

Three Realms 501

Chapter 501: The Only Uncertainty

Although it was only the results from the first category, Ouyang De still couldn't accept his grandson being ranked at number three. In his heart, he'd never thought that Ouyang Chao would fall short of the champion's rank, much less than be ranked at number three! Not only was this a humiliation for Ouyang Chao, it was even more so for Ouyang De.

He'd been the crowd favorite before the competition and had enjoyed so much support, all sorts of fawning compliments and lavish praises. The continued flattery had been music to Ouyang De's ears, and he'd accepted it all.

If Ouyang Chao really did lose out, it would make the Ouyang clan a laughingstock in the eyes of everyone.

Jiang Chen was a lone man kicking up a dust cloud up front, far ahead of the others and soon vaulting into the fourth category of manipulation. This category involved both refining pills and cultivating spirit herbs. There were three topics in total.

The first was about cultivating spirit herb seeds. To succeed, one had to plant the spirit herb seeds and have them germinate in three days. Completion was worth 20 points.

The second topic of refining pills was worth 40 points. If the pill refined was of lower rank, that would earn 10 points. Mid rank would be 20, upper rank 30, and supreme rank 40 points.

The third was relatively complex, requiring candidates to draw a refinement formation. This would undoubtedly be the highlight of the competition, and was worth 40 points.

All three of them together were worth 100 points.

Jiang Chen received the seeds and its accompanying materials, traveled to the cultivation area and observed the soil there to make an analysis before returning to the testing area. He made a few adjustments to the materials on hand and returned to the cultivation area to plant his seeds.

With that, the first topic was temporarily concluded; all that remained was regular fertilization. Jiang Chen made some time calculations before entering the second topic of refining Origin Fostering Pills.

The Origin Fostering Pills were the most popular pills in the Regal Pill Palace. Along with Spirit Consolidation Pills, these were the two pills most used in the sect.

Those who could refine the Origin Fostering Pills by themselves amongst the younger generation were few and far in between. A few decades of work were needed to do so successfully. Although Mu Gaoqi didn't boast of proper training, his innate wood constitution and potential in pills allowed him to stand among the few who were capable of refining the Origin Fostering Pills alone.

For those geniuses entering the finals, this was also the first time that they were attempting to independently refine the Origin Fostering Pills. As for Jiang Chen, although he hadn't personally refined this pill before, it didn't mean he didn't know how to. He only hadn't wanted to waste his time. After all, the thousand Origin Fostering Pills he'd gained from Elder Yun Nie was enough for him to use for quite a while.

There were enough materials to produce six Origin Fostering Pills from one cauldron. The contest only required candidates to hand in their highest quality pill. Therefore, it was fine if there was one supreme rank and five other trash pills in the cauldron. Of course, the ingredients had special marks on them to exclude the possibility of taking out a pre-made Origin Fostering Pill to cheat.

Jiang Chen entered the pill refining room and took out the Skyweave Cauldron that Palace Head Dan Chi had gifted him. As he looked at it, he thought "Palace Head Dan Chi must've had certain hopes in gifting this cauldron to me. If I can't use this cauldron to refine a supreme rank pill, it would be an insult to the cauldron." Nevertheless, Jiang Chen was in no hurry. He meditated on the complete refining process, simulating it once in detail, before finally beginning.

He didn't place all the ingredients in the cauldron in his first go, but used enough for one pill to experiment. As the process wound to a close, he opened the cauldron to find an upper rank pill.

Unsatisfied, Jiang Chen went back over his refining process, perfecting it further. He once again fired up the cauldron. On his third try, he opened the cauldron to find a supreme rank pill.

The Origin Fostering Pill wasn't a particularly complex pill. In the Regal Pill Palace, many elders refined it in batches. Elder Yun Nie, for example, always refined twenty to thirty pills per cauldron. They usually ended up as upper rank pills. If he put his mind to it, it wasn't a big matter to produce supreme rank pills either. Even when he refined in batches, Elder Yun Nie had a twenty to thirty percent chance of forming a supreme rank pill.

Jiang Chen's second topic was over with the emergence of the supreme rank pill. When he left the pill refining room, Jiang Chen went to fertilize his seeds, then took a quick break before taking the third challenge, the final one of the competition. He would be finished with this last category.

Jiang Chen had striven for perfection in all his previous categories, and his results had been almost flawless. Most of these tests were child's play to him. However, this last one did pose a slight bit of technical difficulty.

To Jiang Chen, he had studied formations in his past life, but he hadn't had much experience in manipulating pill refining formations in this life. Still, this didn't stump him, merely making him spend a bit more time, and time was the last thing he was short on. He was ahead of the other geniuses by almost an entire category. When he'd entered the last category, many candidates were still stuck at strength of heart. There weren't many who'd entered the fourth category, so he had plenty of time.

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Mu Gaoqi had emerged from the strength of heart category at this time. He had performed above his usual level in the first and second categories, but strength of heart had always been one of his weaknesses. Although it'd seen some improvement thanks to Jiang Chen in the past few days, he still hadn't performed up to his own expectations.

"Sigh, I really need to do well in this category; it can't be the one that drags me down. It's a good thing that I did well in the first two. If I perform at my usual ability in strength of heart, it'll only eliminate the advantage I build up in the first two categories. The true test is in fourth category! Manipulation of pills is my strength!" Although Mu Gaoqi wasn't a scion of the Herbal Hall and was called self-taught by

others in the Regal Pill Palace, his ability in manipulation was widely acknowledged. His innate wood constitution gave him a unique edge that others couldn't copy.

The rankings for the first three categories were refreshed shortly after all the candidates entered the fourth category. Jiang Chen only seemed to have consolidated his first place, with full marks.

At this point, all the elders were numb to this result. All of them had now separated into two camps, either on one end of the spectrum. One side acknowledged that Jiang Chen was an unparalleled genius, and the other was certain that Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie were colluding to cheat for Jiang Chen.

Those who thought Jiang Chen to be cheating were waiting to see him make a fool of himself in the fourth category. If he received full marks in the first three and saw a tremendous drop in his scores in the last category, that was absolute evidence of cheating and grounds for them to bring up complaints. Therefore, they all watched him carefully, waiting for the sight of his spectacular failure.

This group of people included Ouyang De. He had firmly convinced himself that someone was helping Jiang Chen cheat. However, he was slightly gratified to see Ouyang Chao's score finally rush forward, beating Mu Gaoqi to take second place with 280 points.

Mu Gaoqi had had a poor performance in the strength of heart category and was now at third with 270 points, tying with Ling Hui'er. Fourth place was sitting at 260 points, and the rest weren't more than 240 points. There was basically no hope of a Sovereign Area residence for them in the future.

Of course, nothing was absolute. The fourth category was quite intricate and it was still very possible for something out of the ordinary to develop in the fourth category, particularly since the fight for second was such a tight race.

Although Jiang Chen was at 300 points, those who thought he was cheating felt certain that he would reveal his true colors in the last category and be dragged down from his throne. Although Ouyang Chao's advantage wasn't that apparent in second place, Ouyang De felt even more reassured when he saw his grandson ranked second. With his understanding of the self-taught Mu Gaoqi, it was highly unlikely that he would surpass Ouyang Chao in the fourth category.

Of course, Ouyang De didn't know that Mu Gaoqi had been baptized in the spirit spring, nor did the former know that Mu Gaoqi now possessed the spirit pearl of fire and ice. Only Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi knew of these two trump cards.

The baptism in the spirit spring had enhanced Mu Gaoqi's potential. He would be even more masterful at cultivating spirit herbs, refining pills, and exercise more minute control over ingredients. The spirit pearl would enable him to have finer control over fire, and the greatest ace of all was the discourse the two had the night before. That discussion alone had allowed Mu Gaoqi to gain at least 20 more points in the previous categories!

This was why he was solidly in the top three, otherwise, with the previous Mu Gaoqi would have been trailing Ouyang Chao by over 10 points!

Shortly after Mu Gaoqi and the others entered the fourth category, Jiang Chen was sitting in the pill refining room, looking at his almost completed formation etching. This was just an initial draft, and as easy as breathing to Jiang Chen.

If it wasn't for the fact that he'd yet to attempt this in this life and had acted rather cautiously, he would've long since been completed. Although it was a simple formation, he still took great care. This was worth 40 points, so he didn't tolerate any mistakes.

Jiang Chen finally carved in the final stroke after an hour. Apart from the formation etching, there was also much to calculate with spirit stone allocation, intra-formation resonance, arrangement... There was much theory even to a novice formation.

Jiang Chen heaved a long sigh of relief when he confirmed that there were no mistakes after a round of checking. He had been hard at work for almost two straight days by now, and although he felt a bit tired, all of this was worth it. He firmly believed that with this kind of performance, a Sovereign Area residence was absolutely within his grasp. All he had to do now was to silently wait for the spirit seed to sprout and wait for the final results.

He wasn't worried about himself. The only thing he was uncertain about was whether Mu Gaoqi could triumph over Ouyang Chao. He was most concerned about Mu Gaoqi's performance in the strength of heart category. If Mu Gaoqi made it through that, then he'd have no problem winning out over Ouyang Chao. If to the contrary, the competition between the two would be up in the air and determined at the last possible second.

Chapter 502: Final Rankings, Assignment of Residences

After handing in his formation etching, Jiang Chen left the pill refinement room and walked into the seed cultivation area, checking and fertilizing his seeds. From his understanding of the seed's growth, he had a ninety percent guarantee of making it sprout before three days. This was also the only topic he was left waiting on.

Jiang Chen's seed successfully sprouted after two days, and after handing in the seed, he was completely done. He didn't leave though, choosing to wait in Shen Li Palace to see the final results. Only when everyone finished would they begin the scoring of the fourth category and present the final rankings.

When the elders who suspected he was cheating saw Jiang Chen the first to emerge, they couldn't help but feel a slight sense of shock. In their eyes, Jiang Chen had previously demonstrated such an unstoppable momentum only because Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie were helping him. Following that train of thought, he wouldn't be able to stop himself from faltering in the last segment. All they had to do was wait and watch him make a fool out of himself.

However, they'd never imagined that Jiang Chen's speed and momentum would only maintain its ferociousness in the final category! If he was cheating, would he have been able to complete the fourth category so quickly and easily? At that moment, a trace of surprise grew into a seed of suspicion in the hearts of all the elders. Ouyang De in particular was absolutely mystified by this turn of events.

"Does Jiang Chen really possess such perverse potential?" Ouyang De really didn't want to believe it. He was sure that the sixteen kingdoms did not have the resources or foundation to raise such an

unbelievable pill dao genius. But regardless of his suspicions, he could only silently wait for the final results.

Ouyang De didn't have much effort to spare on Jiang Chen at the moment, he was more concerned about Ouyang Chao. "Chao'er, if Jiang Chen takes a slot, you have no path of retreat. You must take the remaining slot! Otherwise, our Ouyang clan will lose immense face!" He was inwardly greatly conflicted.

Apart from Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi had the easiest time in the fourth category. The innate constitution that had been the result of the spirit spring baptism showed its true colors now. He breezed right through the topic of spirit herb cultivation and Origin Fostering Pill refinement. He was intimately familiar with the third topic too. He knew he had no patron, so he had spent a great deal of time and effort to study pill formations. Therefore, none of these were difficult for him, particularly pill refinement. With his enhanced innate constitution, he was more familiar than ever with the properties of the Origin Fostering Pill. With some care in refining, he too refined a supreme rank pill. Drawing the formation was also no problem either.

His advantages from the baptism in the spring had come fully through in this topic, as he only took two days to make his seed sprout. All in all, he actually became the second person to walk out of the fourth category. When the elders saw him emerge, they were all greatly astonished.

In their eyes, the Ouyang Chao praised for his solid foundations should've been the favorite of the fourth category. The self taught Mu Gaoqi had actually possessed such speed as well? This really was outside of everyone's expectations!

Ouyang De's heart spasmed without warning when he saw Mu Gaoqi walk out with such confidence. Although it wasn't an ominous premonition, he still felt disgusted, like he'd eaten a fly.

Half a day later, Ouyang Chao completed the fourth category, becoming the third to walk out. When he saw that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi were already waiting in Shen Li Palace, he started slightly. A slightly complicated look appeared in his eyes.

"Chao'er, how do you think you did?" Ouyang De hastened to ask. It was over anyways, so he didn't need to remain silent.

