

Three Realms 481

Chapter 481: Schemes and Plots

"It's over." Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian had thought they could smoothly cross the lake after using the Star and Moon Glyph, but they hadn't thought that things would take a drastic turn in the next instant.

As their bodies were engulfed by the several hundred meter tall wave, even mobilizing every scrap of origin power in their bodies wasn't enough to stop their downward momentum. The deeper they descended, the fiercer the heat became, as if it would swallow and melt them whole. They were well aware that heat of this intensity would melt their bodies even if their bodies were cast in bronze or iron.

However, the instant before they impacted the lava, a vine appeared before their eyes. The vine twisted into an intricate knot around them and flung them both over to the other shore.

Whoosh whoosh!

Their bodies sped through the air like loosed arrows.

This reversal in fortunes happened in the blink of an eye. Even as they landed, stumbling from the abrupt halt, their faces were ashen and their hearts still hammering fiercely from their near scrape with death.

Wham!

The wave in the lake once again reared to a height several meters taller than before. Inside the wave was the figure of a monster the size of ten ancient elephants. Eyes the size of lanterns glared furiously at the humans. "Despicable humans who dare interrupt this king's slumber!"

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng both subconsciously took a step back, seeming to find a sense of security the further away they drew from this immense monster.

"This is the Lord of Lava!" Feng Wanjian's heart was still palpating with fear. The enormous wave that had suddenly exploded just now was obviously from the aura of the Lord of Lava blasting forth. But what was with the vine that'd just appeared?

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng were completely befuddled when their bodies suddenly stiffened. They both looked to the side at the same time. They were stunned to see that the two figures next to them were the two from the Regal Pill Palace.

"You guys..." Feng Wanjian was flabbergasted. "When did you get over here?"

Mu Gaoqi snorted softly, "Feng Wanjian, if it wasn't for my senior brother Chen, you'd be food for the Lord of Lava now. How dare you ask how we made it over here?"

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng looked at each other, at a loss for words. They also knew that there was no one else here apart from the Regal Pill Palace disciples. Even though the two were jerks, they knew that they owed the Regal Pill Palace another favor.

"Many thanks for your noble act." For all his faults, Lin Feng could read the situation well, walking over to give Jiang Chen a cupped fist salute.

Jiang Chen waved his hand, "I only saved you to sabotage the Great Cathedral's plot, that's all."

"Great Cathedral?" Lin Feng started.

Feng Wanjian reacted swiftly and began to curse loudly, "That fucking Great Cathedral, they were the ones behind this alright! Or else, why would everything be calm and peaceful when they flew over, but so many disturbances pop up when our turn came around? They were definitely up to something!"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Yue Pan thought himself smart and tossed in a spirit glyph, disturbing the lifeforms in the lake. He meant to leave us in the lurch!"

Lin Feng's expression also changed greatly. "The Great Cathedral is a sect with vile, base bloodlines alright! Such vicious brutality! They are forever my enemy if I make it out alive!"

Feng Wanjian couldn't help but include the Great Cathedral's mothers in his greetings as well. 1 "Xu Gang that bastard, he had ulterior motives to begin with. We all kept our word and only brought minor origin realm helpers, but he and his earth origin realm! Hmph! We'll see which sect has the last laugh!"

Jiang Chen glanced over at the lava region. The Lord of Lava was almost going berserk as it kept firing off streams of lava at the shore, ramming repeatedly against the shores. It looked like he wanted to swallow everyone whole.

However, the lava lifeforms could only rampage in lava. They could do nothing when their enemies left that environment. Everyone would be safe now that they were on dry land.

When Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng saw the crazed Lord of Lava, they realized that this creature wasn't too intelligent, but was very obstinate. Even though they were safe now, their hearts once again began to beat faster with fear.

"Let's go." Jiang Chen waved his hand and took the lead with Mu Gaoqi.

Xu Gang and Yue Pan of the Great Cathedral had left quite a while ago, and those from the Walkabout Sect were further ahead. Jiang Chen was determined to obtain the spring, so he wasn't willing to fall behind by too much.

Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian naturally didn't dare compete with Jiang Chen anymore. After all, he'd saved their lives. In addition, they were all third level origin realm and had a clear idea of the prowess they possessed. The Lord of Lava's aura in the lava region was at least at the peak of the earth origin realm, yet Jiang Chen had made it over to the other side without setting off anyone's alarm bells. He even had the ability to save them from their predicament.

This level of strength was quite frightening. They were now well aware that the mysterious expert Mu Gaoqi had brought wasn't someone who they could contend against. Feng Wanjian had even laughably drawn a line in the ground before entering the cavern, not letting them in. When he thought about that act now, he felt chills run down his back, truly viewing himself as a capering clown. The other could've killed him in a second if he wanted to.

"Brother Feng, just what kind of freak did Mu Gaoqi invite? He's a minor origin realm, but why do I feel like he's stronger than Yue Pan?" Lin Feng was full of questions.

Feng Wanjian smiled ruefully, "You're asking me, but who do I go ask? Brother Lin, we need to get things straight from now on that the Great Cathedral is our mutual enemy. We don't have the strength to fight against this one from the Regal Pill Palace. No matter what conflict happens later, we must stand by the Regal Pill Palace, otherwise..."

Lin Feng was also in full agreement, "I too agree. Although the one from the Regal Pill Palace is strong and very mysterious, he's not a murderous demon and is completely different from those two scum from the Great Cathedral. We just need to be polite to them. I don't think they'll make a move against us then. Otherwise, he wouldn't have saved us."

Feng Wanjian nodded. "We should catch up. I hope the Walkabout Sect ambushes again and the vile Great Cathedral engages in dog-eat-dog for an enormous conflict."

The current situation fated Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian to be wearing the same pants and be standing in the same boat. A pair from the Walkabout Sect, two from the Great Cathedral, another two from the Regal Pill Palace, and the pairing of Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian made for four pairs.

After the setback they'd just experienced, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian were already leaning towards the Regal Pill Palace. Therefore, it was basically three sets of people competing for the spring.

The condition of extreme cold came back not long after they left the lava region.

"Gaoqi, be careful. The two from the Cathedral are about 2.5 kilometers ahead of us." The sensitivity of Jiang Chen's Psychic's Head was dialed up to the maximum due to his vision being obstructed. Mu Gaoqi completely trusted Jiang Chen by now, and didn't doubt his words in the slightest.

"Don't be in a rush to go in. Xu Gang and Yue Pan seem to be plotting something. They've stopped too." Jiang Chen prevented Mu Gaoqi from walking forward. He could discover those from the Great Cathedral in this distance, but he didn't have to worry about them detecting him.

He sensed for a moment and confirmed his feelings. "It looks like the Great Cathedral is going to fight with the Walkabout Sect. The Walkabout Sect was planning on ambushing us again, but the Great Cathedral discovered this and are prepared to counter attack. There'll be a good show now."

Since the two sects were going to face off, Jiang Chen had no reason to disturb them at all. The two forces that were about to meet ahead were all like snakes and scorpions. It was best if both sides ended heavily wounded.

As Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had stopped, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian caught up to them. They were curious when they saw their benefactor halted on the path.

Mu Gaoqi said, "The Great Cathedral is facing off with the Walkabout Sect up ahead. Let's stay back for now."

Feng Wanjian was delighted. "And I was hoping just now that they would dog-eat-dog, they're really biting each other? Haha! Fantastic! I hope both of them are heavily injured!"

The Walkabout Sect ambushed the group, and the Great Cathedral had schemed against them. Feng Wanjian wasn't kindly disposed towards either sect. He hated the Great Cathedral to the depths of his bones.

Jiang Chen closed his eyes without a word, fully utilizing his Psychic's Head. However, there was only so much he could sense, being this far away.

Roughly an hour passed.

Feng Wanjian grew a bit fidgety and couldn't help but ask, "Are they still at a stand off? Did they fight yet?"

Everyone's eyes flicked in unison over to Jiang Chen. He was also slightly surprised at this moment. They'd been paying attention to the conflict between the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect, but all had returned to calm after a short while.

"Brother Chen, what's the situation?" Lin Feng also asked.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow, "It's quiet again after a short conflict. Has the outcome already been determined?"

Lin Feng hastily responded, "Let's go take a look. No matter who wins, it's good for all of us. It's best if they're all down and out."

Jiang Chen felt that things were a bit odd, but it wasn't the thing to do to continue to stand here and wait. "Be careful, let's go take a look." Jiang Chen reminded Mu Gaoqi.

The four of them cautiously walked forward, and detected faint light in the distance not long thereafter. There was a wide karst cave, except that this cave was quite spacious. There was a large platform in it, and grotesque rocks abounded around it, looking quite sinister.

Xu Gang was actually the first to enter everyone's vision. He was currently caught between two enormous boulders, spitting up blood and wheezing his last breaths. Someone from the Walkabout Sect was in a puddle of blood not too far from Xu Gang, fresh blood sprayed everywhere.

The other Walkabout Sect disciple had fallen in front of a rocky curtain, along with Yue Pan. An exotic and rare spirit herb was at the end of the curtain. There was a long wound in the disciple's chest as he crawled arduously towards the spirit herb. Every time he moved forward, he lengthened the trail of blood on the ground, whereas Yue Pan had an ashen face. He seemed to have been hit with severe poison and had no more strength to move.

Feng Wanjian was delighted beyond belief to see this. He laughed heartily, "Haha! Look at you now! When a dog bites a dog, each ends up with a mouthful of fur. Good, good, good! How damn satisfying!"

Lin Feng also smiled happily. "These scum deserved what they got!"

The Walkabout Sect had ambushed them with hidden weapons, and whether it was the Tristar Sect or the Sacred Sword Palace, both had lost members to that ambush. Then the Great Cathedral had plotted against them in the lava region. This grudge went without saying. When they saw how the two sides were both gravely injured, how would Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian not be overjoyed? Jiang Chen hadn't anticipated either that the situation would turn thus.

1. Meaning that they were cussing at the Great Cathedral duo and their mothers as well.

2. Karst topography is a landscape formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks such as limestone, dolomite, and gypsum. Wikipedia.

Chapter 482: Waste of Scheming, Easy Trampling

“Gaoqi, remain here.” Jiang Chen said. Although the two sides in front of them were heavily injured, Jiang Chen’s intuition told him that something was a still bit off. Something strange was entwined in the air of this unfamiliar place, forcing him to stay on his guard.

Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian didn’t care much for that as they strode over, already hefting their swords to enthusiastically send the four on their way. Feng Wanjian stopped in front of Xu Gang, chuckling, “Xu Gang, you vile swine! You broke our oath and brought in an earth origin realm cultivator. Your karma has arrived!” He swung down at Xu Gang’s neck after speaking.

Jiang Chen didn’t stop them. He was more interested in that rare spirit herb. However, he felt something untoward the moment Feng Wanjian struck downwards, and instantly halted in his steps, preparing to back up. At the same time, a ghastly cry came from Feng Wanjian as he collapsed in a heap on the ground.

The Walkabout Sect disciple who’d been lying in a pool of blood stood up with a sinister smile. He didn’t look injured at all!

Almost at the same time, the light from a blade flashed from where Lin Feng had dashed to Yue Pan, and his head was separated from his body. The ashen-faced Yue Pan also leapt up, also looking full of vigor.

Bam bam bam!

Xu Gang sprang into action without delay, with the enormous boulders crushing his body suddenly flying at Jiang Chen with incredible force. The other Walkabout Sect disciple also jumped up and drew back his bow. The nocked arrow transformed into a streak of light as it shot towards Jiang Chen.

The balance had been critically altered in those crucial moments. Feng Wanjian had fallen from a sneak attack, and Lin Feng had been bisected in a single blow. The four who had originally been struggling for life had Jiang Chen surrounded from all four corners, already launching their killing blows.

It was a good thing Jiang Chen had been on his guard earlier. When he saw the boulders crashing down on him and the arrow flying through the air, he snorted softly and clenched his hands once, sealing off the air around his body with a magnetic storm.

