without a doubt!

He gritted his teeth and waved his large hand, triggering the "Tristar Incantation".

"Three Stars Surround the Skies!"

Three beams of light shot out from his hand, whirling around them as air currents until they became a transparent barrier enclosing them. The two didn't slow down their steps as they continued to shoot forward.

Bam bam bam!

Air bubbles continued to explode as the lava lake seemed to suddenly boil over. Enormous waves of lava reached for the cavern's heights as the shadows of humanoid and monstrous forms capered within, seemingly intent on ripping Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian to pieces.

"Brother Lin, hold!" Feng Wanjian was deeply anxious. He was concentrating every iota of energy he had in maintaining his bridge of swords, and couldn't spare anything to respond to the lava monsters.

Lin Feng understood the situation they were in without Feng Wanjian's reminders. Had they faced so many monsters on the ground, he wouldn't have been afraid at all. But right now, they were midair, and the only footholds they had were hovering swords that were sixteen meters apart. A single misstep would mean that they would plummet into the boundless depths of the lava.

Under these circumstances, Lin Feng couldn't display more than thirty percent of his usual strength. But even so, he still did his best with the "Tristar Incantation". The tristar air currents he formed broke off from them to intercept the lava monsters again and again, but there were simply too many. It was as if

the two had stirred up a hornet's nest as all of the lifeforms in the lava lake seemed to wake, rising up in irritation.

A distance of several hundred meters was nothing for an origin realm cultivator, but currently, it seemed like a chasm, with heaven on one side and hell on the other. Every step forward required a strategy to deal with the ever increasing number of monsters assaulting their position. Even their path back was obstructed as the lava monsters surrounded them, howling savagely.

The strength of the lava monsters were far below Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian's third level origin realm, but what they didn't have in cultivation, they made up in numbers and a peculiar body composition. Every single lava monster possessed a fire constitution, so normal attacks couldn't kill them at all. In addition, their attacks were imbued with fiery lava, scorching to the touch. This kind of temperature was something that even the duo was unwilling to touch.

In this regard, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian were forced to a standstill above the lava lake.

"Brother Lin, hurry up and break through! I can only control this many swords for a limited time!" Feng Wanjian was quite worried as manipulating flying swords was an activity that greatly drained origin energy. Moreover, he was controlling thirty at once! It wouldn't have been as much pressure if they'd crossed in a few breaths, but now that he had to maintain them, the drain was getting larger and larger.

Xu Gang and Yue Pan were watching this scene from a dark corner on the other side, both of them chortling.

"Senior brother Yue, was this step a bit too vicious?" Xu Gang cackled.

"What a pity those two trash took the lead here. My goal wasn't them!" Yue Pan looked at the other side from the shadows.

The two had used the flight glyphs to fly over the lava lake, and Yue Pan had very surreptitiously thrown a spirit glyph into the lake when they'd almost arrived. It didn't explode until it'd reached the bottom of the lake.

When it exploded, it immediately enraged all of the lifeforms at the bottom of the lake. Yue Pan's drastic measure had been quite vicious, and aimed at Jiang Chen.

From everything he'd seen so far, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian weren't threats at all. It was only the mysterious Regal Pill Palace disciple Jiang Chen that gave him an inscrutable feeling.

He'd wanted to ambush Jiang Chen before, but hadn't succeeded. Yue Pan had wanted to commit murder with a borrowed knife, but two other unlucky bastards had charged into the trap first, with the two from the Regal Pill Palace safe on the side.

Xu Gang watched for a while. "Senior brother Yue, now that the beings in the lake are all awake, that'll keep them busy for quite a while. It'll be difficult for the two from the Regal Pill Palace to cross. I think we should be on our way. It'd be bad if the Walkabout Sect made their way there first."

Regret flashed through Yue Pan's eyes. "What a pity, a pity." He'd wanted to stay and admire Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian's grisly deaths, but when he remembered that those bastards from the Walkabout Sect were already ahead, he wasn't in the mindset to stay and watch the fun.

“Let’s go. Bastards from the Walkabout Sect, I’ll make today your death anniversary when I catch up with you!” Yue Pan was full of resentment towards the Walkabout Sect. Even though he hadn’t been injured in the ambush, he had still been greatly frightened.

The two kept their previous formation of one in the front and one in the back, moving swiftly forward. The Dark North Sect had all died earlier, with Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng soon to follow in their footsteps. That meant that both the Tristar Sect and Sacred Sword Palace representatives would also be annihilated shortly. The two from the Regal Pill Palace wouldn’t be able to cross the lava lake and so wouldn’t be a threat either. Therefore, their only competition was the Walkabout Sect up ahead. When he thought of how their competition had beaten them to the draw and plotted against him, his anger grew deeper. He and Xu Gang had fancied themselves clever and kept scheming against others, but who would’ve thought that this sect was one step ahead of them! This was nothing more than humiliation.

Lin Feng was dripping with sweat. The enormous heat wave and ferocious lava monsters was fatiguing him immensely.

“Brother Lin, are you still not going to use your full strength? Don’t tell me you don’t have the Star and Moon Glyph of your Tristar Sect?!”

Lin Feng was very depressed. He did have the glyph, but that was his trump card! Was he going to use it just a fifth of the way through the lava region? He didn’t want to!

Feng Wanjian gave a shout as a lava monster churned away one of the swords beneath his feet. The frightening heat radiating off the lava monster burned into his soles. If any more swords suffered that fate, they wouldn’t be left with a foothold anymore!

Feng Wanjian kept redeploying the swords in other areas to come support them, so that they would have a place to push off from.

“Lin Feng, if you still don’t use the Star and Moon Glyph, I’ll just withdraw the swords and we can just die together!” Feng Wanjian yelled crazily.

Lin Feng also knew at this point that if he didn’t use the Glyph, the only path left was death. He grasped the air, and an exotic, heavenly glyph appeared in his hand. Light flashed as the glyph immediately emanated golden starlight for hundreds of meters. Radiance from countless stars instantly illuminated a radius of several hundred meters.

Wham!

Wherever the starlight shone, all of the lava monsters caught within suddenly froze as their bodies instantly turned frost-white, immediately frozen into ice sculptures. They plunged into the lava lake below, exploding from the heat difference on impact and releasing plumes of blue smoke.

“Let’s go!” Without the interference of the lava monsters, the swords turned into flowing streams of light as the two cultivators shot towards the opposite shore.

Just then...

WHAM!

Like a long suppressed volcano, a force that could level mountains and eradicate seas blasted out from within the lava lake. The enormous explosion instantly overturned the surface of the lake, and tidal waves of lava hundreds of meters tall surged outward. Unprepared for the magnitude of this backlash, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian were engulfed by waves of lava several hundreds of meters tall!