Ouyang De responded honestly. "Apart from the Origin Fostering Pill being of upper rank, I think the others were fine."

Ouyang De nodded. "Good, good." If his grandson only lost ten points with the pill, there was no problem there. Ouyang De didn't even consider for a second the possibility that Mu Gaoqi could obtain full marks in the fourth category!

Mu Gaoqi stood there, expressionless as he heard this. This was because Jiang Chen had already silently told him not to say anything, and just silently wait for the results.

The fourth to emerge was actually Ling Hui'er! After her, the other contestants slowly started filtering out one by one, with all thirty of them having completed the fourth category after a few hours.

The judges immediately started checking on the results. Most completed the first topic of cultivating the spirit seed in the time allotted, with very few exceptions. A vast majority had solidly obtained that topic's 20 points. The distinguishing line would come in the second and third topics.

Thirty pills were placed in thirty spirit boxes, each with their own number.

“Number one, Jiang Chen, supreme rank!”

“Number two, Ouyang Chao, upper rank!”

“Number three, Ling Hui’er, upper rank!”

“Number four, Mu Gaoqi, supreme rank!”

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Shen Li Palace fell silent when Mu Gaoqi’s result came out. If it was said that Jiang Chen’s supreme rank results were within expectations due to his perverse potential, Mu Gaoqi’s results were absolutely frightful! He certainly had potential, but under normal conditions he didn’t even refine an upper rank Origin Fostering Pill. How had he performed so much above par and refined a supreme rank today?

No one was in the mood to pay attention to the scores after that. Those left obviously had no hope in overtaking these two. As the results of the second topic came out, the final rankings were adjusted to reflect their scores. Jiang Chen was still far in the lead, but now Mu Gaoqi had tied with Ouyang Chao, with Ling Hui’er ten points behind them.

Jiang Chen had full marks from the first three categories, whereas Ouyang Chao had 280 points, Mu Gaoqi and Ling Hui’er were tied at 270. With the first two topics of the fourth category, everyone had firmly obtained the first 20 points. Mu Gaoqi had been awarded 40 points for his supreme rank pill, whereas Ouyang Chao and Ling Hui’er had been awarded 30 points. But now, Mu Gaoqi had naturally caught up to Ouyang Chao. Both were at 330 points, and Ling Hui’er at 320. Only Jiang Chen was still far ahead at 360 points. He hadn’t lost a single point up to now. It was up to the final topic.

When Ouyang Chao saw that Mu Gaoqi had beaten him in pill refining, he too was greatly taken aback. He hadn’t expected this at all. Mu Gaoqi, on the other hand, was suffused with contentment as great waves of emotion rocked his heart. This was because he knew that he had the residence firmly in hand! He was absolutely sure that he’d committed no flaws in the third topic and wouldn’t lose any points. Then with his current ranking ahead of Ouyang Chao and his faster speed, then according to the rules, he would firmly beat Ouyang Chao on the basis of his faster time.

It was obvious that at this time, whether it was Ouyang De or Ouyang Chao, both felt a keen sense of danger.

The results of the third topic were quickly tallied up. As they were revealed, it fell solidly within everyone’s expectations. Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, Ouyang Chao and Ling Hui’er hadn’t lost a single point in this topic and had received full marks.

This way, the final scores stood at:

Jiang Chen, 400 points, full marks!

Mu Gaoqi and Ouyang Chao, 370 points, tied for second.

Ling Hui’er, 360 points, ranked behind Mu Gaoqi and Ouyang Chao.

Of the rest, the highest had 340 points, and the rest were even further away from the upper circle. The days of tough competition had finally generated the final rankings.

Elder Yun Nie and several judges double checked the score, making sure that there was no error before making their formal announcement. "Champion Jiang Chen receives one residence in the Sovereign Area, and runner up Mu Gaoqi receives one as well! The rest who weren't originally in the Sky Pillar Area will receive a residence in this area. Elder Yun Nie and the various elders of the Herbal Hall can attest that this was a fair competition with no objections."

This proclamation was the final nail in the coffin. It would be officially announced when Palace Head Dan Chi casted a final eye over things and went through the final ceremony.

Ouyang De's gaze was lowered as he suddenly shouted, "I have a question!"

The Ouyang clan were the losers in this. There were those who sympathized with them, and others who delighted in their misfortune and cheered on the circumstances.

Elder Yun Nie was rather calm. "Elder Ouyang, please share your questions."

Ouyang De yelled out, "I just find it strange that Jiang Chen comes from the sixteen kingdoms. We all know what kind of place it is, and I will never believe that the sixteen kingdoms can raise a pill genius superior to the best we have to offer! Do you believe it?! Leaving Jiang Chen aside for now, Mu Gaoqi is one of ours. Everyone should be quite familiar with him. Although he has potential, do you think his scores this time reflects his usual ability? Has he ever refined a supreme rank pill before today?"

Ouyang De had lost his composure. Many elders shook their heads inwardly, musing that Ouyang De was really demonstrating how he couldn't handle a loss this time. With so many pairs of eyes staring at the competition, it was practically impossible to get away with cheating.

Elder Yun Nie smiled faintly. "If Elder Ouyang has questions, you can participate in a recount and re-examination of the results. I for one, am completely willing to accompany you on this endeavor. It's good to have questions. Our sect's mandate is to be fair and just. It's because that we adhere to this principle that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi can rise from the roots." n)-O-.v--E--L./b--1(/n

To put it in other words, if they didn't firmly uphold impartiality, then there was no need in competing over the residences. They could be handed out to the scions of the Herbal Hall.

Ouyang De had hardened his heart to make a scene and leapt up. "Good! I want to request an investigation into their scores. I just don't believe that an outside monk is more skilled at chanting scripture, and that a self-taught rogue can defeat the scion of the Herbal Hall!" The outside monk was naturally pointing fingers at Jiang Chen, and the self-taught rogue was Mu Gaoqi. That left his grandson Ouyang Chao as the scion of the Herbal Hall.

Chapter 503: Innate Wood Constitution of High Order

One had to say that Ouyang De was certainly one to take advantage of his high position to flaunt his seniority. But of course, he came up empty handed when Elder Yun Nie accompanied his investigation. Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had made it to their places with true talent. There wasn't any cheating at all.

Ouyang De's actions merely made himself a laughingstock, nothing else. He rigorously looked over things a few times but found nothing. Palace Head Dan Chi had heard that the pill dao competition had run its course at this point, and hurried over to take stock of the results. After he checked through things, he finally confirmed that there were no doubts about the results of the competition and once again announced the ownership of the residences.

Mu Gaoqi could no longer control himself. He wept with joy, jumping up and down in his excitement.

Ouyang Chao's face was dark as his heart bled, but he didn't say anything. He still wanted to hold onto some shreds of his dignity, such as it was.

Ling Hui'er was deep in thought. She blinked her large eyes, staring at Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, seemingly baffled at the turn of events. Her fatally alluring chest heaved slightly, providing quite a pleasing sight.

"Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, I congratulate you on behalf of the Regal Pill Palace." Palace Head Dan Chi smiled, bestowing the medallions to the Sovereign Area residences on the two. When he handed the medallions over, his smile disappeared and his tone turned grave. "The two of you should remember this well. The Sovereign Area means that one is sovereign. You will enjoy extraordinary treatment in your residences, but also remember that you shoulder a responsibility greater than anyone else. Your every word and action, move and gesture will represent the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace as well as the sect as a whole."

With great power comes great responsibility.

Jiang Chen took the medallion. "Jiang Chen will remember the Palace Head's words well."

Mu Gaoqi was at a loss of what to do and kept nodding. "I'll remember to not lose face for the Regal Pill Palace!" After all, he was born of humble beginnings. He hadn't developed the glacial composure that Jiang Chen displayed by virtue of his experience. It was impossible for him not to be nervous under these circumstances.

The elders all laughed loudly, both amused by and contemptuous of Mu Gaoqi's clumsy performance. It was certainly quite a sight to have such a bumpkin take up residence in the Sovereign Area. Although no one quite understood how Mu Gaoqi had risen so strongly, they were still more or less prejudiced against him. Ouyang De was even more derisive, feeling some hatred and contempt writhe in his heart.

It was rather Elder Yun Nie who suddenly smiled. "Mu Gaoqi, I am the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall, yet I hadn't discovered a hidden gem like you, leaving you to shine with glory only today. I'm of a mind to make this up to you; are you willing to become one of my disciples?"

At his point of his life, Elder Yun Nie only had followers, and no personal disciples. Who would've thought that he'd personally speak up to take Mu Gaoqi as his disciple at this time? The young folk present all looked at Mu Gaoqi with exceedingly envious eyes.

Elder Yun Nie was one of the top five authorities in the Regal Pill Palace, and stood at the peak of power as the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall. He had no heirs, but now wanted to bring in Mu Gaoqi. If Mu Gaoqi could take Elder Yun Nie as his master, that would be akin to a carp leaping over the dragon's gate and turning into a dragon in a brilliant exhibit of glory. His value would instantly shoot through the roof,

quickly becoming one of the hottest people amongst the youngest generation. Once he was one of Elder Yun Nie's disciples, who would dare laugh at him for being an unorthodox, self-taught disciple who wasn't fit for public occasions? Mu Gaoqi was so agitated that he couldn't speak.

Jiang Chen hastily sent him a silent message. "Gaoqi, this is a rare opportunity. What are you still hesitating for?"

Mu Gaoqi's brain was nearing a complete shutdown. He only came to his senses when Jiang Chen nudged him, and he hastily walked up to perform the ceremony of taking another as his master.

"This disciple is willing, absolutely willing, a thousand and ten thousand times willing!" His voice was tight with unshed tears as memories surged through him. Fellow disciples rolling their eyes at him, grievance upon grievance piling atop each other, shame, humiliation, how he'd struggled in the cracks of the sect to eke out a path to the future, how he could only hide behind a smile as others suppressed him or play along as others exploited him... All of that pain, all of that dishonor, they would never come back! Not from this moment! n/-0veLB1n

Elder Yun Nie chuckled. "Good, it seems that I now have a disciple. Mu Gaoqi, you're not bad. There are so very few who can still maintain the heart of a child when they've climbed to the height of a core disciple. Your past experiences will become the wealth that paves your future."

Mu Gaoqi could only nod, his eyes red as he tried his best to keep himself from breaking down.

Jiang Chen also smiled. "Congratulations to Elder Yun Nie gaining a good disciple! An innate wood constitution is truly rare."

"What?!" Elder Yun Nie was taken aback, and Palace Head Dan Chi's attention snapped to him, also immensely astonished. An innate constitution?

Jiang Chen had purposefully said this because he wanted to build a name for Mu Gaoqi and force the others to swallow their contemptuous attitudes. The skeptical attitudes of those that looked to Ouyang De as their leader really pissed Jiang Chen off. What foreign monk? What self-taught disciple? Although Ouyang De had a high position, Jiang Chen wasn't some soft persimmon. He wasn't the sort to not strike back when someone struck out at him. His words were absolutely a blow aimed at Ouyang De.

However, his words were also a bolt of thunder in the ears of those present, making their eardrums hum with the impact.

Innate wood constitution?

An innate constitution was already uncommon enough, but an innate wood constitution was even rarer. Such a constitution meant that a future grand pill master stood in front of them.

Dan Chi also asked, "Jiang Chen, are you sure that he's an innate wood constitution and not just a regular wood constitution?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "If the honored Palace Head and Elder Yun Nie will test him, all will be immediately revealed."

Many knew that Mu Gaoqi had a wood constitution, but knowledge of an innate wood constitution was news!

Ouyang De was first startled, but then immediately smirked coldly. He wouldn't believe Jiang Chen's bullshit! If Mu Gaoqi really did possess an innate wood constitution, he would've been tested when he first entered the sect. It wasn't the sort of thing that would be revealed now.

Elder Yun Nie knew that Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to speak carelessly. He immediately took out a testing crystal ball. "Gaoqi, come here."

Mu Gaoqi walked over docilely. "Honored master."

"Infuse the ball with your wood spirit energy so that I can see your potential." Elder Yun Nie's tone was solemn. This was a matter of great importance. If Mu Gaoqi really did have an innate wood constitution, then he would've struck gold, and so would've the Regal Pill Palace!