Wham!

The boulders exploded as soon as they hit the storm’s front, and the speeding arrow vanished after being ground away by the storm. Jiang Chen’s eyes flashed coldly as he looked at each of the corners.

“So it seems the four of you were plotting together?” Jiang Chen laughed coldly at them. He hadn’t anticipated this scene from the Walkabout Sect and Great Cathedral. Seconds away from attacking each other, they’d formed an alliance and agreed to play dead to create this facade.

“Kid, state your name!” Yue Pan leered. “I don’t create nameless ghosts with my blade.” The eyes of the two from the Walkabout Sect rapidly darted around, a thick sense of killing intent within them.

Jiang Chen’s gaze was at ease as he looked at the latter two, “You’re dealing with the devil here. Aren’t you afraid of becoming sacrificial lambs to the Great Cathedral later?”

A disciple with almost triangular-shaped eyes snorted derisively. “That’s our matters, you don’t need to worry about that.”

Xu Gang yelled, “Kid, don’t try turning us on each other!”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “Do I even need to?”

Standing off in the distance, Mu Gaoqi was greatly beset with worry. He had produced a sword and was preparing himself to leap into the battlefield. Although his strength was only first level origin realm and on a completely different level from those present, he knew he couldn’t sit idly by as his comrade was surrounded.

“Gaoqi, back up some.” Although Jiang Chen was standing with his back to Mu Gaoqi, it was as if he had eyes on the back of his head as he stopped Mu Gaoqi’s impulsiveness.

Xu Gang suddenly grinned, “Mu Gaoqi, if you want to come down here to your death with that little bit of talent of yours, we won’t mind sending you on your way as well.”

Even a rabbit would bite if it was forced up a wall. Mu Gaoqi spoke in a rare moment of anger, “Xu Gang, don’t you overstep yourselves! The duos from the other three sects have been all eliminated now, what else do you want?”

Xu Gang snorted softly, glaring at Jiang Chen. “Mu Gaoqi, you’re something else, aren’t you? Where did you find this rogue cultivator? Even we were almost fooled by how deep he’d hidden himself.”

That the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect could set aside their previous grudges and team up against Jiang Chen meant that they had realized Jiang Chen was the true threat in this expedition. This was why they’d set aside their differences to create this ruse of injuring themselves to lure their enemy. It was a pity that Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian had escaped death from the lava lake only to die here.

Yue Pan flourished the blade in his hand. “Alright, less talk now. This kid isn’t an ordinary character since he could escape from the boiling lava lake. If the four of us don’t take him out together, none of us can dream about calmly proceeding later.” It was obvious that they were definitely in agreement on that point.

Mu Gaoqi cried out loudly, “Be careful, the Walkabout Sect uses poison!” Jiang Chen knew that without Mu Gaoqi’s reminder, but it was truly displaying their incompetence in front of a true connoisseur if they wanted to use poison on Jiang Chen.

Back when he’d been playing with poison in his previous life, who knew if the Walkabout Sect had even formed yet!

Xu Gang and Yue Pan were both Great Cathedral disciples and possessed frightening battle strength at close quarters combat. On the other hand, the Walkabout Sect disciples were skilled at long range combat, and excelled at using strange poisons from the shadows to control the battlefield.

If they hadn't all sworn to the heavens previously that they wouldn't act against each other before killing their opponent. Yue Pan and Xu Gang would've never been willing to expose their backs to the two from the Walkabout Sect.

Two figures pincered Jiang Chen between them, their speed leaving a trail of sand and rocks in the air. Yue Pan's style was fierce, dominating opponents with sheer momentum, whereas Xu Gang favored a vigorous attack, bursting with power. They were very similar in style, but their ease in coordinating this attack revealed how often they'd worked with each other. The twin attacks coming from either side would result in a combined strength that was far greater than the sum of its parts.

The two from the Walkabout Sect had sealed off the battlefield with their arrows and poisoned darts, using concealed weapons to harass Jiang Chen in tandem with Yue Pan and Xu Gang.

Mu Gaoqi was frantic and surreptitiously circled around to the back of one of the Walkabout Sect disciples, only to hear the latter snort derisively, "Mu Gaoqi, don't blame me for killing you if you step within three hundred meters of me!"

Mu Gaoqi had wanted to backstab the fellow from behind, and even more worried now that his plans had been seen through. He knew that he was only of first level origin realm and had never focused on martial strength. He had no advantages whatsoever if he wanted to face off with these third level origin realm cultivators.

Yue Pan's blade had locked onto Jiang Chen at this moment. "Time to meet your maker, kid!" Yue Pan's downward swing suddenly accelerated by a few notches. Light from the blade flashed by as the weapon bit deeply into Jiang Chen's shoulder.

Pfft!

The blow cleaved Jiang Chen clean in two. Xu Gang's blow also landed in that split second opening, smashing explosively onto Jiang Chen's upper body. He twisted his sword, making Jiang Chen's head explode loudly.

Xu Gang and Yue Pan looked at each other, highly pleased with themselves. They'd been practicing this concerted move since they were ten, and had never failed even against opponents a bit stronger than them. However, when the two had finished basking in the afterglow, they felt slightly nonplussed. The atmosphere felt a bit bizarre, and something felt off. It was like they'd overlooked a key detail.

Their strike had been clean and to the point, with no flaws to it whatsoever. Except, the feedback from that crisp and vigorous stroke was eerily similar to a giant gourd, and they felt none of the usual thrill that came from dismembering their opponent.

"Something's wrong!" Yue Pan took a look at the corpse and finally noticed. There was no blood.

"Yue Pan, what the hell are you guys doing?" The two from the Walkabout Sect had also discovered this outlandish situation and began yelling loudly.

Everyone suddenly felt the ground tremble beneath their feet, which rapidly grew in intensity till it felt like the earth was about to split apart.

Bam bam bam!

Countless explosions rocked the air as numerous holes suddenly appeared in the ground. Vine strands sprang out like the tentacles of a monster, instantly sealing off the area.

As for Jiang Chen, he landed in front of Mu Gaoqi with a twist of his body, looking none the worse for wear.

The expressions of Yue Pan and the others changed drastically as they discovered the vines around them were all lotus vines, each of them the frost-white limbs of the Ice Lotus. The vines surrounded the four disciples like an igloo.

“What the hell is this?” Yue Pan was feeling quite weirded out by this turn of events and slashed at one of the vines. It broke with a snap.

“Haha, it’s merely form! Good for looks and nothing else. It’s just a bunch of trash!” His sword danced with brilliance in the air as he slashed at a second vine.

Whoosh!!

Cold light flared brilliantly as this stroke slashed down. A faint layer of frost had grown on the longsword that was slashing down on the second vine. In the next second, it spread rapidly, covering the entire sword.

“No! This is freezing qi!” Yue Pan hurriedly threw away the sword and backed up, but a vine had snuck up behind him, as if it were a spirit snake. Its flower petals probed forwards, then wrapped around Yue Pan like an enormous mouth as countless currents of white frost instantly froze Yue Pan.

Crunch, crunch!

The flower petals shook a few times as its enormous biting force crushed Yue Pan’s body to pieces and digested it. The remaining disciples could do nothing but watch with mouths open in horror.

Xu Gang reached out, intending to use his old trick of having a scapegoat attract the vines while he made his escape. However, he had barely begun to reach out when two vines behind him wrapped around his waist and hoisted him into the air. He was immediately immobilized as he flew through the air.

Xu Gang was scared out of his wits, “Surrender, I surrender! Daoist Chen, I surrender!”

The other two Walkabout Sect disciples weren’t any better off. They had already been trussed up by the ice vines, and the immense freezing power of ice continuously assaulted their nascent soul, as if wanting to even freeze their circulation.

“Mercy, Daoist Chen! We surrender! If you need help in exploring the spirit spring, we’re yours to command!” The two from the Walkabout Sect knew that their life and death was up to a single thought of the other. If they still didn’t surrender now, they wouldn’t ever have a chance to.

Jiang Chen’s face was detached. “Mine to command?”

“Yes, yes! You know too that Mu Gaoqi is weak and insufficient. We’re the useful ones in moments of need!”

“That’s right, if you tell us to go east, we’ll never go west!”

Mu Gaoqi didn’t have the slightest reaction even though these people were calling him weak. He was completely shellshocked. He knew that Jiang Chen was strong, but had never imagined that Jiang Chen would win so easily when surrounded by four people. What kind of counter attack was this? It was a complete smackdown!

Chapter 483: Rune of Heavenly Water, Prison of Water

In the end, Jiang Chen had his own principles. He wouldn’t have antagonized these people if they hadn’t laid hands on him. After all, they had put quite some effort into their schemes, but unfortunately, those plans couldn’t entrap one of Jiang Chen’s strength. Sadly, this group was sly, slippery, and deeply selfish. They’d actually banded together to act against him! There was no way he would show them mercy.

He waved his hand and the petals of the ice lotus opened up, swallowing the struggling fellows whole.

Jiang Chen didn’t feel the slightest ripple of emotion as he watched this scene expressionlessly. The world of martial dao was just as cruel as this. If he was soft hearted and let them off, they would undoubtedly raise even more trouble when they left and returned to the sect.

He’d never liked to create trouble for and hobble himself with restraints of his own making. Mu Gaoqi was still speechless, trying to make sense of the near unbelievable turn of events.

Jiang Chen’s strength and presence gave him a formless pressure. He knew that it would be beneficial to himself when he invited Jiang Chen, but he hadn’t thought that everyone else would end up dead at this point.

“Gaoqi, do you think I should’ve let them go?” Jiang Chen suddenly smiled and asked.

Mu Gaoqi stammered, not knowing how to respond. He was weak by nature, and had made it to this step in his cultivation purely by using pills. He’d never experienced any tempering from cruel bloodshed. Therefore, he didn’t have a strong grasp of the law of the jungle.

“Gaoqi, if you don’t have this kind of mental preparation, you should refrain from adventuring outside that often in the future. This kind of experience isn’t suitable for you.” Jiang Chen sighed lightly and looked ahead. “Let’s go.” He’d already arrived at the rock curtain by the time his words had rung in Mu Gaoqi’s ears. He stood above the herb, only plucking it after careful consideration and coming to the conclusion that nothing was untoward.

Meanwhile, Jiang Chen’s words rang like the morning bell, causing great waves of emotion in Mu Gaoqi’s heart. When he thought back to everything that had happened on this expedition, he had to admit that he was still too naive. He’d thought that everyone would treat him fairly after he’d offered up the pills and would work together with him in exploring the spring. Reality had proven otherwise, and nothing had proceeded as he’d thought. If he hadn’t invited Jiang Chen, then at best, he would’ve been blocked outside the cavern, or even worse, slaughtered if he’d insisted in coming in.

Feng Wanjian had blocked him from entering, and those from the Great Cathedral had agreed. The Walkabout Sect had long since laid in wait after entering and attacked them all from the shadows. If it

hadn't been for Jiang Chen pulling him back, Mu Gaoqi surely would've been the first to fall given his cultivation level. When they arrived at the lava region, Yue Pan of the Great Cathedral had schemed against them. If it wasn't for Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi wouldn't have made it past the lava region at all. If he'd lacked even the slightest iota of luck, he would've fallen into the lava and fed to the lava monsters. And now in the karst cave, would he have had a better fate than Lin Feng or Feng Wanjian if not for Jiang Chen? Obviously not!

Mu Gaoqi instantly understood something when his thoughts traveled here.

"The jianghu is vicious, the jianghu is savage! The senior executives of the sect always conveyed this to us in the sect, but I was too naive. I always felt that because my pill potential was extraordinary, others will always kiss up to me and fawn over me. Who would've thought that the ugliness of humanity would be revealed in its entirety during the search for the spring? I likely would've died four times over had it not been for Brother Jiang Chen."

No words were as convincing as reality. Mu Gaoqi thoroughly laid down the burdens in his heart after this spontaneous enlightenment and called out, "Brother Jiang Chen, wait for me!"

