

## Three Realms 511

### Chapter 511: You Have Questions? The Hell Does It Have To Do With Me

Shen Qinghong was of a mind to take the field himself, but he had his position to think of. He was still the top genius in name and so couldn't bear to lower himself to challenge Jun Mobai and Jiang Chen. He could only repress the fury in his belly and return to the Noble Palace.

"Junior sister Ling, you have the most right to speak when it comes to pill dao. What are your thoughts about Elder Yun Nie setting two spots for the Pill Battles aside?" Shen Qinghong turned the focus of the discussion to the quota for the Pill Battles. Mu Gaoqi's thoughts churned as he realized Shen Qinghong was making trouble again.

There wasn't the slightest ripple of emotion on Ling Bi'er's cold and charming face. The tone of her response was equally void of any inflection, "Elder Yun Nie is the pillar of our sect and he must have his own reasons for his actions. I have nothing to say."

Ling Bi'er may be an icy beauty, but that didn't mean she was a fool. How could she not see through Shen Qinghong's words to see that he was trying to use her as a weapon to object to Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi? Although she was surprised and even slightly irked by their meteoric rise, she'd learned about Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's scores from her sister Ling Hui'er. Her sister had also seemed to accept her loss with grace.

Ling Bi'er knew that her younger sister's potential wasn't much lower than her own. If even her sister admitted she was inferior to Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, then there wasn't much she could be upset about.

The key point was that she was already top in class for pill dao potential in the Sovereign Area. There were four slots allocated to the younger generation when it came to the Pill Battles. Even if Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi took two, one of the remaining would still go to her.

Shen Qinghong threw another look at Nie Chong when he saw that Ling Bi'er wasn't taking the bait. Although Nie Chong was part of the four kings, he'd always been Shen Qinghong's loyal sidekick. Even though he'd just lost his challenge to Jun Mobai, a sharp light still shone on his face. There wasn't the slightest hint of dejection to be found in his countenance. "Everyone, I feel as if there are some thoughts that I'm compelled to air."

He rose to his feet, his back ramrod straight. "I feel that there's a degree of bias in how the spots for the Pill Battles have been determined. Everyone knows that those of the Sovereign Area must first be considered for any event that represents the sect. However, this time, two from the Soaring Cloud area have been chosen to represent us. Who knows if something else is at play behind the scenes?"

Rong Zifeng had been the villain in the sparring, and now it was Nie Chong's turn to play a fierce offense.

Shen Qinghong nodded slightly. "There is sense in junior brother Nie's words. The situation does seem a tad inappropriate. Of course, I would never suspect Elder Yun Nie of any schemes to pull himself ahead, but I'm rather curious how junior brother Jiang Chen and Gaoqi have soared to the skies with just their cultivation level of minor origin realm. Moreover, even managing to obtain a residence in the Soaring Cloud Area. Just what stunning potential do these junior brothers possess to be so astonishing? Let's put

this matter to rest today. We are all gathered here today, so why don't we ask the two junior brothers to show off a thing or two? This will broaden our perspectives and erase the bafflement in our hearts."

Multiple pairs of eyes turned towards Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Even Jun Mobai and Ling Bi'er were no exception. Just because they didn't stand up to suppress the two didn't mean they weren't curious. It was impossible for them not to hold the slightest objection to these two young men from the Soaring Clouds Area seemingly skipping over them to obtain spots for the Pill Battles.

"Junior brother Jiang Chen, you've placed first in the pill dao competition. Why don't you show your hand at pills a little and dispel everyone's prejudices?" Shen Qinghong's look was serene, but a light flickered deep in his eyes.

When Jiang Chen met Shen Qinghong's gaze, he could tell that the latter had practiced some sort of eye art. But even so, how would Jiang Chen be afraid of anyone? There were actually a few traces of a compulsion art underlying Shen Qinghong's gentle tones. Jiang Chen smiled faintly as his God's Eye activated, suddenly shooting out a beam of golden light towards Shen Qinghong's eyes like a sharp arrow.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft!