Mu Gaoqi took a deep breath in before placing his palm on the ball. He circulated his wood spirit energy and fed a steady stream into the ball. A beam of pure and clear green light instantly grew inside the ball, growing to the thickness of a pinky and rapidly cycling inside the ball.

One ring, two rings, three rings...

Elder Yun Nie and Palace Head Dan Chi's face grew graver with every additional circle of the green light. Their expressions changed to slight surprise after twelve rings. The elders who'd suspected that Jiang Chen had been running his mouth squashed their dismissive thoughts as they began to pay rapt attention, faces growing solemn. An ordinary wood constitution would be quite amazing if they could produce twelve rings. More than twelve rings meant extreme potential, and judging from the speed of Mu Gaoqi's green light, it showed no signs of slowing down.

It whipped past eighteen rings without a moment's pause and quickly crept to twenty four rings.

Elder Yun Nie and Palace Head Dan Chi looked at each other, delight suffusing their eyes. Having passed eighteen rings, they could be certain that this was an innate constitution. If it went past twenty four rings, then it would be a constitution of high order. Mu Gaoqi's spirit force still saw no signs of pausing.

Thirty rings...

It finally slowed down after thirty rings before slowly pattering to a stop at thirty six rings.

"Thirty six rings!" Elder Yun Nie's face was full of shock and joy. "Good, good, good! Not only are you an innate wood constitution, it's one of high order!"

Palace Head Dan Chi also began laughing loudly. "This is truly a genius bestowed from heaven. In the history of my Regal Pill Palace, we've at most had an innate wood constitution of mid order, never one of high order!"

"Elder Yun Nie, I must congratulate you on picking up a treasure!" Palace Head Dan Chi was genuinely happy for Elder Yun Nie. The relationship between the two was now quite harmonious because of Jiang Chen.

Elder Yun Nie also smiled. "This isn't just a delight for me, but one for the entire sect. An innate wood constitution of high order is a blessing bestowed upon us by the spirits of our ancestors, so that our Regal Pill Palace heritage can continue! An innate wood constitution of high order can bring good fortune to the sect for three hundred years!"

Palace Head Dan Chi also nodded. "Indeed, and that's just a conservative estimate. When our sect had an innate wood constitution of mid order, that conferred hundreds of years of good fortune upon the sect and enabled us to vault up into the ranks of the first rate sects in the Myriad Domain. In my eyes, if Mu Gaoqi develops well, we stand a great chance of joining the numbers of the third rank sects!" Both heavyweights were unceasingly praising Mu Gaoqi.

In that moment, those who had denounced Mu Gaoqi as self-taught or as a bumpkin all felt their faces burn. This was absolutely a stunning slap to their faces. They, to a man, had looked down on Mu Gaoqi, but he'd actually hid such stunning, frightening potential!

Elder Yun Nie also sighed. "It was my negligence to have allowed such a pearl as Mu Gaoqi be covered in dust until now. This discovery is all thanks to Jiang Chen."

Palace Head Dan Chi also smiled. "Jiang Chen, you are truly broad hearted in recommending sage talent. You and Mu Gaoqi well deserve the Sovereign Area residences!" These words set everything in stone.

As jealous as Ouyang De might be, he could do nothing now. His grandson was a fine man, but how could he measure up to an innate wood constitution? Although Ouyang Chao had lost, he had won glory in being defeated by such a genius. It was rather Ouyang De who'd displayed unbecoming behavior.

Ouyang Chao thought deeply for a moment and walked up to speak to Mu Gaoqi. "Gaoqi, I dismissed you before and thought my victory was guaranteed. I've learned of your potential only today. I wholeheartedly accept my defeat at your hands."

Ling Hui'er curled her lip, forced to accept the results as well.

Chapter 504: Taking Up Residence

The unexpected discovery of Mu Gaoqi sent the Regal Pill Palace into an immediate uproar. The Herbal Hall was even more excited. Being focused on pills, they knew more than anybody else what an innate wood constitution of high order meant.

To put it bluntly, such a constitution was rare even in the Upper Eight Realms, much less a Lower Realm like the Myriad Domain. Therefore, Mu Gaoqi's shocking emergence marked a raucous celebration in the Regal Pill Palace.

At the same time, those whose thoughts ran a bit further silently contemplated, "If Mu Gaoqi with an innate wood constitution of high order was only number two, then what potential does Jiang Chen have, with his full marks? Why didn't Elder Yun Nie take Jiang Chen as a disciple, instead accepting Mu Gaoqi? Could it be that Jiang Chen is so much more talented than Mu Gaoqi that even Elder Yun Nie doesn't dare accept him as a disciple?"

All sorts of speculations and questions spread through the crowd as everyone gave their curiosity about the two who had won in the competition of pill dao free rein.

Since the competition was over with, Elder Yun Nie also took advantage of the situation to announce, "Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi will take two of the slots reserved for the younger generation in the Pill Battles. The other two spots will be chosen from a selection of the pill dao geniuses."

The other geniuses had no objections to this order, but the martial dao geniuses who occupied the eight original residences in the Sovereign Area became restless. These eight people represented the pinnacle of strength among the younger generation of the sect, the face of the young Regal Pill Palace. They were martial dao geniuses, but their pill dao potential wasn't that bad either. They had long since entered the Sovereign Area, so they still hadn't fully registered Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi as one of their own. Frankly, they weren't necessarily willing to accept this command even if Mu Gaoqi was proven to be an innate wood constitution of high order. In their minds, such a constitution only represented future potential, but the Pill Battles were going to happen in the next couple of months. Therefore, the top geniuses had been eying the slots for the Pill Battles for a very long time, carefully maneuvering themselves for a spot.

The Pill Battles meant a chance to enter the mountain and harvest precious spirit herbs. Mt. Rippling Mirage was the most miraculous area of pills and medicine in the Myriad Domain. The ten thousand miles of the mountain contained many fortuitous encounters, treasures, and boundless marvelous changes. Perhaps, a single encounter or opportunity would be enough to change their fates, helping them break free of their cocoon and cast off their current shackles! Therefore, these geniuses had convinced themselves that they absolutely had to obtain spots for the Pill Battles.

However, since Elder Yun Nie had spoken, he naturally couldn't take it back. In addition, Elder Yun Nie was in charge of the spots for the Pill Battles. He knew who should and shouldn't go. Since he'd personally chosen Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, he naturally felt that their pill dao potential and level was beyond the geniuses in the Sovereign Area.

The pill dao competition had ended first, and the two residences for the martial dao geniuses were finally decided upon after three days. The eventual champions were two from the Sky Pillar Area. One was at half step sky origin realm, the other solidly in the sky origin realm.

"A Sovereign Area residence?" Gouyu and the others were overjoyed when they heard Jiang Chen describe where they would be moving to. A private property with a radius of a hundred miles, that was absolutely a superior residence! Although their current residence in the Soaring Clouds area was an independent residence that occupied almost a hundred hectares, it was still comparing an ant to an elephant when compared to a residence in the Sovereign Area.

Huang'er naturally had no reason to object. Although she'd planted many flowers and grasses, she could absolutely move them since they were only moving within the Rosy Valley.

"Brother Jiang Chen, congratulations on the move! Is there anything I can help with?"

"Brother Jiang Chen, I've come by to see if you need help moving to your Sovereign Area residence!"

"Brother Jiang Chen, feel free to throw any manual labor at me! I've got thick skin and flesh, and I'm most suited for this kind of work, hahaha!"

Roughly a dozen Soaring Cloud disciples crowded Jiang Chen's residence in the blink of an eye, all extremely enthusiastic, as if they'd been friends with Jiang Chen for several decades. They'd completely forgotten how they'd personally participated during Yan Hongtu's suppression of Jiang Chen.

Although Jiang Chen could deny them face with a slap, he wasn't interested in this kind of empty pleasantries either. He smiled faintly, "I've only just arrived in the Regal Pill Palace and don't have much to pack up. My followers are more than enough. I won't need to trouble you all."

The Soaring Cloud core disciples all knew that Jiang Chen was moving to the Sovereign Area, becoming the most superior existence in the Rosy Valley. Therefore, all of them wanted to curry favor with Jiang Chen and try to latch onto his thigh. n-o-)V/-e).L(-b.)1).n

"Senior brother Jiang Chen, you moving into the Sovereign Area with such an awe-inspiring momentum is our pride and example for us Soaring Cloud disciples. We'd like to host a banquet for you, senior brother, and send you off well. We should let the others know not to look down on our area when you enter the Sovereign Area."

"I don't like to make a fuss of things, so we can forgo the banquet and associated events." Jiang Chen declined them decisively. These people were fickle and capricious. They fawned over him when he had power, but would absolutely be the first to jump out to step on him if he lost power.

Jiang Chen didn't want to associate with such fair-weather pettiness.

Mu Gaoqi was also met with the same sweet dilemma on his side. One had to say, he felt a bit like he was floating on a cloud. He'd been elevated from the bottom to a Sovereign Area senior brother that everyone buttered up to in an instant. He really was a bit caught on this high and almost agreed after all sorts of coaxing and compliments.

It was a good thing that one of Elder Yun Nie's followers called him away at this point to meet Elder Yun Nie. "Gaoqi, you've an innate wood constitution of a high order, a first in Regal Pill Palace history. However, your mentality necessitates further tempering." Elder Yun Nie's tone was stern. "There is a saying that dragons do not comport themselves with snakes. You're now different from those people. If you stay with them, they'll only mold you into a vulgar and mediocre man. I was quite admiring of your relationship with Jiang Chen before, but you seem to have lost a bit of yourself now."

Mu Gaoqi's heart spasmed. It was as if a pail of cold water had been poured onto his head, making him shiver all over.

Indeed, what had happened to him? A small man intoxicated by success? If he had to find a term to describe himself now, that really did seem a bit fitting. Those people had dismissed him out of hand before, but had his ego been so stroked just because they were suddenly fawning over him? Was this all he amounted to? If this was the case, how would he face Brother Chen's mentorship, his honored master's heritage, and his own innate wood constitution?

An audible thunk sounded as Mu Gaoqi fell to his knees when his thoughts reached this point. "Honored master, your disciple was wrong." Mu Gaoqi spoke woodenly, great beads of sweat breaking out over his forehead.

"Hmph! You should imitate Jiang Chen. Think nothing about praise or condemnation from the outside world. If you have your head in the clouds just from the praise of a group of Soaring Cloud disciples, then you'll revert to your previous timid and cowering personality when you're suppressed by the geniuses in the Sovereign Area. There isn't the slightest bit of good in this for your development. Remember, you must remain unmoved by either gain or loss. Dwell on this more, there is great meaning

in those words. If you had displayed a better performance in the strength of heart category this time, you wouldn't have tied with Ouyang Chao. Training in strength of heart is your biggest weakness." Elder Yun Nie's words were a clap to his head, completely ripping apart his bit of vainglorious puffery.

"Honored master, your disciple promises to learn from senior brother Jiang Chen in the future such that I will remain unmoved by neither gain or loss."

Elder Yun Nie sighed lightly. "Gaoqi, I placed you and Jiang Chen on the list for the Pill Battles because I wished to test the two of you. I wanted to have you face the questioning of the premier geniuses in the Sovereign Area to see how the two of you perform under pressure. If you move to the Sovereign Area in your current state, there is no question that you will be ripped to pieces. At least to the extent where not a shred of skin will be left on your body. At worst, it's possible that you would never recover from it."

Mu Gaoqi abruptly came to his senses, finally understanding his honored master's intentions. "Your disciple has been a fool. From today forth, your disciple will temper his strength of heart and reflect daily."

"Mm, you must make it past the challenge of strength of heart yourself. No one will be able to help you. Go. Move to the Sovereign Area today and don't hang around the Soaring Clouds Area any longer." It wasn't that Elder Yun Nie looked down on the core disciples in the Soaring Clouds, but that he had extremely high hopes for Mu Gaoqi. It wasn't empty bluster to say that an innate wood constitution of high order could bring about several hundred years of good fortune to the Regal Pill Palace. Therefore, he didn't wish for Mu Gaoqi to lose himself in empty, useless flattery.

Not only did Mu Gaoqi not resent his master after such a lecture, but he was full of gratitude instead. He knew that his honored master had lectured him for his own good. If he really did lose his direction by all that flattery, then all of his potential would be as good as dust in the end.

"Hurry to the Sovereign Area. There are only a few months till the Pill Battles. You need to make your preparations, particularly in strength of heart."