There was only the two of them left now that all the others were dead. Mu Gaoqi hadn't been here before either, so they could only slowly explore their way forward. It was a good thing that he had a wood constitution, so he could more or less sense the spring. The two of them made slow progress forward based on these clues.

This ancient cavern was as if a bottomless pit from the legends. The further in they went, the more Jiang Chen could feel that this cavern must have had uncommon purpose in ancient times. The further down they went, the more sensitive Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's perceptions became.

"We should be almost there!!" Mu Gaoqi was a bit excited and spoke enthusiastically.

Jiang Chen reached out a hand and made a gesture to be quiet. "Gaoqi, speak with your consciousness. If a strong entity lives within this heavenly land, you'll wake it with your yelling."

Mu Gaoqi blushed deeply, feeling that he'd completely lost face for himself. He was still too untested after all, and wasn't able to keep his cool in the face of such a tiny matter.

"Brother Jiang Chen, do you sense any danger?" Mu Gaoqi asked with his consciousness.

Jiang Chen himself didn't know either if he was being paranoid. The ones who'd entered the cave were all dead, but there was a sense of danger ringing from his intuition that said danger was still present.

"Caution is the parent of safety. Gaoqi, the closer we get to our destination, the more dangerous things become." Jiang Chen slowed down and extended his consciousness to observe all the flora and fauna around him. The two of them passed through an endless, back corridor to be suddenly greeted with a patch of green light.

"We should be here." The scene opened up to them after they rounded the bend. There was a naturally formed lake in this underground world that seemed like an emerald embedded in this boundless night. The surface was as calm and smooth like a mirror, the waters a pure jade-green and emitting a dense mist of abundant spirit qi, lulling onlookers.

“Brother Jiang Chen, we’re rich, we’re really rich!” Mu Gaoqi still couldn’t hold himself in and began shouting excitedly.

Jiang Chen’s heart stirred as he suddenly felt a trace of danger, but looked around and saw nothing. He perked up his ears to hear water dripping down from the rock curtain and come to rest at their feet.

He raised his head for a look, and suddenly saw two drops start to descend. Jiang Chen’s God’s Eye suddenly contracted and magnified this falling water drop, seeing the dense runes that were appearing within it.

“This is bad!” Jiang Chen immediately reacted—this was an attack that had transmuted the attacker’s consciousness into liquid! That seemingly minuscule droplet contained immense, devastating and destructive power. This attack was absolutely beyond the range of the origin realm!

When Jiang Chen had time to respond, the two water drops had already enlarged. They suddenly became a waterfall crashing down from the nine heavens as a frightening water curtain instantly enclosed the two.

Two enormous bubbles had imprisoned Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi after a short while. The water curtain seemed thin, but it encompassed the strongest power found beneath the heavens. No matter how Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi rammed it, they were unable to pierce the bubble.

Jiang Chen had yet to run into anything like this since he’d set foot in the world. When he saw that there was no effect on the bubble after ramming it twice, he decided to stop his actions. He called upon his fire attribute arts and sent the Skyblaze Supernova Point sizzling towards the water curtain.

The result was still the same. Complete non-response, as if it’d sunk like a boulder into the seas.

The Supernova Point was currently Jiang Chen’s strongest single target attack. It only caused the runes in the water to flare when it hit the water curtain, but harm the curtain at all.

Mu Gaoqi was punching and kicking over on his side, but that too proved futile. The most frightening thing was that Jiang Chen kept sending messages to Mu Gaoqi, but the latter didn’t respond at all. It seemed that the water curtain could block all communication and make it so that Jiang Chen was unable to contact the outside world.

“Hmph! Two mere origin realm rats want to break through my Rune of Heavenly Water?” A figure suddenly flashed out of the shadows in the walls.

This person was stooped and a little hunchbacked, but even so, he was still very tall and bulky. He held a wooden cane in his hand, his vicious eyes sending out faint light like a hungry wolf’s. He took several leisurely spins around Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi.

Jiang Chen was surprised to see that this man wore the same clothes as the two Walkabout Sect disciples.

“This person is an expert from the Walkabout Sect?” Jiang Chen was astonished. Those two had invited such an expert as this one? But if this was the case, why did the two disciples have to bend to ally with Xu Gang and Yue Pan? Something wasn’t quite making sense here.

The hunchbacked expert murmured to himself. "Only these two rats have come squirreling over, so this means that the others are dead? These two look to be from the Regal Pill Palace? This isn't right, according to my speculations, it should either be the two from the Great Cathedral making it this far, or the two useless disciples from my Walkabout Sect. Why is it the two from the Regal Pill Palace?"

However, he didn't seem to care very much about this question after thinking about it for a while. "Hmph, it's easy enough to kill the rats from the Regal Pill Palace. If I wasn't worried for the scent of blood disturbing the strong being here, I would've killed both of you with a blow a long time ago."

The hunchback walked to Mu Gaoqi and stomped on the water curtain, cursing loudly, "Particularly you idiot! Screaming and yelling as if afraid that the entity here wouldn't detect you? What an absolute f*cking idiot!"

The two of them couldn't communicate with the outside world, but they could absolutely hear the hunchback's words. Mu Gaoqi was beside himself with regret, feeling that he'd dragged down Jiang Chen again.

It was rather Jiang Chen who sat down cross-legged, oblivious to the outside world when he realized after a few times that he was unable to break through the water curtain.

The hunchback expert was indeed an elder in the Walkabout Sect and had happened to hear some of the two disciples' conversation before they set out. He'd surreptitiously followed them after learning of the spring with the wood energy, and used his strength to bypass the two to reach the spring first. However, when he arrived, he discovered that there was a warning line drawn around outside the spring, a line left behind by a strong entity.

The strength of this entity was such even a second level sage realm as he felt a bit stressed. Therefore, he'd been brainstorming on how to bypass this entity, or at the very least not awaken it.

This was when Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had arrived, with the latter's holler angering the hunchback so that he'd used his arts to imprison the new arrivals.

It wasn't that he didn't kill people, but that he was worried the killing intent and bloody scent would disturb the entity if he did so. Even so, Mu Gaoqi's previous shout still set him a bit on edge. He became lost in thought as he looked at that line.

1. The great world, the scene that cultivators interact in.

Chapter 484: Dragon!

All of a sudden, thunder-like cracks rang out from the shores of the lake. The several hundred stone stairs next to the lake's surface trembled as the ground rumbled. The rumbling intensified, until the cavern itself began to quake. Enormous boulders shook loose from the rocky walls. It was a good thing that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi were protected by the water curtain, which deflected all the rocks for them.

The hunchbacked expert had a dark face, shooting an intense glare of utmost killing intent at Mu Gaoqi. He knew that the last yell had still disturbed the great being, completely ruining his plans!

Whoosh!

A green light abruptly shot up from the ground in front of the lake, creating a frightening rift in the earth. A black tail suddenly poked out through the crack. It extended into the air, seemingly probing the air. After a moment, it slapped down audibly towards the hunchback.

The hunchback had been on his guard ever since the earth had started to quake. He immediately dodged towards the stairs when he saw the tail sweep at him. He produced a thin blood colored blade and chopped down on the tail as it drew close.

Jiang Chen quailed momentarily when he saw this odd tail. "The tales say that only the tail of a dragon is seen, the head is never glimpsed. This is a dragon's descendent! A child of dragons resides here?!" His usually calm temperament was shattered by this revelation.

The power hidden in the bloodline of a dragon's descendent was utterly horrifying. Even the most humble and diluted of dragon bloodlines was still a part of the dragon race. Without question, they were one of the strongest bloodlines in ancient times.

The hunchback's strike landed on the tail and skittered off in a shower of sparks, leaving behind a clear, ringing sound.

Clang!

It actually hadn't broken through any of the scales on the black tail! The hunchback was also immensely shocked.

Although he hadn't used his full strength, he had calculated his power precisely, as well as the location the blow would land. Even if he didn't slice the tail open, he still should've broken through a scale or two!

But who knew that apart from a spray of sparks, this strike would not even leave behind a blemish on the tail! The hunchback broke out in a cold sweat at the sight. He swayed to the side and shot towards the rock wall next to him.

Slap, slap, slap!

The dragon tail seemed to possess a certain sensory magic that allowed it to predict the hunchback's movements. It pursued him without pause, cleaving through the ground like a knife through hot butter. It easily left deep furrows in the walls and caused countless rocks to fall in its wake.

The rumbling of the rocks made it seem like the cavern would collapse at any time. Jiang Chen watched the fight with unblinking eyes. "The dragon has only revealed its tail, but that alone is enough to force a second level saint realm to scurry in all directions. It looks like the power of this divine dragon is quite terrifying!"

It would be false to say that he wasn't the least bit frightened. However, he wasn't willing to miss this level of a fight, and he absolutely wanted the divine dragon to win. Otherwise, once the Walkabout Sect sage realm killed the dragon, Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi would be next on his list.

"This hunchback expert keeps dodging to the left and right but refuses to leave. Does he have anything else planned?" Jiang Chen's sharp eyes found an odd point. The battle situation was quite apparent. The

Walkabout Sect hunchback didn't dare take the tail head on, indicating that his strength was far below that of the divine dragon.

However, not only did the expert not attempt to escape, it even looked like he had something up his sleeves.

"Let's see what this Walkabout Sect old fellow wants to do." Jiang Chen couldn't take a closer look as long as he was trapped in the water bubble, and so was clueless as to the hunchback's plan.

However, of one thing he was certain, the hunchback was very set on the spring. He refused to back down even when he was facing a dragon.

The momentum of the dragon tail's attacks were quite shocking. Each sweep of the tail left deep grooves in the rock walls. If it landed on a human body, then even one of the second level sage realm would likely have his bones broken and tendons snapped, dying after spitting out blood.

"Just what is this old man planning?" Jiang Chen still had no clue after observing for a while, but suddenly realized with a glance to the side that Mu Gaoqi's face was turning purple. He was about to faint.

The water curtain maintained a vacuum, and although origin realm cultivators didn't need fresh air to live, the immense sealing abilities of the water curtain had an extremely strong corrosive effect, making the weaker Mu Gaoqi feel like he was unable to hold on.

Jiang Chen looked again at the water curtain, certain that it was impossible to break. However, that didn't mean he didn't know how to escape. He had laid out an escape plan long ago. He looked down at the ground and activated the Lotus.

The Rune of Heavenly Water was quite amazing and could even partially restrict the ground, but the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was a divine level treasure. The Rune didn't have the same level of power underneath the ground. A lotus soon appeared beneath Jiang Chen's feet after ramming its way through the water curtain.

Jiang Chen made a hand seal and created a copy of himself from the Lotus, placing it within the water curtain before allowing the lotus to bring him underground. Ever since he'd entered the origin realm, he'd fully tapped into the illusory arts of the Lotus. When he fought Yan Hongtu not too long ago, as well as one against four when fighting Xu Gang, Yue Pan, and the others, the copies had all been put to great use.

Jiang Chen repeated the same actions and saved Mu Gaoqi from the water prison as well.

"Brother Jiang Chen, where are we?" Mu Gaoqi slowly came to, but still felt rather groggy.

"We're in the depths of the earth. Don't fuss, the Walkabout Sect old thief is fighting a dragon. Although we're quite a bit away, I can't promise that we're out of their perception range."

Whether it was the second level sage realm hunchback or the mysterious dragon, both were existences far beyond the two of them. Mu Gaoqi was startled and tightly shut his mouth. He'd already caused trouble once with his speech, he'd finally learned his lesson this time.

Jiang Chen sat down cross legged. Even though they were hundreds of meters below ground, he could still feel the stunning battle taking place above them.

Enormous aftershocks kept rippling through their surroundings, and the two of them could feel the intense trembling even from deep within the ground.

Mu Gaoqi slowly recovered his senses and suddenly remembered Jiang Chen's words. He was shocked, "Brother Jiang Chen, what did you say? Dragon?!"

Jiang Chen nodded, "Correct. Dragon."