The sounds of their gazes produced an audible clash. Shen Qinghong's eyelids flickered, betraying his shock. His compulsion art had been utterly destroyed by Jiang Chen's golden beam.

Jiang Chen's smile was slightly mocking as he replied in an unruffled tone, "So you have some questions, but what does that have to do with me? Why must I show what I've got?"

It's your business if you've questions, but do I have the obligation to enlighten you?

Shen Qinghong's look grew frosty. This Jiang Chen was completely unbridled, leaving him no face at all! Even Jun Mobai didn't dare act so brazenly in front of him.

Nie Chong slammed his hand down on the table. "Jiang Chen, aren't you fearless in your ignorance! How dare you act like this in front of senior brother Shen?! I can only presume that you don't want to remain in the Sovereign Area any longer!"

"That's right. Jiang Chen, even the sect elders show senior brother Shen face. He has reached half step sage realm, and once he breaks through, he will become the core of the sect. An unparalleled existence! A mere minor origin realm like you leaves senior brother with no face! Are you trying to end your days in this area?" Rong Zifeng had been furious ever since he'd lost the bet to Jiang Chen and come off the worse after the blow to his resources.

"Indeed Jiang Chen, you're a bit much. Although you do have a few hints of being a genius, the Sovereign Area has its own rules, and your behavior is tantamount to flouting them with impunity."

"Jiang Chen, you're likely used to doing whatever you wanted in the Precious Tree Sect. But now that you're in the Regal Pill Palace, how are you worthy of your residence with such crude and rude behavior? In my eyes, we need to hold a serious discussion about your continued placement in this Sovereign Area."

Those speaking all looked to Shen Qinghong as their leader in the Sovereign Area. They were his men through and through.

Even when faced with this crowd of poisonous admonishments, Jiang Chen's expression didn't change at all. That confident and relaxed smile never wavered even as his eyes narrowed and swept across those assembled. "Groveling in the dust and desperately licking boots. Forming cliques and factions. These are the so-called geniuses of the Sovereign Area? I, Jiang Chen, am ashamed to be even named as one of you." Jiang Chen's tone was completely contemptuous. He looked indifferent to the gazes that were suddenly set aflame by his words. Every pair of eyes promised him a sure death.

His tone suddenly changed as he continued. "I'd thought that the geniuses of the Sovereign Area were all unique geniuses with their own path. Who would've thought that there were so many who only know to fawn on the rich and powerful? I feel rather sad for Palace Head Dan Chi. He'd created new residences to cultivate extraordinary geniuses who could rise above the common herd. Why don't all of you take a piss and look at your reflection? Are you worthy of the Sovereign Realm with such subservient behavior?"

His God's Eye shone with a brilliant presence as his words echoed. His quick barrage left everyone's mouths hanging open in shock, so stunned that they were at a loss for what to say.

Jun Mobai clapped loudly. "Junior brother Jiang Chen's words speak straight to my heart. Since we occupy positions of high station, it is our responsibility to set an example for the younger generation within the sect. Sadly, some people can't seem to shake off the mentality of a slave and never realize their true self. Therefore, what other great accomplishments can they achieve in this life apart from being a sidekick?"

Although Ling Bi'er didn't say anything, she nodded slightly, plainly agreeing with Jiang Chen and Jun Mobai's words. She was a pill dao genius, a martial dao talent, and one of the few who weren't willing to run with Shen Qinghong in the Sovereign Area. Just like Jun Mobai, she walked her own path and refused to kiss up to Shen Qinghong or submit to his power.

Shen Qinghong's faction held absolute advantage in the Sovereign Area. Although Jun Mobai and Ling Bi'er didn't coexist peacefully with him, they rarely publicly attacked him like this. Jiang Chen's appearance this time had brought all their conflicts to the fore, and the situation immediately became dangerously explosive.