"Understood! Your disciple has received his orders." Mu Gaoqi responded seriously.

"Go, you can come to my residence anytime if you run into any difficult questions." Elder Yun Nie looked at Mu Gaoqi with encouraging eyes.

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A residence in the Sovereign Area was indeed superior and uncommon, a fact that Jiang Chen immediately felt after setting foot onto his own territory. The spirit power in this area wasn't the least bit below the residence in Hundred Elders Peak. Although the range of this area was less than the Peak's, its superior spirit power still made Jiang Chen feel that this endeavor had been worth it.

Compared to the Soaring Clouds Area, the concentration of spirit power was at least three to five times greater. In addition, each residence acted as its own world and had restrictions unique to the sect defending it. One wouldn't be able to even enter without a unique token. This meant that Jiang Chen truly owned this hundred miles radius territory.

Gouyu and the rest of his followers had their own houses and gardens. Huang'er also chose a small yard in a peaceful area, transferring her flora over. The environment there was expansive, calm, and independent—markedly better than the Soaring Clouds area.

Many people entered and left the Soaring Clouds Area, and it wasn't as quiet as this place. Huang'er in particular liked it much better.

After settling everyone in, Jiang Chen took a spin around the territory. He wanted to find a dangerously steep area to install the wood spirit spring.

Chapter 505: The Conception of a Formation

After walking around for a while, Jiang Chen still chose the ground beneath a karst cave system. Although it didn't have a naturally formed crater, Jiang Chen wasn't worried. After all, he had a free labor force in the form of the Goldbiter Rats. After a day of excavation, they managed to dig out an enormous pit just slightly larger than the one that originally held the wood spirit spring. It was perfect for holding the lake's waters.

There was also ample spirit energy in this area, so Jiang Chen planted many spirit herbs that had the wood attribute to conceal the presence of the Jade Vine. He replanted the Jade Vine before summoning Long Xiaoxuan to release the waters of the lake.

The spring was reformed in a mere two hours.

Jiang Chen circled the cave a few times and felt that the cave didn't have much in the way of defenses. "Although a restriction is in place on the border of my residence, it really is appalling that none of my personal restrictions are in place around the residence."

Since he now had his own place, Jiang Chen didn't wish for just anyone to easily walk in and out of his territory. It wasn't that he was unfamiliar with formation restrictions. The only thing he couldn't immerse himself in during his past life was cultivation; everything else was fair game. The way of formations naturally wasn't left unexplored.

However, formations were toys for the rich. The amount of spirit stones that a formation would consume was easily commensurate to the amount of resources that ten cultivators would consume. If Jiang Chen wanted to set up a formation of his own, the amount of spirit stones he'd consume for sage level defenses would be absolutely stunning!

With the current depths of his pockets, he wasn't capable of affording this kind of black hole level consumption at all. But it was a good thing that he had an enormous flock of Goldwing Swordbirds, and an even greater group of Goldbiter Rats at his beck and call. Now that he had his own property, he could absolutely establish the Rats in the cave. Of course, the wood spring itself would still be Long Xiaoxuan's territory. No one apart from Jiang Chen would be able to easily approach. The Goldwing Swordbirds and Goldbiter Rats would be arrayed as the first and second layers of defense. This way, he'd be able to set up multiple layers of manmade defenses.

However, this was just a temporary situation to deal with the current circumstances. There was still a urgent requirement for a strong defensive formation. Jiang Chen started to examine the terrain around

his residence. The building structures weren't that far from the karst cave. After analyzing the layout, the name of a formation rose in his heart—the Nine Gates Incineration Formation.

The terrain rose and fell in nine waves, as if the nine gates beneath the heavens. With this kind of topography, that particular formation seemed very appropriate.

The Nine Gates Incineration Formation was one that Jiang Chen had a deeper than usual impression of in his memories. This formation wasn't a divine level formation, but one that combined all sorts of heritages in the mundane world. Jiang Chen was versed enough in the formation to hold off Titled Great Emperors if he could activate it to its fullest.

Of course, that wasn't a realistic notion at the moment. He didn't have that much in terms of spare resources. Only if he had the resources of the entire Regal Pill Palace at his disposal would he have seventy to eighty percent guarantee of fully activating the formation. But obviously, he didn't even bother entertaining this kind of wishful thinking at all. His current goal was to defend against sage level experts, and that would be enough. Thirty percent of the formation's power would be sufficient to handle those kinds of experts, but the amount of materials needed to barely reach thirty percent was equally stunning.

For one, refining the formation flag was a critical step. Although it wasn't as complex as refining divine weapons, it was a direct determinant of how the formation would perform.

There were stringent requirements for the materials used to make the flag as well as the materials for drawing the formation. Apart from that, there was an exorbitant number of spirit stones needed to maintain and operate the formation.

With Jiang Chen's current stipend, he'd have to save up for ten years to be able to activate and sustain thirty percent of the formation's strength for a year. If he wanted to keep it running for a decade or a hundred years, then he'd need to save up a hundred to a thousand years of his stipend. It was an absolutely staggering amount.

Jiang Chen estimated that only the elders of the sect would be able to bring out such a figure, and the figure would cause no small degree of heartache at that. "I don't expect it to operate for a hundred years. At minimum, five years. Five years is a must." Jiang Chen estimated that five years was the lowest he would accept. However, even that required fifty years of his stipend. Despite being favored by Dan Chi, it was an unrealistic notion to think of getting a fifty year advance on his stipend. If he tried to obtain this amount through sect missions, one that would reward him that many spirit stones would be much more difficult than the eight star mission of refining the Hexarune Dragon Pill for Elder Yun Nie. Missions obviously wouldn't resolve Jiang Chen's immediate need for spirit stones.

"I still need to earn money in the end." Jiang Chen once again felt the woes of not having enough money. Although he had quite a few valuables on him now in the form of the dragon blood, the crystal, and the wood spirit spring, these were all his trump cards. They couldn't be exposed at any cost. Once they were exposed, Jiang Chen would have no end of troubles. He didn't want to do this if he didn't have to. Otherwise, one drop of dragon blood would've been enough to resolve all his problems.

Of course, it wasn't as if he didn't have any other viable avenues. If he went to find Palace Head Dan Chi or Elder Yun Nie, they might very well just lend him the resources he needed. However, Jiang Chen

wasn't willing to make this request. Only when one spent money they earned themselves would one feel satisfied about spending it.

When Jiang Chen had departed from the wood spirit spring back then, he'd also received a large amount of spirit stones. He did a quick count of how much he had, and came to the conclusion that the not insignificant sum would resolve half of his need immediately.

But that's only half. Where do I go to fill the hole for the other half? Jiang Chen quietly mused. He had many methods, but they all needed time. The one thing Jiang Chen lacked the most at the moment was time. He didn't want to spend most of his time earning money for his formation and thereby neglect his cultivation. That would just be losing sight of the main goal for small gains.

"Forget it, I'll take things one step at a time. I'll be training in the Sovereign Area for the foreseeable future anyways, and there are already defenses set up in the outskirts of the Sovereign Area. Most ordinary folk won't be able to set foot in my territory." Although Jiang Chen wanted to immediately set up the formation, he knew that it wouldn't be done quickly. It was already a decent level of privacy from the restrictive formations set up in the outskirts of his private residents. Ordinary people couldn't bypass those.

He wanted to set up some precautions to prevent unwelcome guests. If someone happened to visit uninvited and possessed great arts, his secret concerning the wood spirit spring would be revealed without a doubt. Although with Long Xiaoxuan sitting guard and capable of killing intruders to keep the secret, if the person who barged in was a senior executive of the Regal Pill Palace, he didn't feel that he could kill the man. $n-(\mathcal{O})(v))\mathcal{E}-L(/&(-1--n$

When he returned to his house, Jiang Chen was about to enter closed door cultivation when a message glyph suddenly came in from outside his walls. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, I am here on behalf of my master to invite you to the monthly meeting of the Sovereign Area in three days, to sip tea and discuss pills as well as the overall development trends of the Myriad Domain."

Gouyu made her way out just as the message sounded, returning with an invitation not long after. The invitation was quite exquisitely designed. It seemed a lot of attention had gone into making it.

"Daoist Jiang Chen, as Sovereign Area geniuses, we stand at the peak of the sect and look out over the world. I will be holding the monthly meeting at my humble abode in three days to engage in a session of tea tasting, pill discourse, as well as a conversation about the lay of the land and trends of the times. Wouldn't that be wonderful? You have newly come to the Sovereign Area and are certainly interested in the literary pursuits. Your presence is requested. Please do not leave us waiting for long." The name Shen Qinghong was signed with great flourish at the bottom.

Jiang Chen naturally remembered this character. He was one of the peak existences in the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. It was said that he was half step sage realm. That put him at one of the top three in the Sovereign Area.

The monthly meeting of the Sovereign Area?

Jiang Chen toyed lightly with the invitation. He knew that it was half a real invite and half a probe. If he didn't go, it would mean a decisive split with the group. He would become the target of everyone's suppression in the Sovereign Area in the future and the laughingstock of the entire Rosy Valley.

Although he didn't mind that, he wasn't willing to display weakness. If he went himself, he'd likely meet with multiple difficulties. This gathering would be a hotbed of malicious intent. These Sovereign Area disciples were all experts and would never show him a polite face. Throwing obstacles in his way was a bygone fact. If he didn't handle it properly, it'd be very likely that he'd end up with a face full of dirt or even make a fool out of himself.

However, Jiang Chen didn't bother thinking too much. No matter how complex this monthly meeting would turn out to be, he had no other choice.

He had to go.

If he didn't, he would be painted as a coward and drop in the esteem of the entire sect. The most critical thing was that he had a great deal of Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie's favor. If others looked down on him, it would be an indirect blow on the two as well.

Jiang Chen put the invitation down, having come to a decision already. Whether it was the lair of a dragon or the cave of a tiger, or mountains of blades and oceans of fire, he had no reason to decline.

Mu Gaoqi came visiting in a hurry after a short while. Jiang Chen had expected this as well. Mu Gaoqi must've also received an invitation and found it hard to decide. He'd come to ask for Jiang Chen's opinion.

"Brother Chen, this monthly meeting is just an excuse to snub us at the very beginning. They don't accept that you and I have already received a spot in the Pill Battles, and likely want to create all sorts of difficulties for us."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "And so you're afraid now?"

Mu Gaoqi's heart spasmed as he thought of his honored master's lecture two days ago. He resolutely made up his mind. "I'm not afraid, Brother Chen! I'm here to tell you that I'll be going no matter what. I'm an innate wood constitution of high order and my pill dao potential is the greatest in Regal Pill Palace history. I cannot appear weak and lose face for my honored master." Although this kind of expression was a bit stilted, Jiang Chen could still detect the undercurrent of Mu Gaoqi's determination.

"Gaoqi, you and I share a common fate. I have here an art to train strength of heart and vision. I now pass them onto you, but you must promise to keep this a secret." Jiang Chen passed on "God's Eye" and "Boulder's Heart" to Mu Gaoqi with his consciousness.

"Brother Chen, my accomplishments till today have been purely due to you. You've taken such good care of me, I won't have a single word of complaint even if you smack me to death because of continued immaturity. I won't share what you've given me even if others beat me to death." Mu Gaoqi may have a weaker personality than others, but he still had his own principles.

Chapter 506: The Monthly Sovereign Area Meeting

Every single one of Jiang Chen's followers trained in these two arts, so it wasn't some exclusive method that he was passing onto Mu Gaoqi. Jiang Chen was investing this much in Mu Gaoqi because he saw potential worthy of doing so in the latter. Mu Gaoqi's personality was loyal and honest, worthy of trust.

The Regal Pill Palace was treating Jiang Chen well, and this would be how he would repay their favor, by raising a great future pill master for them. Nevertheless, he only passed on these two and nothing else, because as a pill master, what Mu Gaoqi was weakest in currently was vision and strength of heart. If he could obtain some achievement in this regard and shore up the gaps in his abilities, then his growth rate would skyrocket. To be honest, Jiang Chen was rather looking forward to the day.

“Gaoqi, although I’ve been of some use in helping you achieve what you have today, the key still lies in your potential and your intelligence. If you didn’t possess a wood constitution and have knowledge of the wood spirit spring, you never would be where you are today no matter how much I helped you. Of course, you and I are both Regal Pill Palace disciples now. We put forth effort on behalf of the sect. Everything I do, everything you do, is all for the sect.”