Any creature with the bloodline and form of a dragon could be called a dragon. Only when the bloodline became so diluted that their descendants could no longer shift into dragon form would they lose the right to be called a dragon. But even so, as long as a creature had the bloodline of a dragon, no matter how much their form had changed, they would call themselves the descendants of dragons. After all, even the slightest of association with the word "dragon" was a cause for pride. Since ancient times, it has always been one of the most noble of bloodlines, the truest king of beasts. Even the slightest drop of dragon blood meant that they were one of their descendants.

Currently however, judging from the dragon's tail and scales, this creature was definitely a true dragon. Jiang Chen wasn't sure of its particular bloodline, but it could definitely keep the true form of a dragon.

A dragon like that had a very pure bloodline no matter how far down in the world it had come. After all, changes to its body had to do with purity of its bloodline.

"Then... then can we get out?" Mu Gaoqi's thoughts weren't on the spring at all.

Dragon!

Dragons existed only in legends of the Myriad Domain. Even the premier experts of the Myriad Domain would pay solemn attention when they heard the legends of dragons. They were spoken of as invincible existences. Therefore, Mu Gaoqi had no thoughts of seizing a spring with wood spirit energy from a dragon. He only wanted to know if they could make it out alive.

"I don't know. If the situation called for us to escape, that old thief from the Walkabout Sect should've ran long ago. However, he didn't go, which indicates he must have noticed something. What reason do we have to flee since he isn't doing so?" Jiang Chen had seen too many true dragons in his past life, and often saw ones with the highest of lineages. Therefore, he wasn't the least bit afraid of dragons.

Even if the strongest of the ancient dragons might've been stronger than his father, the Celestial Emperor, he'd never seen one of that caliber in his past life, and those certainly didn't exist in the current plane he lived in.

When he took into consideration his knowledge of the ancient beast language and his equal skill in the noble dragon language, he decided to stay. In contrast, he was more at ease if the dragon killed off the hunchback expert. Jiang Chen would rather have dealings with a dragon than his fellow man.

He could possibly communicate with a dragon, but he'd never be able to communicate with an evil heart.

“Gaoqi, you stay here and don’t move a muscle. I’m going up to take a look.” Jiang Chen was concerned about the battle situation and was likewise worried about the spring. If he turned tail and left, he would likely regret it for the rest of his life.

Only with great risk comes fortune. He didn’t wait for Mu Gaoqi to respond as he made a hand seal. One of the petals of the lotuses retracted and folded Mu Gaoqi in. He was now imminently ill at ease about Mu Gaoqi. If he didn’t restrict his movements, the fellow might run around haphazardly later and ruin things again.

It was better for Jiang Chen to restrict his movement now and have him just stay where he was. There were only good things to be had from training inside the Lotus, and the spirit pearl Mu Gaoqi had should resist the Lotus’ power.

Chapter 485: Jiang Chen Reveals Himself

Jiang Chen had no lack of ability or courage, and he fully exploited the Lotus’ enormous capability to surreptitiously move upwards. Numerous ice and fire lotuses had taken up residence a few meters beneath and around the cavern. Jiang Chen’s consciousness descended upon them to observe the brutal fight.

The cavern was a wreck, fallen boulders dotting the area.

A black dragon was coiled atop an enormous boulder, staring viciously at a particular rock wall. The hunchback had already lost an arm, and his chest and back were covered with bloody wounds. He was panting heavily.

“You despicable human, how dare you set up a poison formation in my territory! What sect are you from?! When this sage one leaves this area, I’ll make sure to annihilate your sect!” The dragon’s awe-inspiring voice reverberated around the cavern, echoing to and fro.

“Hahaha!” The hunchback began to laugh maniacally, in spite of his injuries. “Such big talk! I might actually be slightly afraid of you if you weren’t poisoned to this state. You still want to throw your weight around after being hit with my Spirit Restraint Powder? Dream on!” His words set off a spasm of coughs, hacking up large mouthfuls of blood.

It was obvious that he’d used poison to ambush the dragon, but had been injured in turn as well. Given his grievous wounds, he couldn’t muster enough strength to end the dragon with one last blow.

Jiang Chen wasn’t sure if he should be happy or worried at this sight. The hunchback’s deviousness was too frightening. He hadn’t made a move when he’d first arrived at the spring, but had instead set down a poison formation first. It was obvious that he’d long been prepared for such an outcome.

As for the dragon, it hadn’t noticed the poison formation when it first woke up. It’d immediately attacked fiercely and ferociously, taking in more poisonous air as it did so.

Although its powerful attacks had injured the hunchback, the dragon had also been heavily dosed with the Spirit Restraint Powder, leaving it unable to concentrate its dragon breath anymore. It too was unable to give the hunchback a lethal blow.

One true dragon and one second level sage realm had both suffered great losses.

“Vile human, don’t think I don’t know your intentions! As good as the spring is, it won’t purify your lowly bloodline.” The dragon was incensed.

The hunchback laughed leisurely. “Just keep talking tough! I won’t die from these injuries for a short while anyways. But with your poison, even with the true essence of a dragon, how long can you hold on without aid? Three months? Six months? One year? I’ve got more than enough time to spare. When you die, I’ll peel off your skin, pull out your tendons, bleed you dry, feed on your heart, and then refine your core, hahaha!! The bloodline of a dragon and a spring with wood spirit energy, what a fortuitous occurrence that the heavens have given me! There hasn’t been an emperor realm cultivator in the Myriad Domain for hundreds of years. It looks like I’m predestined to become a Great Emperor and unite the Myriad Domain!”

If one could absorb the bloodline of a dragon, ascending to the emperor realm was a given. Add the baptism of the spring, and it wasn’t farfetched to think that he’d become a Titled Great Emperor that everyone in the Divine Abyss Continent would look up to.

The hunchback started laughing proudly as he started to imagine his future, but his laughter choked off into silence as a violent light shone in his eyes, “Who’s there?!”

Although Wei Wudao 1 was gravely injured, his consciousness was unimpaired, and he felt a ripple of another consciousness in the shadows, observing them. The shout he let out shook the rock walls in its intensity, rock shards falling as they fragmented into pieces.

That ripple of consciousness had been Jiang Chen in the shadows. The Lotus had almost perfectly concealed him, and he’d been very careful, but he hadn’t thought that Wei Wudao would be even more shrewd than a rat! He immediately retracted his consciousness and ceased observing.

Wei Wudao looked around for a bit, but came up empty handed. “That’s odd, I definitely felt a consciousness spying from the shadows. Although it hid itself well, there’s no mistake about it.” Wei Wudao suddenly looked at the two water curtains. The two figures were still inside. “Weird, was it my imagination? Those two origin realm rats have no future but death under the suppression of my Rune. There’s no way they can escape. Can it be that there’s some remnants left alive from that pack of minor origin realm cultivators who entered the cave earlier?”

Wei Wudao suddenly jerked in surprise when his thoughts reached that point. It wasn’t that he was afraid of those minor origin realm cultivators. He was confident he could handle them all, even if they came charging in as a horde. Even a lean camel was bigger than a horse, and his injuries were only to his body. His battle strength might be below par, but that wasn’t enough to prevent him from dealing with a few minor realm cultivators.

Wei Wudao’s gaze was about to shift from the water curtain when a thought struck him.

“Wait... wait!” Something flashed through his mind. The quick glance he’d taken just now had set off a slight warning bell. His body flashed as he landed next to the water curtains like a large bird of prey. The closer he was to the water curtain, the further he was from the dragon. Therefore, he didn’t feel the slightest pressure from this movement.

“How can this be!?” He looked at the two figures in the water curtain, particularly Mu Gaoqi. His face had been almost turning purple from suffocation earlier, but why was he actually more rosy cheeked now? This doesn’t make sense!

Wei Wudao paced around the curtain, looking carefully at the two. However, he couldn’t see anything through the water either. If a level two sage realm cultivator looked carefully at the illusion that Jiang Chen was channeling through the Lotus, they would’ve certainly seen some flaws. But when viewed through the curtain and his heavy injuries obscuring his perception, he could call upon only half his cultivation. Therefore, he couldn’t see much of anything no matter how hard he looked.

Wei Wudao’s unease only grew as he slapped his hand against the water curtain, a blue light from his hand seal covering the water curtain.

Pop! Pop!

The two water curtains popped as two figures landed in front of Wei Wudao.

“Hmm? This isn’t them!” He was greatly shocked and slammed his hand down on the two lotuses. They swayed and then drilled deep into the ground.

This turn of events left Wei Wudao openmouthed with surprise. He’d been out and about in the world for who knew how long, and had imprisoned many with his Rune. Even sage realm cultivators would find it almost impossible to escape if confined by his rune, but now two origin realm rats had escaped! He was both angered and anxious.

He was angry that his Rune had proven ineffective, and anxious that the two origin realm rats might come back with reinforcements, ruining his advantage for taking the spring for himself.

A true dragon and a spring of wood spirit energy. This was a fortuitous occurrence bestowed by the heavens! What portion of it would be his if stronger people arrived? He didn’t even dare think about it!

As he blanked momentarily, he was suddenly struck with joy. That peeping consciousness he’d sensed just now must have come from the two minor origin realm cultivators.

Since they haven’t left yet, there’s no need for them to leave now!

Wei Wudao suddenly smiled and flicked his hand, a jade-green vertical bamboo flute appearing in his right hand. “A mere origin realm wants to display your incompetence to me? My ‘Hypnotic Requiem’ melody will destroy your consciousness, even if you’re hidden thousands of feet in the ground.” Wei Wudao had many hidden techniques, and this particular melody was useless on dragons, so he hadn’t bothered to use it. The souls of dragons were simply too strong, and the consciousness of a dragon was almost invincible. Wei Wudao had never thought of using this method to suppress the dragon. However, it was perfect for two mere origin realm cultivators.

Jiang Chen knew that things had taken a bad turn when his consciousness had been discovered. However, he wasn’t nervous as he decided to just break out of the wall and land on the other side, placing the dragon between him and Wei Wudao.

The dragon had obviously long since detected Jiang Chen’s presence. He looked Jiang Chen up and down as the human broke out of the wall.

Jiang Chen grinned and greeted it in the dragon language, "Five claws and horns. You're a true descendent of the dragons!"

The dragon trembled when he heard the dragon tongue, staring at this human young man with incredulity. "Human, you know dragon speech? Are you the reincarnation of a true dragon?"

"...no no, there's no presence of a dragon about you."

"I'm not the reincarnation of a dragon, but I'm a friend of the dragons." Jiang Chen spoke in flawless dragon.

The two of them chattered away in the dragon language, completely stunning Wei Wudao. He glared fiercely at Jiang Chen, "Kid, just what kind of background do you have?"

Jiang Chen smiled, completely at ease, "Does that matter, Wei Wudao? Are you going to get the hell out now yourself, or will you wait for the experts from my sect to come and destroy you?"

"You!" Wei Wudao scanned the surroundings and found no sign of Mu Gaoqi's consciousness. He suddenly started, "Your companion fled?"

Jiang Chen laughed. "Do you think we'd be so dumb as to stay here for you to capture? Of course he went back to get reinforcements!"

"Went back?" Wei Wudao's eyes spun in thought. "You're a disciple of the Regal Pill Palace, and it takes at least four to five days to make a round trip from there. By that time, I'll have assimilated the dragon blood, refined the core, been baptized in the spring and gone on my merry way. Your sect can only come to pick up your carcass!" Wei Wudao lifted the flute and prepared to play.

Jiang Chen had come out because he'd been worried about this "Hypnotic Requiem". He could resist its effects, but Mu Gaoqi, hundreds of feet below, wouldn't be able to. This was why Jiang Chen had come out to face this Wei Wudao.

Of course, he wasn't the sort to put himself in sure danger like a moth to flame. He'd broken out of the wall because he'd already made his own plans. He would never stand face to face with his enemy without preparations beforehand. But even with Wei Wudao's injuries, a second level sage realm still wasn't someone Jiang Chen could handle.