Shen Qinghong had always sat firmly on his throne, but who would've expected that his throne would be shaken to this extent by the repeated losses of the day? Jun Mobai's words only criticized Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng, but Jiang Chen was publicly defying Shen Qinghong!

However, he was the local tyrant in the Sovereign Area, and although he was enraged, he still sneered coldly. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, it's all well and good to show off our light and edge. But if one lacks the corresponding ability that can back up their bluster, that's not called unsheathing one's edge, but the blind bravery."

Nie Chong also shouted out. "That's right! Jiang Chen, it's no use if you only have a glib tongue. Who knows if there's a hidden force at work behind the scenes regarding your Pill Battle slot? Your refusal to

show your abilities is simply a sign of a guilty conscience! The more you have a guilty conscience, the more it points to some unspeakable secret in the shadows!"

"Moron." Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "You seem so confident that you've found some secret of mine. Then what are you waiting for? Call all your backers and sign a collective petition tattling on me. Go make a big deal out of things! Go protest to the Palace Head. What are you doing wasting time here with me?"

Nie Chong laughed coldly. "Do you think this matter is over like this?"

Jiang Chen shrugged lightly. "Whatever you want." He stretched, getting to his feet with an unconcerned smile, "Senior brother Shen, are these boring tricks the entirety of the so-called monthly meeting? My time is valuable; don't waste it in the future. I'm leaving."

Mu Gaoqi also leapt up when he saw Jiang Chen walk out, following his brother out. He also shook his head and sighed as he left behind his parting words. "For all I've heard of the vaunted Sovereign Area, nothing was more telling than seeing it in person. It would be an exaggeration to say its reputation is unearned, but it's been truly disappointing." Mu Gaoqi had solidified his determination to follow Jiang Chen. He didn't waver even when facing Shen Qinghong.

As Shen Qinghong saw the two leave, a look of killing intent shot out of his cold set face.

Jun Mobai also smiled noncommittally. "Brother Shen, there is indeed no meaning to this monthly meeting. I will also not attend in the future."

Ling Bi'er also stood up. "I have no interest in attending either. Enjoy yourself, senior brother Shen."

The two newly ascended martial geniuses also expressed their intent to leave. They'd just been insulted by Rong Zifeng and naturally wanted nothing to do with Shen Qinghong.

In this way, six of the twelve geniuses in the area took their leave, leaving only Shen Qinghong's group of five and another fellow who couldn't make up his mind. However, the fellow ultimately decided to stay after thinking about things for a while.

"Senior brother Shen, this Jiang Chen is simply too cocky, we must take him down with extreme prejudice!" Rong Zifeng huffed with anger. "It's a pity that I underestimated this vermin earlier!"

"Senior brother Shen, even that trash Jun Mobai is starting to strut about. It looks like he has quite some ambition and wants to sway Jiang Chen to his side, setting himself up as an equal against you." Nie Chong also spoke.

Shen Qinghong's cold expression suddenly changed as he revealed a chilly, arrogant smile. "Completely useless trash like clay chickens and pottery dogs. I was going to announce something today but forget it, they will all come to know in a few days. Then they'll realize how unwise and idiotic their actions today were!"

Nie Chong's expression abruptly transformed. "Senior brother Shen, are you breaking through to the sage realm?"

Chapter 512: Handing Out the Wood Spirit Spring

“Junior brother Jiang Chen, please wait a moment.” Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had yet to depart from Shen Qinghong’s residence when they heard Jun Mobai calling out to them from behind.

Jiang Chen paused briefly. “What insights does senior brother Jun have to impart?”

“Heh heh, junior brother Jiang Chen’s words today have convinced me that I’ve finally found someone who lives on my wavelength. My residence isn’t far from here. How about coming over to my place for a drink?” Jun Mobai was careful to remain extremely polite as he smiled at the two. The overall effect was one of refinement and nobility.

However, Jiang Chen still declined. “My interest has been sapped for today. If there is a chance to in the future, let me treat senior brother Jun instead.”