“Yes, yes.” Mu Gaoqi nodded in quick succession. He identified deeply with the sect, and had an even greater sense of belonging after gaining Elder Yun Nie as his master.

“There are still three days until the meeting; go back and make your preparations.”

“Brother Chen, I understand! Don’t worry, I won’t disappoint any of you.” Mu Gaoqi’s confidence was gradually increasing thanks to Jiang Chen’s continual help. Although it wasn’t possible to immediately wipe out all the weak spots in his personality, he was at least improving. His confidence level was noticeably higher compared to when he’d first met Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen gave no further thought to the monthly meeting over the next three days, instead immersing himself in cultivation. With so many Origin Fostering Pills on hand and after refining the Firelizard core, Jiang Chen was now gathering his momentum at the peak of the third level origin realm. He was only a step away from earth origin realm, and he was very confident that he’d be able to set foot into it after the monthly meeting.

When he’d set foot in the Regal Pill Palace, he’d set his goal on breaking through to the sky origin realm in three years. A few months later, he was only a step away from the earth origin realm. This wasn’t slow, but neither was it particularly fast.

“Time waits for no one. The Myriad Grand Ceremony in three years is the meeting of the most powerful of the younger generation in the Myriad Domain. All the geniuses of the younger generation will converge, and the resulting clash will be extraordinary. If I cannot enter the sky origin realm in three years, what right would I have to compete for the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Ranking? What would I be able to bring to the Grand Ceremony? What right would I have to compete for the chance to enter the Paramount Realm in the Myriad Domain?”

Back during the Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect alliance ceremony, Palace Head Dan Chi had told Jiang Chen a bit of the story behind the Myriad Domain. Jiang Chen was now aware of what the Dragon Rankings represented, what the Grand Ceremony indicated, and what the Paramount Realm meant. If he couldn’t even come out on top at a gathering of the Myriad Domain geniuses, what right would he have to challenge the Upper Eight Realms?

When he thought about how his father had already spent so many years in the Upper Eight Realms, Jiang Chen felt his heart afire with anxiety. “Strength! I, Jiang Chen, still need to urgently increase my strength.”

He received Mu Gaoqi's message glyph as soon as as he emerged from closed door cultivation. The two of them made their way to Shen Qinghong's residence together.

Shen Qinghong was ranked as one of the top three in the Sovereign Area, with subtle hints of being number one. His strength was touted as between peak origin realm and half step sage realm. But of course, that kind of title was just a compliment. He was still just peak origin realm in reality.

Just as most spirit kings at the peak of the spirit realm liked to call themselves half step origin realm, so did origin kings at the peak of origin realm like to call themselves half step sage realm. Shen Qinghong did have the right to look down on everyone else with pride though. At 28 years old, he was only six years older than Jiang Chen, but his cultivation level had already reached the peak of the origin realm.

Of course, Jiang Chen was neither admiring nor envious. There were a multitude of geniuses in this world, and those who could reach the top in the Regal Pill Palace naturally had tremendous potential. If he'd been born in the Regal Pill Palace and not the Eastern Kingdom, his cultivation would've broken through to the sage realm by now. In the end, it still came down to a matter of resources. The Regal Pill Palace's resources couldn't be compared to the paltry resources that Jiang Chen had been exposed to in the Eastern Kingdom, Skylarell Kingdom, and Precious Tree Sect.

"Brother Chen, I feel that they'll make trouble for the two of us about the spots for the Pill Battles."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Gaoqi, you've an innate wood constitution of high order. Even if their martial dao potential is higher than yours, they have no right to point fingers at your performance in the arena of pills. You must have at least this level of confidence in yourself."

"Yes, I'll listen to Brother Chen." Mu Gaoqi smiled and responded, "Brother Chen, I've felt my strength of heart soar after cultivating Boulder's Heart these past couple of days. It will surely leap even higher in the future!"

Of that, Jiang Chen had no doubt. If even Boulder's Heart was unable to raise his strength of heart, then Mu Gaoqi would really be trash. He would still be trash even with his innate constitution.

If strength of heart didn't scale with one's cultivation level, one was destined for a destitute future.

The two laughed and chatted until they arrived at Shen Qinghong's residence. His followers had long since been standing to welcome them. When they saw the two arrive, two followers in uniforms walked up in welcome. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, senior brother Gaoqi, our young master has been waiting for a while."

These two followers were actually minor origin realm! That slightly startled Mu Gaoqi; he hadn't ever encountered a figure so high that even his followers were minor origin realm. Jiang Chen however, had a relaxed expression on his face as he followed the two into the residence.

Each of the Sovereign Area residences had their own unique aspects; all superior locations. Shen Qinghong's residence was the best that the Rosy Valley had to offer, no matter how one looked at things. Its various furnishings and design were all arranged perfectly.

Jiang Chen took a quick look around and noticed a restriction placed on the outskirts of the residence, and noted two more in place after entering the residence. n-0ve1b1n

“Tsk tsk, just how wealthy is Shen Qinghong that he can afford to spend so much? These formation restrictions are absolutely the height of opulence!”

The visible eye could see nothing of the formations, and Jiang Chen wouldn't have discovered them either had he not made an extensive study of formations. He made a mental comparison and had to sigh with amazement at how much money Shen Qinghong seemed to possess.

Jiang Chen's initial plans for the Nine Gates Incineration Formation wouldn't even amount to a third of Shen Qinghong's.

“This Shen Qinghong is either the son of a wealthy family or the lineal descendent of a wealthy family in the Regal Pill Palace. Ordinary disciples wouldn't have such a strong foundation.” Jiang Chen kept speculating as he examined his surroundings and grew curious of Shen Qinghong's background. “Gaoqi, what's Shen Qinghong's background?”

Mu Gaoqi hurriedly responded when he received Jiang Chen's message. “Shen Qinghong has quite a background. His honored master is Elder Lian Cheng, the Hallmaster of the Hall of Might, hailed as the first elder in the Regal Pill Palace. His grandfather is Elder Jin Gu of the Hall of Spring and Autumn.”

This background greatly took Jiang Chen aback. So this is the case!

No wonder he could afford to spend so much. This kind of expenditure elicited admiration from even Jiang Chen. The personal disciple of the Hall of Might would have stunning power. The grandson of the Hall of Spring and Autumn would have stunning wealth at his disposal, since that hall was in charge of all the resources in the sect. There was no way that a grandson of that hall would be short on resources.

This was a typical example of second generation power and wealth. Superior birth, respected position, and high potential made for a solid winner in life. He was one in which the fortunes of the sect were concentrated on.

Before long, Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi were led to a magnificent and resplendent palace. There was a single man in the center of the great hall. His complexion was as clear as jade, and he exuded an elegant and refined presence. Red lips, white teeth, deep eyes and vigorous eyebrows framed a perfect face. It was astonishing, no matter what angle one looked at him, he was perfect.

“Young master, Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi have arrived.”

This visually perfect young man was naturally Shen Qinghong. “I have long since heard of your names. Come, take a seat. Bring forth the tea!”

Jiang Chen walked in leisurely into the great hall and cupped his fists. “Senior brother Shen's residence is majestic and grand. No wonder it has been chosen by the top genius in the Regal Pill Palace.”

Mu Gaoqi also cupped his fists. “Gaoqi greets senior brother Shen.”

Shen Qinghong only smiled faintly. “Come, take your seats.” He didn't actually voice any pleasantries in response, making Mu Gaoqi feel a bit awkward. Jiang Chen however, didn't mind and casually selected a seat off to the side. He wasn't interested in trying to posture and establish superiority.

Shen Qinghong looked perfect, but he still lacked that sliver of proper bearing. This greatly reduced Jiang Chen's first impression of him.

He knew that as second generation youth born into wealth and power, it was normal for Shen Qinghong's eyes to be firmly atop his head and lack the slightest modicum of respect for anyone. While it was enough to fool girls, it was nothing to Jiang Chen.

When Mu Gaoqi saw how Jiang Chen remained composed, he didn't say anything else and just sat down next to him.

Jiang Chen took a look around as he took a seat. As his eyes swept across the hall, he noticed several others keeping a close eye on the proceedings. However, the geniuses of the Sovereign Area seemed to be on their guard against each other, keeping their interactions brief. Everyone sat there silently with their eyes closed, as if they were storing energy and afraid that interacting too much would result in revealing their trump cards.

From their behavior, Jiang Chen realized that they were just pretending to be mysterious and mentally dismissed them. He too leaned against his chair and closed his eyes to rest. If anything decided to come, he'd just deal with it. He wouldn't purposefully start trouble, but he wanted to see just what would develop in this monthly meeting.

Chapter 507: Suppression and Counterattack

Mu Gaoqi broke Jiang Chen's silent resting with a mental message, "Brother Chen, there's always been talk of four kings in the Sovereign Area. Those would be Shen Qinghong, Jun Mobai, Ling Bi'er, and Nie Chong. Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai have reached the peak of the origin realm and are called half step sage realm. Ling Bi'er and Nie Chong are ninth level origin realm. Ling Bi'er in particular is Ling Hui'er's older sister and known for her sexy style. She also happens to have the strongest pill dao potential. The other Sovereign Area disciples are well behind the four kings."

Jiang Chen's expression suddenly grew a bit odd, and Mu Gaoqi also seemed to sense something off as everyone's eyes suddenly snapped open, shooting stern looks over to Mu Gaoqi in unplanned unison. The looks felt like the spontaneous eruption of sword aura, sending chills raking over Mu Gaoqi.

Shen Qinghong smiled slightly. "Junior brother Gaoqi. I forgot to tell you that my palace is called the Noble Palace. There's a particular restriction here that prevents silent messages. When you use your consciousness to send a message, it will travel through various paths into everyone's ears, making it no different from speaking conversationally."

Mu Gaoqi was immensely embarrassed. This was the first time he'd come to Shen Qinghong's residence, how would he know of that restriction? He immediately understood why everyone had snapped their eyes to him. Did everyone hear what I said just now?

Ling Bi'er in particular looked like she wanted to kill Mu Gaoqi with just her eyes. An coldly arrogant look drilled into Mu Gaoqi as a frosty expression covered her face. Mu Gaoqi smiled awkwardly back at her.

It was rather Jiang Chen who smiled with ease. "Noble Palace, hmm? Noble Palace. What a nice name. If those of honor and virtue truly resided within the Noble Palace, it would actually be a beautiful tale for the ages."

“Mm? Jiang Chen, what do you mean by that? Are you insinuating that someone here has no honor?” An eighth level origin realm genius looked at Jiang Chen with hints of provocation.

Jiang Chen didn’t care in the slightest, smiling faintly. “Whether one has honor or not will not change due to a mere word from me.”

The man slammed his hand down on his chair, his tone growing hard. “What a cocky kid! It’s your honor to be able to sit here today, and to have senior brother Qinghong give you face! Don’t you actually think you have the right to be on the same level as us! Remember, those who are here to just make up the numbers will reveal their true form one day and be thrown out of the Sovereign Area sooner or later.”

These words were obviously aimed at Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Mu Gaoqi felt a bit like he was sitting on needles, but Jiang Chen was still as coolly composed as ever. “Indeed, so you must take care.”

The person started and only understood after a beat that Jiang Chen had just mocked him as the useless one to make up the numbers instead. He immediately grew enraged. “Jiang Chen, what do you mean by this?!”

Although this person wasn’t one of the four kings, he was still a part of the original eight members who had entered the Sovereign Area so many years ago. He had a natural sense of superiority over Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi and rejected them from the depths of his heart. He felt that the Sovereign Area shouldn’t have expanded. The eight slots should’ve remained as that forever. Only then would his nobility and uniqueness be emphasized. The sudden addition of four people made him feel that the value of a Sovereign Area residence had been greatly reduced all of a sudden, making him feel like he’d suffered quite a loss. He grew even more irritated when he saw Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. These two were merely minor origin realm but now had the same status and benefits as him, one of the sky origin realm! How could he ever accept this?!

The others smirked to see him jump out. They didn’t try to hold him back, delighting in this newfound misfortune as a rapt gleam appeared in their eyes. How would Jiang Chen not see through this?

“So it seems that this so-called monthly meeting is just an opportunity to take us newcomers down a peg? Senior brother Qinghong, is this how you treat guests?” Jiang Chen’s words took everyone greatly aback.