"Wei Wudao, who are you trying to frighten with a mere 'Hypnotic Requiem?' Why don't you get a taste of this first!" Jiang Chen pulled back on Sunpiercer after speaking, sending out three arrows in quick succession like meteors flaring across the sky, aimed straight at Wei Wudao.

"Pathetic little tricks!" Wei Wudao's flute flicked left and right and knocked the arrows away with ease.

Chapter 486: Use of All Trump Cards, Destroying Wei Wudao

The dragon was also immensely disappointed once it saw Jiang Chen's cultivation level. "Young man, even this sage can't help but suspect your intelligence. You could've escaped, why did you come out to your death? Your cultivation is leagues apart from his!" The dragon sighed in the dragon language.

When Jiang Chen had first appeared and spoke fluent dragon, the dragon had actually felt a bit of anticipation for this human's next move. But when he actually saw Jiang Chen make his move, his hope

evaporated like a snowflake in the desert. Although the youth had a decent strength, that was at most when facing off against a sky origin realm cultivator. It was absolutely a different case when compared to a sage realm cultivator.

Even though Wei Wudao had successfully knocked aside Jiang Chen's arrows, he was still slightly surprised at the strength behind them. A minor origin realm cultivator is capable of exhibiting the battle ability of a sky origin realm cultivator!? A trace of alarm began to grow in Wei Wudao's heart. If he didn't kill this kind of opponent, he would only be fostering trouble for himself in the future.

He sneered, "Kid, do you think you can avoid death by hiding behind that little eel? I admit that your cultivation isn't bad, you even count as one of the premier geniuses of the Myriad Domain. However, the dumbest thing you've done yet was running out to play the hero even though you had the opportunity to escape. Since you've come so boldly, how would I be able to face the senior executives of your Regal Pill Palace if I were to let you go? Even giving you Sunpiercer, just who are you to old man Yun Nie?"

As an elder of the Walkabout Sect and a master of poisons, Wei Wudao often sparred with Elder Yun Nie of the Regal Pill Palace. In fact, he had a bit of a grudge with the elder. He immediately recognized the weapon when Jiang Chen brought out Sunpiercer. From there, it was easy enough to conclude that this youth had a relationship with that elder of the Regal Pill Palace.

Sunpiercer was just something that Jiang Chen was using to cover up his true attack. Instead of responding, he just laughed, making a hand seal as he did so.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!

A slew of vines tore through the walls and ground of the cavern. At first count, they numbered around eighty, each as thick as a full grown tree. They wove through the air, clustering together to form a bristling wall. Every twist and curve of the vines gave off a palpably lethal aura.

"The hell is this?" Wei Wudao was stunned. However, he was still a sage realm expert. A little complication like being besieged by vines wasn't enough to faze him. "Kid, you certainly have some ability to boast about. At least, being able to dual train water and fire is quite the feat. But.. so what!? Do you think that you could rely on mere minor origin realm cultivation to try and refine me with fire? Or use ice to seal me in?"

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was unequalled, but only when it was facing a strength on par with or slightly above it.

The enormous gap between the minor origin realm and the mortal sage realm wasn't something that could be crossed on a moment's whim, so Wei Wudao naturally had reason to dismiss Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow, "Wei Wudao, were you uninjured, I may not have dared to try challenging you. But, here you are, a single strike away from crumbling. This sort of risk is definitely worth it for the spring."

It was like Wei Wudao had heard a truly amusing joke as he broke out in hearty laughter. "It looks like you truly believe you have a chance! In which case, let me give you a look, an abject lesson on how puny

a minor origin realm is in front of a sage realm cultivator!" He put away the flute, drawing instead the blood-red longsword he had used before.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft!

Wei Wudao's body was a shadow as it flashed by four of the vines. The four vines were severed with barely any resistance, falling limply to the ground.

Jiang Chen's pupils contracted swiftly, apparently surprised by a sage realm cultivator's overbearing ability. When he faced off against Sunchaser and Yan Hongtu previously, at most, they could only sever one vine. Wei Wudao had sliced away four with a single careless stroke. He well deserved the reputation of a second level sage realm cultivator. However, Jiang Chen wasn't disheartened. He manipulated the fire lotus, sending goutts of flame through the air. His finger stabbed forward and the air began to sizzle and sear.

"Skyblaze Supernova Point!" Supernova Point was his strongest attack he'd developed so far. It was like an inferno had descended from the skies, a white hot pyre to its target. The terrifying fire elemental power congealed at the very tip of his finger until it streaked through the air with an explosive blast.

Wei Wudao was also quite surprised when he saw the strength behind this finger. Such domineering strength is coming from a minor origin realm cultivator?

He laughed heartily, "Interesting, hmm? But, go back and suckle at your mother's teat for a few more years before coming to challenge me!" He extended his hand and several runes rippled out, expanding in the air. Suddenly, the water curtains of the Rune of Heavenly Water cascaded down in front of Wei Wudao, defending against the Skyblaze Point with barely a ripple.

On the other side, Jiang Chen wasn't dejected by this development. Instead, he chuckled and suddenly reached out with his right hand, his fingers constantly flickering gently through hand seals as if he was playing the zither.

Suddenly, all the lotuses began swaying to an odd rhythm. The cadence gave off a mesmerizing feeling, not at all like the battle crazed tempo that had just happened. A strange raspy sound echoed in the air, emitted by the vines as they swayed.

Wei Wudao held his breath for a moment, feeling strange. "What are you playing at, kid?" He fell silent, trying to figure out what was happening. The battle's rhythm had suddenly flipped from a furious back and forth to this drastically slowed tempo. There was definitely something odd going on.

But what was strange about it?

Wei Wudao stared at the rhythm of the lotuses, determined to read something from it. There seemed to be a frightening attack held within this bizarreness that would spell disaster for him at any second.

Except, no matter how he stared, he couldn't see through it. He suddenly yawned as a thought flashed through his mind. It might be nice to take a nap.

That thought didn't seem to come alone, as it was followed by many more like, surging into his consciousness like a locust plague. As he looked at the vines sway, milky-white mist began to drift from from, an oddly appropriate accompaniment the rhythm.

“What’s going on?” Wei Wudao’s heart suddenly sank as he felt his body soften. He actually had the urge to drift away to sleep.

His consciousness began to dissipate.

“Wei Wudao, you’re injured. It won’t ever heal if you don’t rest. Take a nap.” This voice kept reminding him in his consciousness, hypnotically lulling him to sleep. He felt that something was amiss, but a strong sense of drowsiness kept muddling his senses.

He suddenly shook his head and his body.

Jiang Chen hastily yelled when he saw this, “Wei Wudao, look here!” Just now, he’d been releasing the sap from the Divine Tree of Dreams from the vines. He’d first obtained it in the Valley of Destruction during the initial selection in the sixteen kingdoms. Since even he had almost fallen to its hypnotic scent, he’d learned his lesson and collected large amounts of sap, but hadn’t had a chance to use it after refining it.

He’d released it through the Lotus just now to hypnotize Wei Wudao. Even the swaying of the vines was an imitation of the tree.

However, Wei Wudao’s strength of heart was still stalwart, even though he was deeply injured. He desperately hung onto a sliver of wakefulness, and wasn’t completely lulled by the Divine Tree.

It would’ve sent him into eternal slumber once the hypnosis took effect. It was a pity that there was that final step left.

When Wei Wudao shook himself all over, Jiang Chen knew that the Divine Tree hadn’t fully succeeded. But it had provided him with an opportunity, a chance where his enemy’s consciousness was at its weakest, and his defenses the lowest. At that moment, Jiang Chen fully activated the Evil Golden Eye and infused it with all the metal power he could control, melding the two into a brilliant beam that shot into Wei Wudao’s eyes.

Wei Wudao’s consciousness was already half asleep thanks to the Divine Tree’s hypnosis. Although he was still hanging onto a sliver of consciousness, he still wasn’t fully awake and was thus at his most vulnerable. On the other hand, Jiang Chen’s every move had been for the sake of this blow with the Evil Golden Eye. In fact, it could be described as an attack sent at his peak condition.

Even one sitting at the peak of the sky origin realm would likely lose in the face of this sparkling missile. But it still wouldn’t be enough to take down Wei Wudao... had he not been in his current condition.

Whoosh!

He shook all over as it suddenly felt like thousands of golden needles had shot into his eyes, drilling into the depths of his blood vessels.

“No!” Although Wei Wudao didn’t know what kind of art this was, but he knew the signs of trouble when he saw it, and he’d definitely sensed it when that golden light burrowed into his body. He suddenly threw back his head and howled, “Little swine, I...”

But his voice petered out into silence before he could rant more. His pupils contracted rapidly as all his circulation seemed to freeze. The power of metal in that Evil Golden Eye had thoroughly assimilated his circulation and froze instantly.

Jiang Chen didn't hesitate when he saw that he'd succeeded. He gathered up the immense power of metal once again and stabbed at the air from afar, focusing his power into a meteoric streak that shot towards Wei Wudao.

Supernova Point!

This was his strongest point thus far, combining the power of metal essence with the strongest power of metal from the magnetic golden mountain, coalescing into the "Galaxy Supernova Point".

If an expert from ancient times demonstrated this move, the power within would be enough to crush the stars, moon and sun.

Bam!

Just like a supernova, Wei Wudao's body suddenly exploded. The boundless attack utterly fragmented him. His nascent soul didn't even have time to emerge before it too was incinerated to dust.

Jiang Chen himself was secretly impressed by the power behind this finger. The strength of this move was far beyond his expectations.

Now that his enemy was dead, Jiang Chen also breathed a sigh of relief. He'd used almost all his power and all his trump cards this time. Even so, a large part of why he'd won was Wei Wudao's heavy injuries. Otherwise, even all of his arts would've been incapable of defeating this second level sage realm.

Chapter 487: Dancing with Dragons

Jiang Chen had absolutely taken a huge chance with this battle. He'd revealed multiple trump cards over the course of this battle, including the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, the Divine Tree of Dreams, the Evil Golden Eye, and the Galaxy Supernova. The fight had lasted for just a few moments, but he was as exhausted as if he'd battled for three days and three nights.

Drained beyond belief. He was almost completely wrung out.

On the other side, the dragon was in complete shock. It'd nearly succumbed to despair when it saw Jiang Chen's initial three arrows. But the match had quickly taken turns that even it'd never expected. That human youth it didn't think much of had actually killed Wei Wudao!

Although Wei Wudao himself wasn't much in the dragon's eyes, he was still a second level sage realm cultivator. Even injured, that was still an existence that couldn't be underestimated.

This young man was just a minor origin realm cultivator, but possessed a battle ability far beyond his cultivation, and a number of techniques that made the dragon's scalp go numb. Suddenly, it didn't know whether to be happy or depressed.

Wei Wudao was dead, so the antidote to his Spirit Restraint Powder was certainly in this young man's hands. To the dragon, this meant that he'd kept the wolf at bay, only for the tiger to slip in through the back door.

The atmosphere became a bit heavy, and the dragon could no longer take it. It fixed his gaze on Jiang Chen, who was sitting on the stone steps, and rasped, "Young man, what do you intend to do to me?"

Jiang Chen started, then started laughing. "I said I'm a friend of the dragons, why would I do anything to you?"

The dragon tilted his head and widened its eyes, staring at Jiang Chen, obviously unable to tell if those words were a lie or not.

Jiang Chen opened his palm. "This is the antidote, I obtained it just now."

The dragon was greatly surprised. He'd swept the carcass with his consciousness just then and hadn't found the antidote. So the youth took it alright!

"How did you obtain it?"

Jiang Chen smiled without responding. He had so many lotuses that acted like extensions of his limbs. Anything they could reach was as if already in his pocket!

"Alright..." The dragon sighed. "No matter what, you're still a bit better than that old ruffian. What do you want?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "I only have two requests."

"What requests?" The dragon revealed a trace of wariness. "Don't tell me you want to enslave me. That's impossible! One of the noble dragon race will never be a slave!" The dragon spoke firmly, cutting off this idea before it could bloom.