Jiang Chen had dared to rebut the words Rong Zifeng at eight level origin realm, and was openly questioning Shen Qingrong’s hospitality! This greatly astonished all the others. A few of them started to take a closer look at Jiang Chen.

Shen Qinghong’s brow creased faintly. It was apparent that with his level and his usually domineering style, even the other three kings wouldn’t dare have the guts to question him like this. What gave Jiang Chen, a foreigner, the kind of guts to be so impolite even if he had a backer?

Suddenly, a young scholar wearing black and white Taoist robes smiled slightly. “Everyone, please take a breath. We are all disciples of the Sovereign Area and thus represent the face of the Regal Pill Palace. If we yell at each other until we’re red in the face for small matters like these, it will be the height of vulgarity. I, Jun Mobai, propose that we discuss the way of pills and converse vigorously about the greater picture of the state of affairs in the Myriad Domain. How about that?”

Jun Mobai looked rather like a scholar who normally consumed a steady diet of books and poetry in his black and white Taoist robe. He appeared quite genteel, giving him a wise and refined feeling. He was the only one among the four kings who gave other an amiable and approachable feeling. The other three were either aloof and domineering, such as Shen Qinghong, or frigidly beautiful as Ling Bi'er, or shone with a fierce light like Nie Chong.

When Mu Gaoqi heard Jun Mobai express his views, he hastily concurred, "Senior brother Mobai makes sense. Since we are all of one sect, we should coexist harmoniously and in unity."

"Mu Gaoqi, who the hell are you? Is there a place for you to speak here?" Rong Zifeng, the one who'd provoked Jiang Chen before, laughed coldly as he looked at Mu Gaoqi. "A pill dao genius is indeed something, but nothing if he is killed. Not to mention that you have yet to even develop to that step, but even if you did, you can shove off to the side in front of a true martial dao genius. There's no place for you here."

These words were a direct slap across the face. As even tempered as Mu Gaoqi was, it didn't mean he would accept this kind of humiliation. His face darkened, "Senior brother Rong Zifeng, your words make some sense, but you don't seem to be a true martial dao genius either. If I recall correctly, you're already 35. I'm only 19 this year. You're a full sixteen years older than me. How do you know that I won't reach your level of martial dao cultivation in sixteen years?"

Not only did Jiang Chen not stop Mu Gaoqi from losing his temper, he was actually inwardly gleeful to see this. He wanted Mu Gaoqi to lose his temper more often, as sometimes authority and status were built up in this method. If you always presented a smiling face and was always even tempered, others would feel that you had no temper and was an easy target. Not much respect would be forthcoming. On the contrary, the more of a temper you had, the more others might fear you.

Jiang Chen applauded lightly and started laughing. "Junior brother Gaoqi's words speak to my heart. As the saying goes, don't bully a youth for being poor. With senior brother Rong's age, you shouldn't be acting tough with younger men. There's no glory in defeat, and nothing more than additional loss of face if you lose."

Jiang Chen really wasn't kindly disposed towards someone like Rong Zifeng. There was no grudge between them, yet he just had to jump out to try and step on them. But was Jiang Chen someone so easily stepped on?

Rong Zifeng's face darkened. His age was one of the greatest blots on his record in the Sovereign Area. All the other geniuses were below thirty, but he was already at thirty five.

The sexily dressed Ling Bi'er suddenly frowned and spoke in an icy tone. "Rong Zifeng, cut the blather. First of all, you're not much of a martial dao genius, and second, who says pill dao geniuses need to stand to the side in front of martial dao geniuses? Who says they have no right to speak?"

Of the four kings, Ling Bi'er's potential in pill dao was the highest, so Rong Zifeng's words were also an enormous affront to her.

Rong Zifeng broke out in a cold sweat after hearing Ling Bi'er's words. "Junior sister Bi'er, I... I didn't mean to impugn you."

Ling Bi'er was in an ill temper. "Back off, I don't want to hear your nonsense."

Rong Zifeng was inwardly incensed to have been lectured by a woman, but he didn't dare do anything. He could only back away with a lowered head. His greatest backer in the Sovereign Area was Shen Qinghong, and when the latter saw this sight, he said, "Junior sister Ling, I think that although Zifeng's words were somewhat extreme, they still made sense. Martial dao is the establishment of the world in the Profound Continent. Those who can create clouds with one palm and summon rain with another are almost all martial dao geniuses."

Ling Bi'er responded coolly. "Then I'll congratulate senior brother Shen in advance for when you can walk out of the Regal Pill Palace and summon the wind and rain to bring glory to our sect." n.-o(.17-(e)-l(-1b).1-/n

It was patently obvious that the four kings weren't the picture of harmony. Ling Bi'er was even prouder than Shin Qinghong, and left him no face at all.

The latter smiled modestly. "That day will come."

Ling Bi'er's lips curved remotely, a look of contempt flashing through her stunning face, but she didn't continue arguing with Shen Qinghong.

"Alright, back to the topic at hand." Shen Qinghong spread out his hands, the very picture of overwhelming might. "Now that we're all here, the old rules apply. Trying pills and discussing martial dao, these are the traditions of our monthly meetings."

Rong Zifeng leapt to his feet. "I'll serve as a modest spur to inspire others to come forth with valuable contributions. I'd like to try our newly promoted junior brothers. Frankly, it would be bullying if I challenged you one on one. Why don't all four of you come at me!"

This Rong Zifeng really didn't know how to interact with others. Not only had he offended Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi with his words, but now he'd gone and insulted the other two newly ascended disciples in martial dao as well. The latter two hadn't said anything up until now because they were newly arrived, and because they knew they didn't have the right to speak. But Rong Zifeng wanted to force them to submit, it would be impossible for them to continue with a low profile.

"What kind of words are these, senior brother Rong? You against four of us?"

Rong Zifeng smirked arrogantly. "You're not my opponent in single combat, and the four of you together may not even be able to take ten of my moves."

Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had both won their residences through pill dao. Their loss of face from Rong Zifeng's challenge weren't as great as the two who'd won through martial dao. The latter two felt immensely humiliated. They placed their hands on their sword hilts, with expressions that looked like they were fully ready to fight Rong Zifeng to the death at a single wrong word.

All eyes shot to Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Everyone wanted to see if they had the courage to take up the challenge. Although they had won their residences through the pill competition, if one didn't even have the courage to take up a challenge in the world of martial dao, one would simply be too spineless for much use.

Chapter 508: If We're Going to Bet, Let's Make a Bigger Bet

Jiang Chen's fingers tapped lightly on the armrest of his chair, following his own rhythm as he sat back. Even in the face of gazes flicking at him from all corners of the room, he was completely at ease.

"Stop pretending to be so mighty and mysterious, Jiang Chen. Answer the challenge if you have the guts, or bow your head if you don't!" Rong Zifeng barked in laughter and looked on with contempt.

"Rong Zifeng, do you have any self respect at all?" Mu Gaoqi leapt to his feet, his voice rising in anger, "A sky origin cultivator of such an age, and yet you feel no shame in challenging us minor origin cultivators?"

Rong Zifeng smiled sinisterly. "Don't worry, Mu Gaoqi, I won't bully you. Come on up. If I can't handle you in one move, then just count that as my incompetence. As for Jiang Chen, if you can even take three of my moves, then you can count that as me losing!" It was a thoroughly provocative tone.

"So what if you lose?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "You're just flapping your lips. I have no interest in playing such a boring game."

"Then what do you want to do?" Rong Zifeng snorted derisively.

"Since you want to play, let's really play then. Whoever loses gets the hell out of the Sovereign Area." Jiang Chen responded decisively.

Everyone snapped to attention when these words rang out. Jiang Chen was vicious alright! Although Rong Zifeng was putting up such a tough front, he didn't actually dare agree to such a large bet.

"What? You were talking so tough just now, was that just for show? Did your balls turn into raisins when we upped the stakes a bit?" Jiang Chen flicked a mocking glance at Rong Zifeng.

Shen Qinghong frowned. "We're all geniuses in the Sovereign Area. There's no need to go so overboard for some light sparring. In my eyes, placing some bets are fine, but there's no need for words such as leaving the Sovereign Area, spoken in the heat of the moment."

The genteel Jun Mobai also agreed this time. "Indeed, a small bet will liven up the proceedings, but it's likely that even the higher echelons will be displeased if the bets are too large."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Rong Zifeng, I know you can't afford to lose. How about this, tell me what you can afford to bet?"

Rong Zifeng was already beyond incensed from Jiang Chen's provocative words. "Jiang Chen, don't think I don't dare bet against you! I'm just afraid of someone whining to the Palace Head once they lose. Since you want to bet, then let's bet Origin Fostering Pills and spirit stones. Do you dare take me up on that?"

"Come come, tell me how much you can bet." Jiang Chen gave an indifferent chuckle.

Rong Zifeng gnashed his teeth. "Two hundred upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and five hundred upper rank spirit stones! Do you have the guts to match that?" This wasn't an insignificant sum to Rong Zifeng, it was one to two years worth of his stipend.

"That little?" Jiang Chen smirked disdainfully. "Too little, not interested."

Rong Zifeng's expression grew cold as he spoke frostily, "Jiang Chen, you're just a foreign disciple. How much wealth can you possibly have to stand here blustering in this manner?"

"You can come laugh at me later if I can't afford the bet. Don't get muddled now, right now it's me who's looking down on your capital."

Rong Zifeng wanted to say something else, but Shen Qinghong suddenly interjected. "In that case, let's increase it by fivefold. Zifeng, I'll pay for you if you don't have enough."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. "Good, good! It's the ostentatiously wealthy senior brother Shen alright! The supreme geniuses of the Sovereign Area are generous indeed."

Shen Qinghong grew unaccountably irked by these words. He got the distinct feeling that Jiang Chen was somehow mocking him, insinuating that his cultivation level was the result of investing obscene amounts of wealth in himself.

"Come! Take out a thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand upper rank spirit stones!" A follower immediately went to prepare the bet when Shen Qinghong waved his hand.

When Rong Zifeng saw that Shen Qinghong had somehow ended up backing him, he was inwardly delighted and leered at Jiang Chen. "Jiang Chen, I'm borrowing from senior brother Shen for now. You've made a great fuss till now, don't tell me you can't take out this piddling amount of capital?"

Jiang Chen had been making a great deal of things precisely because he'd been setting up this moment. What he lacked most at the moment were spirit stones! The Nine Gates Incineration Formation needed a staggering amount of spirit stones, and he could only fill up the void by half with what he had on hand. The three thousand upper rank spirit stones would partially fill the rest of the void. If he could collect another two or three thousand spirit stones, he would be able to operate the formations for approximately five years.

Shen Qinghong's followers quickly brought forward a thousand Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand spirit stones. Although this was a sizable sum of money, it was still a pittance compared to his overall net worth. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, do you have enough pills and stones? Do you need to borrow some in advance from your humble brother here?" Shen Qinghong purposefully put on a courteous front. Once Jiang Chen used any of his resources, he'd never be able to escape from Shen Qinghong's gasp!

"Thank you for your concern, senior brother. Although I can't compare to senior brother Shen's immense wealth, I can still afford to play with this kind of a small bet." Jiang Chen took out a thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand upper rank spirit stones as he spoke. These spirit stones counted as nearly two thirds of his current wealth.

He lightly placed the forfeit on the table and looked at Rong Zifeng with a deep gaze. "Well, how are we betting? Is it by the three moves you were just boasting about, or do we come up with another plan?"

"Three moves are indeed a bit inappropriate. That's not quite fair." Shen Qihong shook his head, plainly not wanting to risk a potential loss for Rong Zifeng.

Jun Mobai smiled. "We can't really bet on basis of actual strength when it comes down to a sky origin realm facing a minor origin realm, can we? The way I look at things, how about five moves?"

Lin Bi'er looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen. "Five moves seems rather fair."

Three of the four kings had spoken, and the last, Nie Chong, shot a sharp look at Jiang Chen. "This Jiang Chen isn't exactly weak since he was able to defeat Yan Hongtu. He has the strength of the peak of the earth origin realm. I say at least ten moves should be allowed for fairness."

"Mm. Ten moves it is." Shen Qinghong nodded.

Jiang Chen maintained a faint smile on his face throughout this exchange. He didn't care in the slightest what number these folks ended at. Even though Rong Zifeng was at eighth level origin realm, when it really came down to a fight, Jiang Chen wasn't afraid of his opponent. He was at the peak of the minor origin realm. If he really exerted his full strength, he'd have no problem fighting Rong Zifeng to a standstill, even if he didn't win. If he went so far as to bring out his trump cards, he'd even have a thirty percent chance of winning.

Therefore, no matter whether it was three, five, ten, or even a hundred moves, Jiang Chen didn't care in the slightest. Rong Zifeng would never beat him.

Having received Shen Qinghong and Nie Chong's support, Rong Zifeng felt greatly emboldened. "Ten moves it is then. Jiang Chen, I will absolutely crush you within those ten moves. All our peers here can be my witness."

"Come, let's meet in the ring!" Rong Zifeng's body flickered as he was the first to dash out.

Shen Qinghong also stood up. "Sparring is a great event in our Sovereign Area. Let's go watch, everyone!"

Jun Mobai smiled slightly. "Enormous forfeits for a duel between geniuses. This is indeed an entertaining event. Junior sister Ling, let's go take a look!"

Ling Bi'er responded faintly. "I can hear. I don't need your invitation."

Nie Chong smirked distantly as he leaped into the air and transformed into a streak of light, disappearing into the unknown before people's eyes.

The two geniuses that had been promoted through the martial dao competition looked at Jiang Chen with some gratitude and pity. "Jiang Chen, if you lose, we'll shoulder some of the cost for you." The two geniuses knew that Jiang Chen's match was also shielding them from disaster. Otherwise, with Rong Zifeng's proclamation of one versus four, it would be an incredible blow to them if they lost.

Mu Gaoqi also put himself forth eagerly. "I'll take on a third!"

However, Jiang Chen just laughed leisurely. "Don't you guys even think about it!"

Mu Gaoqi and the other two were dazed as they saw Jiang Chen's figure already dashing forward. His long laugh was carried on the wind back to them, "This Rong Zifeng comes bearing gifts with open hands. You guys want to share in the spoils? No way!"

Mu Gaoqi started as he finally understood Jiang Chen's meaning. Brother Chen was actually full of confidence and had never even considered the possibility of him losing! The other two geniuses also

blinked and started laughing ruefully. They increased their speed and sped towards the ring, not wanting to miss even one moment of the match.

Shen Qinghong was obviously accustomed to holding such matches as he even had a special ring built for just this kind of occasion. Rong Zifeng was currently standing in it, adopting a mighty and glorious pose that spoke of his unparalleled power. He was releasing the aura of the sky origin realm without holding back. His aura covered the entire sky over the ring, giving others an exceedingly stifling feeling.

“Brother Chen, you must be careful. Although he’s not one of the four kings, his original ranking in the Sovereign Area was number six. He’s quite strong.” Mu Gaoqi sent a quick reminder to Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen nodded lightly and walked up the steps to the ring.

The aura of the sky origin realm was not to be underestimated. The entire ring was suffused with an enormous sense of pressure, making Jiang Chen feel quite repressed.

“Mm? What’s this? An art of gravity?” Jiang Chen felt a tremendous weight settle on him as he set foot into the ring, seemingly restricting his movements. **novelb-In**

Rong Zifeng’s gaze was piercingly cold as he gazed at Jiang Chen as if he were looking at an idiot. “Jiang Chen, I don’t know what kind of backdoor deal you made to make Palace Head Dan Chi value you so highly, but it’s high time that I rip that lying, thieving mask to pieces and let everyone understand that a country bumpkin is forever only a country bumpkin. You’ll never be on the same level as true geniuses!” The grave authority in his tone made it seem as if he were the ruler in the ring; as if his every word and gesture was an imperial edict.

“True genius?” Jiang Chen suddenly let loose with a peal of laughter. “Do you mean you? Sorry, I don’t see any genius in front of me, just a piece of garbage busy dallying in his own daydream.”

Rong Zifeng’s face stilled as he circulated his aura, appearing as an enormous mountain in front of Jiang Chen. His talents lay in the earth attribute, and all of his arts and methods lay in that area as well. “Jiang Chen, you can still talk tough even when facing death! My Great Earth Flood will restrict your movement by two thirds! Let’s see how you can still act cocky then!”

“Great Earth Flood” was one of Rong Zifeng’s arts of gravity. Once deployed, it would increase gravity in the surroundings by several folds, becoming a restrictive force that would greatly hinder his opponent’s movements.

Rong Zifeng rubbed his hands together once and turned a piece of paper scribbled with runes into nothing. Suddenly, dots of light the color of yellow soil formed a meter tall air current of stardust. It was a current of air generated by the art, but it was obvious that this dust wasn’t ordinary dust. Each particle was incredibly dense, and moved as if it could form an enormous restraining effect.

Chapter 509: Enormous Arm of Buddha’s Warrior Attendant

Jiang Chen’s own arts did indeed lack ways to counter earth based moves. None of the skills in his repertoire would be able to hold this Great Earth Flood back, but that didn’t mean he was helpless.

He extended his arms, and eighty one ice and fire lotuses erupted from beneath the ground like snakes, surrounding him in their mist. Jiang Chen stood within a flower with a gentle look in his eyes. He reigned supreme in the world of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Even the Great Earth Flood would falter

before the Lotus that could drill through even the most durable of mountains. Therefore, when the Lotus emerged, the force of the Great Earth Flood was ablated to a reasonable degree.

“Rong Zifeng, you only have ten moves. Make them count!” Jiang Chen was holding back enough to even verbally spar with his opponent during the battle.

Although Jiang Chen was slightly surprised by the earth attribute art that Rong Zifeng was training, this level of gravitational restraint wasn’t enough to render him helpless. If it’d been a sage realm expert deploying the gravity art, then perhaps Jiang Chen would’ve truly been immobilized. However, Rong Zifeng was far from strong enough.

A cold hint played about Rong Zifeng’s lips when he heard the taunt, responding with a shout, “Jiang Chen, since you’re obviously seeking death, I’ll be happy to send you on your way!” His arms suddenly ballooned, rapidly becoming as thick as a pair of elephant legs. Each arm was five meters long, and resembled a giant tree trunk. His fists radiated yellow ripples the size of a great drum.

Wham!

Rong Zifeng slammed his fist down, but his target wasn’t Jiang Chen. He punched the ground as hard as he could.

Bam!

The ring shook fiercely like it had been hit by an earthquake. Jiang Chen’s body swayed as he kept his balance through the shaking.

Rong Zifeng’s other fist whistled through the air, instantly filling the space in front of Jiang Chen. The enormous fist’s descent was accompanied by countless soil-colored runes, full of the domineering aura of a sky origin realm cultivator.

Jiang Chen was inwardly impressed when he saw the overwhelming force behind the punch. The geniuses in the Sovereign Area well deserved their titles. Rong Zifeng wasn’t number six on the Sovereign Area rankings for nothing.

When the enormous fist came crashing down, Jiang Chen didn’t remain idle. He directed eighteen ice lotus vines to whip towards that enormously thick arm. “Wind around it!”

With a quick gesture, he manipulated the vines to twine around the arm. As soon as the vines were fully wrapped around the arm, he made a different seal with his hands, “Freeze!”

Eighteen ice lotuses spat out beams of frost, as the air filled with crackling sounds. The enormous arm was covered in a layer of hardened ice. The combination of the ice and the vines managed to bring Rong Zifeng’s punch to an abrupt and forceful halt!

“Great! That’s one!” Mu Gaoqi shouted from below. He’d sucked in a quick breath when he saw just how frightening this punch was. If it were him in the ring, he likely would’ve long been pounded to a fine meat paste. It was a good thing that Brother Chen was amazing and had even managed to counterattack after catching this punch.

Rong Zifeng’s fist was sealed, and the enormous surge of ice energy was even seeking to freeze his arm solid. He roared loudly as a brown haze appeared on his arm.

Wham!

The arm flexed, growing thicker again as various green tendons trembled beneath the skin like water snakes, as if they were struggling with everything they had. The vibration from the green tendons actually fractured the ice to pieces, causing it cascade to the floor in great sheets.

“Jiang Chen, take another of my punches!” This time, Rong Zifeng swept his arm over in a sweeping move that sought to clear everything before him. If the Lotus could catch that previous blow that bore down with the weight of Mt. Tai, then this arm that swept everything up in its path was aimed straight at the stalk of the Lotus.

Snap snap snap snap.

More than ten vines were instantly snapped by the crushing momentum, but Jiang Chen was ready. A magnetic storm whirled into existence around him as it went careening into Rong Zifeng’s arm. Rong Zifeng felt like he was punching through a patch of turbulence as the magnetic storm grated away all the force he brought to bear.

“Haha, move number two. Go Brother Chen!” Mu Gaoqi was both excited and agitated as he hopped from foot to foot beneath the ring. He was completely enthralled by the fight, utterly oblivious to Shen Qinghong’s furrowed brow of displeasure. Mu Gaoqi was well aware that he was destined to be suppressed by Shen Qinghong in the Sovereign Area. Now that hostilities had broken into the open, he had no reason to walk on eggshells around Shen Qinghong.

Although he was weak and cowardly, the Mu Gaoqi of today wasn’t the Mu Gaoqi of yesteryear. His mindset had slowly started to transform.

Jiang Chen activated the fire lotuses and fiery vines began to breathe flames like the dragons of old, wreathing around Rong Zifeng’s arms in a blazing sheath.

Rong Zifeng cackled. “Jiang Chen, don’t waste your efforts. My Gorilla Arm is impervious to fire and water. You want to use these paltry abilities to defeat my Arm? Dream on!” He began punching rapidly, building his rhythm as he sent his fists crashing towards Jiang Chen.

Rong Zifeng was quite irked that he hadn’t connected with his first two moves. His “Gorilla Arm” technique didn’t just have those two moves, but also a set of continuous attack techniques. Once he had the chance to deploy them, it was as if an ancient gorilla had awakened in a fury, forcing the heavens to tremble in fear.

Bam bam bam!

The boxing aura soared to the skies as it battered the Lotus’ defensive perimeter, slowly reducing its coverage.

Ever since Jiang Chen had obtained the Lotus, he’d never lost a battle. But currently, the Lotus had indeed been suppressed to its lowest output. It wasn’t that it wasn’t up to par, but that it was indeed difficult to contend with this crazy barrage of attacks with only the power of fire and water.

It was a good thing that there were many lotuses, and that Jiang Chen could now control 108 vines at the same time. Although his defenses were gradually giving ground, the Lotus’ defenses wasn’t

something that could be easily destroyed. The monstrous regenerative power of the Lotus managed to stave off the constant destruction, becoming the keystone of Jiang Chen's defense.

"This won't do at all. Staying on the defense will only cement my loss. I can't just let him whale on me like this without a proper response, can I?" With that thought, Jiang Chen once again began forming hand seals and letting countless golden currents stream out of his fingers. This time, the magnetic storm he was building was many times greater than the one before. Jiang Chen suddenly pushed with both hands and sent the storm whirling towards the threatening Rong Zifeng.

Rong Zifeng was having a great time hurling punches to his heart's content. He was caught off guard as the magnetic storm smashed into him. He swayed on his feet, almost lifted off the ground from the force of the storm. He hastily retracted both arms and sent his palms thrusting forward.

Wham!

One had to say, the Arm did indeed possess an incredible power. This push was enough to tear the frightening magnetic storm into a shower of golden fragments of light, disappearing into the void. The two had already exchanged seven moves.

"Go Brother Chen! This guy only has three moves left!" Mu Gaoqi called out loudly.

Rong Zifeng was enraged. If they'd kept the original bet of three moves, he would've lost already. He had never imagined that Jiang Chen would be so strong. When he deployed his Gorilla Arms, even the four kings would have to let him obtain center stage for a while, only defeating him when he ran out of strength. But now, it hadn't defeated Jiang Chen even after seven blows in a row? Jiang Chen, a mere cultivator at the peak of the minor origin realm? This fellow only seemed to be a pill genius!

Rong Zifeng couldn't accept this at all.

Jiang Chen suddenly laughed coldly. "Rong Zifeng, it's time you take one of my blows!" His words were accompanied by his finger, which rose to point into the air.

All of the fire lotuses spewed out countless tongues of flame as he moved. His fingertip sucked in all of the fire, turning incandescent. Go! Jiang Chen stabbed forward with his finger and the terrifying force behind it filled the air.