Jiang Chen knew much about the dragon race, even more than this dragon in front of him. Dragons were indeed the nobility among all beasts. However, there were many that had been enslaved by humans in the ancient times. Even his own father rode a dragon carriage hauled by nine five-clawed golden dragons when he traveled. There was no such thing as not enslaving a dragon.

The strong were revered, and no race was able to escape this odd logic. However, Jiang Chen knew that it was unrealistic to expect this dragon to docilely bow down to him in servitude. He smiled faintly, "Your strength is far greater than mine. I don't dream of enslaving you. However, I do plan on signing a treaty with you, to form an alliance. This is my first request."

"A treaty?" The dragon blinked, mulling over the request. After a moment, he nodded. "I can consider a mere treaty. However, you can't force me to this and that. I will go back on my agreement then."

Jiang Chen laughed, "We're allies, I won't be attempting to enslave you. However, don't think that there are no benefits for you in this treaty. To be honest, even though you're a true dragon, you've awakened less than a hundredth of the ancient dragons' bloodline in your body. What if I could awaken your heritage, and gift you the arts of the dragons? What if I could help you fly through the air and ground, be hailed a Great Emperor, transform into human shape, summon the wind and rain, break through the void, and ascend to the heavenly dao?"

Jiang Chen's every word in the dragon language slammed against the dragon's heart as if a spell.

"What are you saying?"

“I’ll say this only once.” Jiang Chen smiled. “You are a true dragon, but you’re currently holing up in this remote corner of the Divine Abyss Continent. You have no confidence in showing yourself before you’ve reached your full strength. If you do, you’re afraid that those who call themselves emperors will capture and enslave you. You don’t need to deny anything, because the only way that no one knows of you in the Myriad Domain, with your peak sage realm cultivation is if all this is true.”

The dragon was silent. It was indeed a true dragon that had awakened from a dragon egg after countless years of nurturing in this spring of wood spirit energy. It knew nothing of the outside world, just fragments from his inherited memories that awoke through the years.

It’d grown strong in the couple hundred of years that it’d stayed in the spring, but had never left. It was lonely, but had no companions to speak to. There was no one it could depend on, or succor.

It was a good thing that as its cultivation level had risen, its memories had continued to awaken and it had learned more and more. Its memories were the reason it hadn’t dared leave the spring, the fragments that informed it that there were many races in the world that eclipsed it in strength. The experts of these races all shared a common interest, and that was to enslave dragons.

Having a descendent of a dragon as their steed, a contracted beast, was a very fashionable thing amongst them.

It was a true dragon, so it would more than likely become very popular as soon as it appeared. Therefore, it both yearned for the outside world and worried that it would be hunted down as soon as it appeared. This contradiction left it bereft of the conviction to step away from the spring, and in that moment, its thoughts had been laid bare by Jiang Chen. It couldn’t find the words to refute him.

“Youth, you speak of impressive sounding things, but how do I know you’re not lying to me?” The dragon was still very much on its guard.

“I hold your life and death in my hands right now, what need do I have to lie to you? Besides, I’ve always valued keeping my word. As a show of faith, take this secret method of the dragon race and study it first.” Jiang Chen sent over a secret method of the dragons with his consciousness after speaking.

“Mm?” The dragon immediately detected upon receiving the method that this really was a cultivation art of the dragons!

Jiang Chen smiled. “I also have the method that dragons use to transform. With your cultivation, you should have long been able to transform. Your inherited memories must not contain this technique, does it?”

As one of the royal races of ancient times, the dragons had noble lineages and extraordinary status. Jiang Chen had naturally studied them thoroughly. He could easily take out a handful of those techniques, and it was made even easier since this dragon was still just a baby compared to the dragon races in his past life. It couldn’t even count as having undergone an initial awakening, only a half step awakening at most. He could naturally bluff a baby dragon.

“A transformation technique?” The dragon’s eye gleamed. “Do you mean that?” It couldn’t help but become excited at the thought of being able to transform. If it could shift into a human form, he’d be able to travel the four seas without worrying about being hunted down.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely, "Forget it if you don't believe me. There should be nothing amiss with the method I just sent you, right?"

"Youth, just who are you? According to my inherited memories, you shouldn't know so much at your cultivation level."

Jiang Chen didn't directly respond to this question. He smiled instead, "You may be the only true dragon in the entire Myriad Domain, and I'm the only person in the entire region who understands dragon tongue. I may even be the most special existence in the Divine Abyss Continent!"

For some reason, the dragon grew thoughtful when it heard Jiang Chen's words. Its draconic intuition told it that this human youth didn't seem to be blustering. "I can agree to the matter of the alliance, name your second condition." The dragon's tone softened.

"The second condition would be the spring. This is your territory, but I want to make use of its power to baptize my body."

"That's not a problem!" The dragon agreed without a moment's pause. "The spring has an endless supply of spirit power and can purify itself. It will still recover over time even if ten, hundreds, or thousands of people are immersed here. If you like it, I don't even mind if you take the entire spring away."

"Take it away?" Jiang Chen grew curious. "How would we do that?" He really didn't have the kind of treasure that could swallow rivers or move creeks to just abscond with this spring.

The dragon chuckled, "A trade! You give me the transformation method and I'll help you move the spring."

Jiang Chen's interest was piqued, "What about the treaty?"

"You don't have a bad heart, I can agree to the treaty. I can even gift you some dragon crystals and dragon blood if necessary. But, I've heard you humans are very treacherous and often betray your allies. Therefore, we can be allies, but you must swear to the heavens that we won't betray each other."

The dragons were a proud race, and would never ignore, regret, or betray a treaty. But humans were different. There were numerous stories of humans betraying even their kin for profit. Dragon crystals or a drop of dragon blood were an exceedingly valuable item for anyone. However, to this enormous dragon, dragon crystals were just its solidified fecal matter, and although dragon blood was precious, it wasn't much to give up just a bit of it.

It certainly wasn't an empty boast to claim that dragons were full of treasure from head to toe.

Jiang Chen smiled, gratified at the offer. "Alright! It would be remiss for me to keep hemming and hawing since you're being so forthright. Let's happily settle on this then!"

One man and one dragon sat on the banks of the spring after they chatted, swearing to the heavens and signing a treaty of allies. The dragon seemed to have quite a good impression of Jiang Chen as well as it didn't overly haggle over the details. The two concluded their treaty in a lighthearted atmosphere.

Jiang Chen flung over the antidote when they were finished, "You only need to eat the antidote for it to work. Remember, don't be in a rush. Expel all the toxins, lest you give rise to countless trouble in the future."

Chapter 488: Cutting the Hair and Washing the Marrow, An Enormous Change

The atmosphere lightened considerably after the treaty was signed. When the dragon began to expel the toxin, Jiang Chen even purposefully assumed his role as pill master to probe the dragon's body, ensuring the complete removal of toxins. He didn't hold back either, as he transmitted the "Dragon Transformation Method" to the dragon.

"This transformation method isn't an easy thing to train either, and won't be grasped overnight. However, the foundation of this transformation method has to do with the arts of your dragon race. True dragons can be large or small, can rise or hide themselves. You can grow large enough to spit clouds and mist, or so small that you are virtually invisible. If you wish to soar the four seas, then you must master this foundational method and train in the skills of the dragons." Jiang Chen didn't need to resort to any tricks if he wanted to tame this dragon. He only needed to show it some of his abilities.

Indeed, the dragon's admiration for Jiang Chen grew even stronger after it received the "Dragon Transformation Method". "Youth, it's not a bad thing to ally with you!"

Dragons were proud by nature and normally weren't much for compliments. As such, their rare occasions of praise came from the heart.

"Since you've been so forthright, I, a son of the dragons, won't lie to you either. If you wish to move the spring away, you must first move that Taiyi Jade Vine. That Jade Vine is the only source of the spring's energy. Once you remove the Jade Vine, I will suck up the water for you.

The dragons could summon the wind and rain, or overturn rivers and seas. That was their natural gift, and there was no need for them to be taught how to do so. They could suck dry a massive river, much less this small lake.

Jiang Chen smiled. "Not yet," and summoned the Goldbiter Rat King. "Ole Gold, I've found the natural place of spirit power. Have you selected your children yet?"

The Rat King stared at the jade green spring with narrow eyes, delight suffusing them. "Young master Chen, you didn't lie to me alright! Fantastic, fantastic! I've already selected a hundred of my children and they're ready at any time."

The Goldbiter Rats were small, so not a lot of spirit power was required to evolve their bloodlines.

Jiang Chen laughed and responded, "Ole Gold, you're in too much of a rush. The spring's owner is here, don't you intend on greeting him?"

The Rat King had simply been far too agitated, with eyes only for the spring. He hadn't noticed the large dragon coiled atop it at all. When he finally saw the dragon on the stone steps, he couldn't help but tremble all over and hid behind Jiang Chen. "This... this is a... dragon... dragon!"

The royals of ancient times, the dragons possessed a naturally intimidating aura. This was why the Rat King was almost scared into a faint when he saw the dragon.

“Just look at you! This is a true dragon, the owner of this place and also our friend. Hey now, buck up, you’re the descendent of the Goldbiter Kingrats! Although they weren’t the equivalent of the dragons in ancient times, they were still a frightening race!”

The Rat King chuckled and cowered, still appearing a bit shell shocked.

The dragon suddenly spoke, “Descendent of the Goldbiter Kingrats? I have a few memories of them, a terrifying race capable of swallowing the heavens. They’re supposed to be unnaturally fierce, so why are their descendants so cowardly?”

Forget swallowing the heavens, the Rat King wished the ground would swallow him whole.

Jiang Chen smiled, changing the subject, “You’re a dragon, but you should at least have a name when you walk about outside, hmm?”

The dragon started. It really had never considered having a name. It asked blankly, “Do I have to have a name?”

The Rat King couldn’t help but muffle laughter when he heard that idiotic question.

“And what are you laughing at?” The dragon’s face chilled. A mere rat dared laugh at a dragon?

The Rat King’s expression changed drastically as he tucked his head in and crept behind Jiang Chen again, quietly sniggering off on the side.

Jiang Chen nodded. How about this, you have a body of black scales for armor, so I’ll call you Long Xiaoxuan.” 1

“Why small?” The dragon asked dejectedly.

“Unless you like being called Long Daxuan?” 2 Jiang Chen smiled wryly, “Don’t blame me for not warning you now, but Daxuan really doesn’t sound good, and it’s easy to appear older than your years.”

“Then let’s do Xiaoxuan.” The dragon said, depressed.

“Alright, alright, I’ll call you Brother Long in the future if you don’t like the name Xiaoxuan. This way, everyone will think your surname is Long.”

“That’s more like it!” The newly crowned Long Xiaoxuan nodded with satisfaction.

“Alright, Brother Long, you’ve already received the method and if you don’t mind, please take some cover. Your presence will surely badly scare those Goldbiter Rats. Plus, I have a companion with a natural-born wood constitution who’s waiting for baptism in the spring.” Jiang Chen hadn’t forgotten Mu Gaoqi.

The latter was magically delivered to the edge of the spring after a short while.

“Brother Jiang Chen, is this a dream?” Mu Gaoqi couldn’t believe the sight in front of his eyes. This had to be a dream.

Jiang Chen waved his hand, “Gaoqi, don’t speak nonsense. I don’t know where that old thief and the dragon have gone to, but now is our chance.”

Mu Gaoqi suddenly came to his senses after Jiang Chen's words and nodded his head furiously, "Yes yes, I've gone silly in my joy."

Mu Gaoqi actually had some speculations in his heart, but he didn't dare voice them when he saw Jiang Chen's no nonsense manner. After so much, he would be a fool if he couldn't see how extraordinary Jiang Chen was.

"Let's go!" Jiang Chen grabbed Mu Gaoqi and leapt into the spring.

Two splashes accompanied the two as they landed in the spring. The water of the spring was quite temperate, neither hot nor cold. As the two sat in it, they could feel spirit power of unparalleled purity sinking into each of their pores, surging in to fill their bodies.

"This is amazing!" Mu Gaoqi couldn't help but cheer.

Jiang Chen was greedily absorbing all the wood elemental energy, scouring his body of impurities. As a wood constitution body, Mu Gaoqi was truly a fish in water this time. The Goldbiter Rats were hiding in another corner, far away from these two. There was plenty of spirit energy in this enormous spring.

The baptism occurred for a full half month before the spirit energy in the spring began to ebb. At that time, both Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had achieved their goals.

Jiang Chen had broken through to third level origin realm, but Mu Gaoqi had had an even greater gain. While he didn't take in as much spirit energy as Jiang Chen, his gifts of a wood constitution had worked in tandem with the spring's energies, wholly purifying his body to the level of an innate constitution—one which actually far surpassed that of Long Juxue's!

Although she too had possessed an innate constitution, there were still more or less some impurities within. But Mu Gaoqi had eliminated all his flaws, and naturally had much higher potential. There were naturally differences in the level of innate constitutions. Mu Gaoqi now could be counted amongst the peak of the Myriad Domain when it came to potential.

"Congratulations Gaoqi, you'll soar to the skies from now on." Jiang Chen smiled.

Mu Gaoqi bowed deeply with cupped fists, saying seriously, "Elder brother Chen, there would be no me without you. My accomplishments of today are purely because of Brother Jiang Chen's help. I will never forget this favor as long as I live! If elder brother Chen has any requests in the future, I will be sure to handle it with all my efforts!" Mu Gaoqi was a smart person as well, he'd even changed what he called Jiang Chen from "Brother Jiang Chen" to "elder brother Chen" 3. Even though it was just a slight change, the meaning behind it was vastly different.

"Gaoqi, you and I have been through thick and thin, and since you call me elder brother, I don't mind telling you that I intend on taking the spring away with me. There won't be any spirit spring with wood energy here in the future."

Mu Gaoqi was astonished at hearing this. "Brother Chen, you mean to take the spring? How... how do you intend on doing this?" He couldn't imagine such a thing.

"I naturally have my ways." Jiang Chen smiled faintly and didn't respond. He didn't want to spread the news of his alliance with Long Xiaoxuan just yet.

There were advantages to someone with a cautious nature. Take Mu Gaoqi for example, he knew what questions to ask and what not to, what could be voiced and what had to be kept a secret. He knew that he shouldn't keep asking when he saw that Jiang Chen didn't give him any details. He scratched his head, "Brother Chen, then I'll wait for you outside?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "Sure, you be careful too. I may not be that quick about things, you can go back first if you want."

Mu Gaoqi responded without hesitation, "I'll wait for you at the entrance." He was well aware that if Jiang Chen wanted to move the spring, it would be a monumental undertaking. Even though Mu Gaoqi deeply wished to observe, he still reined in his curiosity.

Soon after he left, the Goldbiter Rats also finished their baptism. One had to say, the spring had had a great effect on inducing the Rats to evolve. The ones that had been selected had cast off their old selves and evolved their bloodlines. It could be said that they'd reached the skies with one leap, particularly the Rat King. He'd grown incredibly strong in one month, breaking through to and reaching the peak of the origin realm in one month! His children had all broken through to the origin realm as well, their speed in advancement so fast that even Jiang Chen wanted to call them perverse.

"Having ancient bloodlines is indeed different!" Jiang Chen sighed, whereas Long Xiaoxuan just snorted dismissively, clearly not holding a high opinion of the Goldbiter Rats' evolution. Jiang Chen smiled ruefully at the sound, "Brother Long, your lineage is noble and your heritage excellent, you don't understand the troubles of the Rats!"

The Rat King walked over, seriousness in every fold of his body. "Young master Long, it is thanks to your spring that us Goldbiter Rats have been able to reach where we are today."

Long Xiaoxuan apparently liked being sweet talked. He felt that he'd gained quite a bit of face with the moniker "young master Long" and spoke proudly when he saw how the Rat King humbled himself in front of the dragon, "As long as you know that you should be grateful!"

"Alright, we're all friends in the future. Brother Long, I've obtained the Taiyu Jade Vine, it's your turn to demonstrate your art now."

Long Xiaoxuan nodded, taking to the air and opening his mouth. A strong suction force suddenly covered the lake's surface. The jade-green spring waters turned into a green wave, filtering into Long Xiaoxuan's mouth as the lake's waters grew increasingly shallow...

Chapter 489: Returning with Fruitful Results

The spring had been completely sucked into Long Xiaoxuan's abdomen. The Rat King was flabbergasted at the sight, sighing, "Amazing, wonderful! The king of beasts, truly the royalty amongst us all! This ability to swallow the skies and devour the earth is absolutely at the peak of all beasts. Young master Long, Ole Gold is most impressed!"

The Rat King's personality was a bit similar to Mu Gaoqi's. They were both cautious and wary. However, the Rat King had lived for hundreds, if not a thousand years, so it'd long since grown comfortable with itself. He had more of a scamp's air around him, the slipperiness of someone familiar with social conventions. These words were obviously to kiss up to Long Xiaoxuan and make the dragon happy.

In terms of strength and lineage, the dragon was indeed far superior to the Rat King. But in terms of age, Long Xiaoxuan actually wasn't much older than Jiang Chen. It was just that he'd been nurtured by the spring ever since he lay curled in his egg, and some of his inherited memories had awakened before he'd hatched. It had been several hundred years or so since Long Xiaoxuan's memories had been awakened, but he had only broken out of his egg in the last thirty years or so. Only then had his body begun to develop. Dragons were naturally proud, and didn't possess a high emotional intelligence, so he felt quite pleased and high on the Rat King's compliments. He even felt that the lowly Goldbiter Rats didn't seem that ugly to his eyes anymore.

Jiang Chen knew full well what was going on, but didn't spoil things. "Brother Long, have you finished learning the foundations of the Transformation Method?"

Long Xiaoxuan didn't respond. He just shook his body as a faint haze of light suddenly covered his enormous body. His body started to shrink continuously beneath that light, and quickly became as small as a mustard seed.

"Well done! Hiding your true form, you're a dragon alright!" Jiang Chen applauded and laughed, stunned at the training potential of the dragons. Human cultivators would be unable to truly master this kind of art that hid one's form, even if they trained to the point of becoming a Great Emperor.

The waters of the spring had been thoroughly sucked dry, and all sorts of precious and exotic treasures were revealed. The Goldbiter Rats didn't dare keep the treasures to themselves. They collected them all and offered them to Jiang Chen.

The treasures were actually the dragon's accompanying treasures. The entire body of a dragon was a treasure, even their defecation. They would all transmute into treasures over time, particularly when nursed by the spirit spring. All sorts of spirit stones were present in heaps and piles, whereas all sorts of spirit herbs dotted the ground.

"Brother Long, do you still want these treasures?" Jiang Chen asked for Long Xiaoxuan's opinion.

"I long since put away the useful items." Long Xiaoxuan was quite dismissive of what remained. Jiang Chen knew that dragons had high standards, and happily claimed all the treasures for himself. These spirit stones and herbs were absolutely an astounding amount of wealth. Even though he'd temporarily bid farewell to a shortage of resources, no one wanted to return to poverty after one bout with it in the martial world.

The further one proceeded in their cultivation, the greater the need for resources. Therefore, no one would ever think they had too many resources, only that they had too few. The finite amount of overall resources meant that it was impossible for everyone to have sufficient resources, limiting the amount of people at high cultivation levels. Ultimately, it comes down to strength, luck, and intelligence to fight for all of them.

Jiang Chen swept around in an arc and confirmed that there was nothing of value left before finally leaving. Long Xiaoxuan concealed himself and left with Jiang Chen. He could feel the dragon's nervousness. Although the dragon was strong, with even ordinary emperor realm cultivators unsure of winning out over him, he'd never set foot outside of this area since regaining his memories. It would be a lie to say that he wasn't anxious by this sudden departure.

“Don’t worry Brother Long, although the outside world is devious, with our strength, there’s nothing to worry about unless we run into any reclusive experts.” Jiang Chen spoke silently to the dragon.

Although Long Xiaoxuan was nervous, he wouldn’t admit to it at all. “You think too much, I just can’t bear to leave this place. Who told you that I’m worried??”

Jiang Chen smiled and didn’t say anything else. All things needed time.

They ran into no obstructions as they left, but Jiang Chen discovered that Mu Gaoqi had yet to leave because he’d been trapped by the lava region. Unexpectedly, the Lord of Lava treasured grudges. It was actually still guarding the area after so many days, just waiting for them to return.

Mu Gaoqi scratched his head with some embarrassment when he saw Jiang Chen arrive. “Brother Chen, this Lord of Lava seems to have lost its mind. My strength is low and I’m not certain I can make it over. I could only wait here for you.”

Jiang Chen nodded, although Mu Gaoqi’s strength had risen by quite a bit, the effects of this remaking was destined to be less impressive when compared to the Goldbiter Rats. Most humans had no heritages or bloodlines to awaken. As such their strength wouldn’t suddenly increase explosively.

With Mu Gaoqi’s cultivation level, it was already stunning that he was touching third level origin realm by now. Jiang Chen himself had broken through to the third level, and his cultivation continued to increase in minute amounts. This Lord of Lava was likely at the peak of earth origin realm. At Jiang Chen’s current strength, he felt no pressure in facing off against the Lord of Lava.

He stood with his arms crossed, shooting forth the God’s Eye at the Lord of Lava. “Formed from the coalescence of the earth’s fires, you’ve reached your current cultivation after much effort and time. Don’t block the way, and I won’t make trouble for you.”

The Lord of Lava was already incensed, and began to scream. The lava of the lake rose, covering his body. With the added protection, the Lord of Lava quickly turned into the size of a small mountain. “Human, you are but a puny ant in front of this lord! How dare you speak so boldly!”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, “Ant? That means you’re not moving then?”

The Lord of Lava waved its large hand and sent a torrent of heat waves crashing into Jiang Chen. “Die, ant!”

Nine fire columns as thick as fire dragons churned towards the humans.

Suddenly, a black light flashed across the Lord of Lava’s body as a bafflingly strong force suddenly manifested as a water vortex, catching the nine thick fire columns.

Szzt, szzt, szzt, szzt!

The nine fire columns all vanished into the air as if they’d sunk into the depths of the sea.

“You...” The Lord of Lava was dumbstruck at the sight. It was obvious that this scene was completely out of its expectations.

Long Xiaoxuan hadn’t shown himself, but Jiang Chen knew that the dragon had made a move.

The Lord of Lava seemed to sense something, as extreme fear suddenly suffused its eyes. It shrieked like it'd seen a ghost and shrank, the enormous body suddenly turning into nothing as it fled deep into the lake.

The lake was suddenly as calm as a mirror, without a single air bubble marring its surface. This reaction speed rendered Jiang Chen speechless. He knew that the Lord of Lava must've sensed the dragonic aura of Long Xiaoxuan.

"Heh heh, you sure fled fast. Chalk one up to you recognizing the situation." Jiang Chen called out to Mu Gaoqi. "Let's go, the Lord of Lava won't make trouble anymore." After speaking, he turned into a streak of light and flew over the lake.

If it wasn't for the harassment from the lava monsters, it would be an easy thing for origin realm cultivators to leisurely fly over the lake. Mu Gaoqi followed quickly when he saw Jiang Chen fly over.

At some point in this journey, he'd started to unconditionally trust Jiang Chen. If Jiang Chen said that the Lord of Lava wouldn't dare harass them, then it truly wouldn't dare harass them. They met with no further obstacles as they traveled through the cavern. The light of day greeted them as they took their first steps outside.

It'd been almost a month. As Mu Gaoqi breathed in the fresh air and thought about everything that had happened, he truly felt that he'd aged decades. When he thought about how those who'd entered this area was now dead without even a corpse remaining to them, while he himself had received the baptism of the spring, causing his cultivation to increase greatly and his constitution advancing to an innate level, this put him in a wonderful mood.