"Skyblaze Supernova Point!" If this point was at its pinnacle, it would be capable of annihilating planets. Its destructive power was astonishing, and as Rong Zifeng hesitated, it sprang at him as it could set the very sky on fire. A wave of anger sent a flush through Rong Zifeng as he thrust his arm forward, ripples emanating from his palm.

Bam!

When the force behind the finger collided with the palm thrust, the defenses formed by the ripples exploded, and Rong Zifeng felt his arms grow hot as the enormous forces collided with each other.

At this time, Jiang Chen's moves suddenly changed as he stabbed forth with another finger, one even more profound than the last. "Supernova Galaxy Point!"

This move was the most devastating one he could harness at the moment. It attempted to tame the boundless metal energy and transform it into a terrifyingly destructive energy. The two moves arrived at almost the same time despite being deployed after each other. ~~novE-lb~~(In

By the time Rong Zifeng felt the burning sensation spread through his arm, the Supernova Galaxy Point had already arrived.

Wham!

The terrifying finger was a golden flash of light as it sank into Rong Zifeng's arms. Immediately, an earth shaking explosion reverberated in the ears of the spectators.

When the dust cleared, Rong Zifeng's enormous arms was nothing more than gore, flesh and blood splattering across the ring. The Supernova Galaxy Point had forcefully twisted them into scraps of flesh. The jaws of everyone present dropped.

Everyone, including Shen Qinghong, were well aware of how frightening the Gorilla Arms were. But now, right before their eyes, it'd been torn apart by a minor origin realm cultivator! Even if Rong Zifeng's bones and tendons were left intact, this was something that had never happened before!

Mu Gaoqi was overjoyed. "Fantastic! The ninth move! Only one left, Brother Chen! Hang on and victory will be yours!" Mu Gaoqi's shouts were deafening in the silence, and was also a unquestionable blow to Rong Zifeng's psyche.

"Jiang Chen!!" Rong Zifeng threw back his head and howled, killing intent exploding into flame in his eyes. "You... you harmed my Gorilla Arm! This is unforgivable! I will tear you to shreds for this blasphemy and eradicate you, no matter your background or patron!"

Rong Zifeng had gone mad as he looked as his arms dripping with blood. This was a humiliation he'd never tasted before!

Chapter 510: Jiang Chen Wins the Bet

Mu Gaoqi frantically gesticulated beneath the ring, as if he wanted to lend Jiang Chen every iota of his strength to withstand Rong Zifeng's final blow. In Mu Gaoqi's eyes, a minor origin realm facing a sky origin realm was very much the heroic efforts of a rabbit against a lion. If Jiang Chen could remain undefeated after ten blows, it would be an absolutely epic battle.

"Mu Gaoqi, you're starting your victory parade a bit early. Do you think that this is all that Rong Zifeng, number six of the Sovereign Area, has to him?" Nie Chong, ranked fourth amongst the four kings, sneered coldly from his seat.

Shen Qinghong's lips curved slightly, a hint of smile tugging at them. "To think that a mere peak of the minor origin realm could force Zifeng to use his trump card, what a rare sight. What a pity that he's simply too young."

Ling Bi'er also sighed softly, seeming to pity Jiang Chen. At the same time, she seemed to despise Rong Zifeng even more. Her sexy lips moved slightly, but she said nothing.

It was rather the genteel Jun Mobai who chuckled. "That Jiang Chen is quite interesting. Rong Zifeng has his trump cards, but who knows whether Jiang Chen has any trump cards hidden away? Would someone

be personally chosen by the Palace Head or be this valued by Elder Yun Nie without having some trump cards? Would he be able to enter our Sovereign Area?"

Jun Mobai was always the one most at odds with Shen Qinghong since the two fought over the first ranking within the Sovereign Area. The two were similar in potential and strength, but Jun Mobai was just slightly inferior to Shen Qinghong in one area, birth. Although Jun Mobai had a renowned master, that background paled in comparison to the Hallmaster of the Hall of Might, not to mention Shen Qinghong's grandfather, the Hallmaster of the Hall of Spring and Autumn.

A tinge of arrogance colored Shen Qinghong's smile. "Mobai, your potential is high, but you are far too radical at times. You're always dreaming of a star rising from the masses that can topple a genius, but do you think ludicrous events like that happen so often beneath the heavens?"

These words were confident and relaxed, but held poisonous insinuations within. They implied that Jun Mobai was as lowly as dirt, and elevated Shen Qinghong to the pedestal of a noble genius. It was a thinly veiled warning for Jun Mobai to forsake any thought of challenging him, Shen Qinghong, because Jun Mobai was unworthy!

Jun Mobai was no fool, and naturally understood the meaning that was concealed within those unassuming words. Then again, so did the others. He smiled gallantly, noncommittal as he turned his attention back to the ring. "Time will tell. After all's said and done, I still favor Jiang Chen."

Mu Gaoqi threw a grateful look at Jun Mobai when he heard these words. Only Jun Mobai dared to openly support Jiang Chen apart from himself in the Sovereign Area. Although his support may not be sincere, he had still spoken the words.

At this moment in the ring, the earthen colored air current had coiled itself in the ring. Under the influence of the dirt colored runes, Rong Zifeng's enormous arms were healing rapidly as they flew into and out of his arms. He held up the air above his arms, as if he was a giant holding up a mountain overhead.

Streams of soil colored air currents constantly gathered in his hands, condensing into a chain of mountains. The origin energy of each mountain was thick and powerful, giving off an overpowering aura. Rong Zifeng cackled as every tendon on his body expanded to cartoonish proportions, as if they would explode at any moment.

"Jiang Chen, let's see how you escape from the gravity of my Skymountain!" Rong Zifeng's enormous arm trembled as he flung the mountain range down on Jiang Chen.

The enormous power descended from the skies with awe-inspiring momentum, forming a gravitational cage that fully trapped Jiang Chen inside.

"Meet your doom!" Rong Zifeng roared as he pushed downwards with both arms. The mountain of origin energy pressed down like the heavens themselves, combined with stunning, earth shattering momentum.

Wham!

The impact of the origin mountain threw up great clouds of dust, completely obscuring Jiang Chen's form. It looked like he hadn't managed to escape the gravity cage of the origin mountain, and had been

crushed beneath the mountain. Rong Zifeng's eyes were bright as he stared at the mountain resting amidst the dust cloud. He threw back his head in a laugh as he struck a victor's pose, "Jiang Chen, you're the first minor origin cultivator to have forced me to use my trump card. But this is where it ends. Ten moves exactly!"

Rong Zifeng laughed proudly, knowing that even if Jiang Chen hadn't died beneath this move, he was almost definitely crippled. He exerted his origin power again, raising the origin mountain into the air with just his arms. A crater several feet deep was revealed, but there was no sign of Jiang Chen's carcass within. He seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

Rong Zifeng cocked his head. His Skymountain was indeed strong, but not to the point of crushing someone into oblivion. It was certainly possible to crush Jiang Chen into meat paste, or leave all his bones and tendons broke. It was even possible to reduce him to a morass of mud, but definitely not the point of dust.

Suddenly, unease flashed through Rong Zifeng's heart. A cold sneer sounded from right behind him, sending a shiver down his back, "Rong Zifeng, are you unilaterally announcing victory?"

Rong Zifeng's body trembled as he slowly turned around to see Jiang Chen behind him. The latter had a vaguely disinterested expression as a tinge of mockery played about his lips.

"You..." Rong Zifeng was immensely startled. "How did you escape?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Did I need to?"

Rong Zifeng looked like he'd seen a ghost. He'd just seen Jiang Chen crushed with his own eyes, how had that gone wrong? Could it be that Jiang Chen could turn into a gust of wind and slip away? How was that possible? He never heard of an art that enabled one to transform their body into the wind and escape. Even a Titled Great Emperor would find that impossible.

But no matter how dejected, skeptical, or baffled he was, he couldn't reject the facts. Jiang Chen was standing right in front of him without the slightest trace of injury.

Mu Gaoqi leaped into the air. It wasn't the first time that he'd seen Jiang Chen deploy this art. He was fully aware that his strange lotus could transform into the figure of Jiang Chen. However, although he'd been watching from beneath the ring the whole time, he too hadn't seen when Jiang Chen had demonstrated this sleight of hand. But then again, none of this was important now!

Mu Gaoqi leapt up. "Nice going, Brother Chen! You win hahaha!"

Clap clap clap!

Jun Mobai was applauding and laughing below. "Brilliant, simply stunning. A peak of the minor origin realm forcing an eighth level origin realm genius to the point of pulling out his trump cards, yet still able to come out unscathed. Jiang Chen, you are simply too stunning." He smiled slightly after speaking as he glanced at Shen Qinghong.

"Brother Shen, it seemed the underdog's victory did indeed happen. It looks like you were wrong again." Jun Mobai hadn't retorted when Shen Qinghong had jeered at him earlier, but now Jiang Chen had used truth itself to strike back hard at Shen Qinghong.

Shen Qinghong smile was an icy, chilling thing. “Mere smoke and mirrors. Rong Zifeng simply underestimated his opponent. If they have a rematch, Jiang Chen would lose without a doubt.”

“Don’t forget, Brother Shen; Rong Zifeng is already thirty five and Jiang Chen only twenty. Did Brother Shen have this level of fighting ability at Jiang Chen’s age?” Jun Mobai chuckled softly as he riposted

Shen Qinghong snorted lightly. “Mobai, you seem to greatly admire this foreign kid. What, does he trigger your inferiority complex and help you stand a little taller?”

Jun Mobai laughed leisurely. “He rather does strike some nerves, but it should be yours that’s been triggered, no? There goes a thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand upper rank spirit stones, just like that.”

“They’re but mere items, hairs on an oxen. Only you would care about these small matters. Mobai, your cares are simply not on the same level as us, eh?” Vicious words flew as the two sparred verbally, with neither backing down.

Jiang Chen couldn’t care less about the clash of words between two half step sage realm cultivators below the stage. He cared much more about the forfeits he’d just obtained. Under the eyes of everyone, he walked down from the ring and leisurely put away his winnings. During the entire charade, Rong Zifeng watched him with eyes that could set tinder aflame.

“Glorious, how glorious! Senior brother Shen, I must thank you for your helping hand. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been to gain so much from Rong Zifeng.” Jiang Chen wasn’t kindly disposed towards Shen Qinghong, so he decided to stoke his temper a bit more.

Although Shen Qinghong was inwardly blazing with rage, he still maintained his veneer of disdain as he casually waved, “Treat these small things as a welcome present.” His gaze flicked past Nie Chong’s face as he spoke.

Nie Chong suddenly nodded lightly and bounded in front of Jun Mobai. “Brother Jun, I’ve been practicing a couple of sword arts regarding life and death these days. I’ve had some breakthroughs and wish to spar with you.”

Nie Chong was ranked last amongst the four kings, and Jun Mobai was ranked second. Challenging Jun Mobai was naturally a bid for his position. Jun Mobai swept an indifferent gaze across Nie Chong’s face as he smiled slightly. “Nie Chong, as long as that mindset of a slave remains, your sword arts will never advance to the great perfection realm. You’ve a long ways to go to challenge me. But since you’ve asked, I’ll help crush your hopes.” He walked into the ring with ease and great magnanimity.

His words were both to take Nie Chong down a peg and incite some discontent. Nie Chong was obviously issuing this challenge on Shen Qinghong’s instructions. That’s what Jun Mobai referred to as the mindset of a slave.

Nie Chong grew incensed as Shen Qinghong’s face also changed drastically. But this was how the four kings competed with each other, and Jun Mobai had always been Shen Qinghong’s greatest rival. Even more irritatingly, a nettle like Jiang Chen had popped out today. Shen Qinghong was feeling thoroughly irked.

Jiang Chen had no desire to flaunt his victory after his match. He began watching Jun Mobai and Nie Chong's match quite seriously. Nie Chong's sword arts of life and death did indeed stand out as a unique set of arts. But when compared to Jun Mobai, he still lacked that all encompassing aura.

Indeed, Nie Chong began losing the upper hand when his aura peaked after ten moves. Jun Mobai then defeated him easily.

This displeased Shen Qinghong even more. His right and left hand men were Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng, but now both had been defeated in short order. This made him feel that his position was in grave danger.