All this was thanks to Jiang Chen. Mu Gaoqi cast a worshipful glance at Jiang Chen, inwardly rejoicing at his initial decision. If he hadn't invited Jiang Chen, but any other genius of the Regal Pill Palace, he would likely be a pile of withered bones by now. Even if he hadn't died in the hands of the Walkabout Sect, he would've died to Xu Gang and Yue Pan of the Great Cathedral. Had he been able to make it to the spring by some fluke, he ultimately would've died in Wei Wudao's hands.

"Gaoqi, this matter ends here. Don't mention it when we return to the sect, let's go."

Mu Gaoqi nodded and then seemed to think of something. He took out the spirit pearl of fire and ice. "Brother Chen, this is yours."

Jiang Chen waved his hand, "I have no use for it. Since I gave it to you, keep it as a memento."

Mu Gaoqi trembled slightly, how could he accept such a valuable item? "I... Brother Chen, this won't do!"

"Keep it, I've given it to you." Even though it was the treasure of a sage realm expert, Jiang Chen had the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, so he really had no need for the pearl.

At this point, Mu Gaoqi could be viewed as someone who'd gone through life and death with Jiang Chen, so using this bit of benefit to thoroughly bind Mu Gaoqi to him wouldn't be such a bad idea either. Besides, with Mu Gaoqi's potential and gifts now, he was destined to be an uncommon figure in the future. Gifting him the spirit pearl could be viewed as a long term investment.

Mu Gaoqi was quite touched when he heard Jiang Chen's words. He accepted happily, feeling even more gratitude towards Jiang Chen. He also made up his mind to carefully follow in Jiang Chen's footsteps in the future.

Chapter 490: The Battle Over Residences in the Sovereign Area

When he returned to the Regal Pill Palace, Jiang Chen decided to first pay a visit to Dan Chi's residence to catch up on news before returning to his residence.

Walking in, he found that all of his followers had immersed themselves in training, not setting a single foot outside. The residence was still orderly, but it was rather Huang'er who'd taken up some of the daily tasks of cleaning and keeping everything neat.

When Jiang Chen stepped inside, he was greeted by the sight of Miss Huang'er holding a broom, gently sweeping some fallen leaves in the courtyard. Evidently she was taking very good care of the place, as the entire residence was spic and span.

"Miss Huang'er, why are you the one being imposed on for these chores?" Jiang Chen was a bit embarrassed when he saw this development. She was his patient! How was she being asked to do this kind of menial work?

Huang'er dimpled, "Sir Jiang, you're back? I'd just thought that things can't be a mess when you return. You might be displeased otherwise. So, I swept a bit since I had some free time on my hands. Huang'er is clumsy and can't do much anyways."

Jiang Chen smiled, "If Miss Huang'er is clumsy, then no one can be considered good with their hands."

As the two chatted, Huang'er's eyes suddenly flicked, "Sir Jiang, you... you seem a little different?"

"Mm, I had some fortuitous occurrences this time." Jiang Chen knew that Huang'er's observation skills were sharp. She was able to quickly detect many things.

"Sir Jiang is truly an unparalleled genius. You were uncommon to begin with, and now have completely remade yourself with this change. Huang'er believes that Sir Jiang will be on the same level as the top geniuses in the Upper Eight Realms before too long." Huang'er sighed with amazement. Her expression then flickered as she raised the broom and smiled at Jiang Chen. "Sir Jiang, a guest comes calling. Huang'er will go to the rear yard first."

Jiang Chen was moved. He'd just sensed that there were footsteps approaching the residence, but to think that Miss Huang'er felt the same as well! He looked at Huang'er's lithe, graceful silhouette in deep thought. I wonder where Elder Shun and Huang'er are from? Far from their homes, they're drifting through desolate regions such as the Myriad Domain. They must have their own reasons other than the Hundred Generations Curse? One can find a sense of nobility from Miss Huang'er's actions, but she sets aside her bearing to be friendly with everyone. Her actions betray her breadth of mind as far beyond that of ordinary, short-sighted girls...

Jiang Chen was a bit curious, but he didn't intend to plumb the depths of this particular mystery. As he stood there ruminating, someone sent in a message from outside, "Senior brother Jiang Chen, Elder Yun Nie requests your presence at his residence."

Elder Yun Nie had found out the second Jiang Chen had stepped foot inside his home. It was almost impressive that there were no secrets in the Regal Pill Palace that was hidden to the Elder. In any case, he should've gone to see Elder Yun Nie after seeing Sage Dan Chi. Jiang Chen smiled and walked out, "I was just about to pay a visit to Elder Yun Nie, but he's summoned me first. Let's go!"

The guards were flabbergasted when Jiang Chen once again appeared at the Hundred Elders Peak.

"This Jiang Chen is a bit too ridiculous, isn't he? Elder Yun Nie personally sent a person to invite him over? A message glyph would've done the job just as well!"

"Oh what do you know? Jiang Chen is destined to be extraordinary. Sage Dan Chi personally traveled to recruit him and Elder Yun Nie values him this highly. In my eyes, Jiang Chen will sooner or later become an influential person in the Regal Pill Palace. He might even become the successor!"

"Oh come on. That's too much. Do you know what the successor is? How is it that easy to become the successor to the Regal Pill Palace?"

"Don't believe me? Wait and see. I completely trust Sage Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie's eyes." The guards were still gossiping even after Jiang Chen had disappeared from sight.

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"Jiang Chen, I've invited you here today to thank you for your help, amongst other things. You've helped me successfully break through to fourth level sage realm and become another earth sage cultivator of this sect." Elder Yun Nie was in a great mood as he smiled and continued. "Secondly, I wanted to ask if you're interested in competing for a residence in the Sovereign Area of the Rosy Valley?"

"Congratulations to Elder Yun Nie for breaking through to the earth sage realm!" Earth sages was absolutely the first tier amongst experts in the Regal Pill Palace. Even Palace Head Dan Chi was only fifth level sage realm.

"Haha! The lion's share of the credit goes to you for this accomplishment! The Sovereign Area of the Rosy Valley has created four new residences, and competition is fierce for them. I made a decision for you when you weren't here and put your name down for a lot. You won't blame me for my decision, will you?"

There were four areas in the Rosy Valley. Jiang Chen's current Soaring Clouds was the lowest level, and Peerless was quite small as it was where the female disciples lived. Sky Pillar was the one level above Soaring Clouds. Sovereign wasn't segregated by gender, and those who lived in it had their own separate residences, each with land of almost a hundred square miles that didn't overlap with the territory other geniuses.

This kind of independent residence was absolutely the highest class of residences for the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace, whether in terms of spirit qi in the environment or its facilities. Although Jiang Chen's current residence wasn't bad, it was on a completely different level compared to the Sovereign Area.

"Sovereign?" Jiang Chen arched his eyebrow. "I've heard that the land in a radius around each residence belongs solely to the disciple?"

“Exactly so. Those are the best residences for the younger generation. Jiang Chen, such a chance must not be missed, you can’t afford to lose out on it!” Elder Yun Nie smiled. “Both Sage Dan Chi and I look favorably on a young genius like you. You’ll be restricted in what you can do if you continue to skulk in the Soaring Clouds Area. The Sovereign Area is where your stage is!”

Elder Yun Nie’s words also caused ripples of great emotion in Jiang Chen’s heart. He’d come to the Regal Pill Palace to embrace further challenges. What was the use in coming if he didn’t even dare take the challenge for a residence in the Sovereign Area?

“Many thanks for Elder Yun Nie’s favor. How many residences might there be in the Sovereign Area?” Jiang Chen asked.

“There were only eight residences, and now four more have been added this time. Thus, competition has gotten, hmm, impassioned.” Elder Yun Nie looked at Jiang Chen with brightly shining eyes. “The apex geniuses should live in the apex areas. Jiang Chen, although you are young, you undoubtedly have the aura of a sovereign. I feel that you should pursue this challenge whether you succeed or not. In addition, half of the allotment of the residences will be reserved for pill masters this time.”

“Oh? How is this so?” Jiang Chen blinked rapidly, his interest piqued.

“The first eight residences are all currently taken by martial dao geniuses. This time, I analyzed the situation for the Palace Head to secure two slots for pill geniuses. This is to say that martial dao geniuses will be competing for two of the slots this time, and the other two are reserved for pill geniuses. Since you seem to be a peak genius in both daos, you can make the decision yourself as to which to choose.”

“Of course, there are some reminders that I must voice first. In terms of pills, I feel that your potential will give you quite a guarantee for success. As for the two slots in martial dao, you’ll face enormous competition from large numbers of sky origin geniuses from the Sky Pillar Area. I feel that you have no need to reject what is near at hand to seek what is far away.” Elder Yun Nie looked quite favorably upon Jiang Chen, but still wanted to share his opinions.

There were two slots reserved for each, and the dao of pills was relatively easier given where Jiang Chen’s cultivation was currently at. Although he wasn’t afraid of the impending fight from the sky origin geniuses, it was apparent that it would consume more time and effort.

Jiang Chen’s current cultivation level could easily win over those at the peak of the earth origin realm, but the results were still up in the air if he were to face a sky origin realm genius.

Geniuses in large sects such as the Regal Pill Palace were bound to have numerous trump cards in hand. Given that Jiang Chen had yet to enter the earth origin realm, he was well aware that he couldn’t say that he was assured of a victory against the large swathes of sky origin realm geniuses.

He might have a chance if he used all of his trump cards. But doing so for a mere residence in the sect clearly wasn’t his style. He thought briefly. “Alright, then I’ll participate in the competition for the pill dao residences.” He quite liked the idea of an independent residence with a high degree of solitude, especially after taking the spring with the wood spirit energy. He also needed a place large enough to hold it. A residence that was his alone fit the bill perfectly. Therefore, he set his sights on the prize and was determined to win it.

Elder Yun Nie also laughed heartily when he saw that Jiang Chen had taken his advice. “Good, good, good! Promising and worthy to be taught. Jiang Chen, you have lived up to my hopes for you.”

A follower on the side couldn't help but say to Jiang Chen, “Senior brother Jiang Chen, the elder fought ferociously in the council meeting this time in order to secure these two slots for pill geniuses. He even pounded the table in front of first elder Lian Cheng in heated argument for quite some time before finally obtaining them.”

Elder Yun Nie chuckled and glared at his follower. “You talk too much. Dismissed.”

The follower's heart spasmed in fright as he hastily stepped away to the side. Jiang Chen was also quite surprised by this matter. Palace Head Dan Chi had only smiled merrily when he'd paid his visit and hadn't said anything. However, his expression had been quite... interesting. Now that Jiang Chen thought about it, this had probably been the reason why?

Elder Yun Nie spread out his hands. “Jiang Chen, I didn't go against Elder Lian Cheng just for you. Our Regal Pill Palace was founded for pills, and this has been our tradition for a thousand years. But now, martial dao flourishes whereas we have become complacent about our achievements in pills. Many of us are arrogant and still heady from the halo of being number one sect in pills. We are unable to extract ourselves, and it will be very dangerous to continue this way. This is why I went to the point of fighting with Hallmaster Lian Cheng of the Hall of Might. As the Hallmaster, his perspective is naturally one of having more martial dao geniuses enter the Sovereign Area.”

Jiang Chen nodded. The Hall of Might was the foremost hall in the Regal Pill Palace, and Elder Lian Cheng the foremost elder on the council. Elder Yun Nie's Herbal Hall ranked number two, and he was likely the only one amongst the elders who dared argue against Hallmaster Lian Cheng. Even though he said it was for the good of the sect, Jiang Chen knew that there was still more or less a desire to protect and nurture Jiang Chen behind Elder Yun Nie's actions.

The warmth of gratitude rose in Jiang Chen's heart in that moment. “Elder Yun Nie, this disciple will bring forth everything I have to obtain a place in the Sovereign Area to repay your immense favor!”

Elder Yun Nie applauded loudly. “Good, good! I too wish for you to stun all those present in this competition. This way, who will dare say anything when I add you to the list of those participating in the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage?!”