Ling Bi’er had also emerged from the residence at this moment, but stopped roughly three hundred meters away from them. When she saw Jun Mobai cozy up to Jiang Chen, her dark brows drew together slightly, seeming to take exception to what she was seeing.

Jiang Chen happened to be facing her at that moment, and his God’s Eye clearly took in the slight pursing of her mouth and slant of her eyebrows. He just didn’t know if she was disdainful of himself, or contemptuous of Jun Mobai.

Jun Mobai wasn’t angered by Jiang Chen’s refusal and still smiled as gently as the spring winds. “Sure. I’ve heard that junior brother Jiang Chen is an unparalleled genius from the sixteen kingdoms. I’ve long since heard of your name and have eagerly anticipated your arrival.”

Jiang Chen nodded and didn’t look in Ling Bi’er’s direction, walking off with Mu Gaoqi. Jun Mobai watched Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi leave, the slight smile on his face very thoughtful as if seemingly contemplating something. Ling Bi’er took this chance to walk over.

She paused next to Jun Mobai, and spoke with a cool and emotionless voice. “Senior brother Jun, one Shen Qinghong is enough in the Sovereign Area. Do you want to become the second one?”

“Eh? Junior sister Bi’er, what makes you say that?” Jun Mobai started slightly.

Ling Bi’er smiled indifferently. “Senior brother Jun should be clearer than me on his ambitions. Why ask me?” She drifted off in a fragrant whirl after speaking, soon vanishing from Jun Mobai’s line of sight.

His expression sank. “Self-righteous woman; always thinking she’s right.”

As Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi walked, they suddenly heard the increasingly faster patter of footsteps behind them. Ling Bi’er was catching up and obviously had the desire to pass them. When her lithe figure overtook them, she suddenly spoke, “I quite admire your courage in defying Shen Qinghong, but be careful of being used as cannon fodder by others. Take care of yourself well!”

She seemed to be talking to thin air with her words, not addressing Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. She didn’t even pause when speaking, but darted past them in a fragrant breeze and quickly bounded three hundred meters away from them. However, the two were well aware that her words were meant for Jiang Chen.

Mu Gaoqi sighed. "Brother Chen, you've got some face indeed! I've heard that senior sister Bi'er is a notable ice beauty in the Regal Pill Palace. She doesn't give even much face to senior brother Shen, yet you command enough face to have her speak to you of her own volition!"

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "That was her speaking to me of her own accord? Why do I feel like she was speaking to the air?"

Ling Bi'er was a notable genius in both pill and martial dao. Add that to her natural beauty and removed bearing, she exuded the cold pride of a kind of holy lotus growing on an iceberg. One could say that she was the dream lover of more than ninety percent of all the young disciples of the Regal Pill Palace.

She had high potential, status, cultivation level, and was beautiful to boot with an extraordinary bearing. She was also highly competent, making her one of the most perfect girls in the younger generation of the sect. Even Mu Gaoqi had quietly harbored some admiration for her in his youth. However, he was indifferent in nature and viewed the matters between man and woman with a cooler eye. Thus, he was not as lovestruck as the other young men. But even so, he felt that of all the female disciples in the Regal Pill Palace, Ling Bi'er was absolutely the most resplendent and perfect pearl amongst them all, glowing with her own light.

She had a younger sister called Ling Hui'er, who'd ranked number four in the competition for the Sovereign Area residences. Although they were sisters, their personalities were completely different. This duo was one of the most popular disciples in the entire sect. Jiang Chen was slightly oblivious of all this due to his recent arrival in the Regal Pill Palace, and he didn't pay much attention to Mu Gaoqi's exaggerated description.

When Jiang Chen returned to his residence, he quickly packed everything he needed to take from Rosy Valley.

He'd settled the wood spring matter and planned on baptizing Ye Chonglou and Tang Hong in it. This was crucial for them, and the earlier it happened the better.

When he emerged from his residence, he was wearing the robes of the Sovereign Area and was naturally greeted with respect and others gathering around him wherever he went.

When Ye Chonglou and Tang Hong heard that Jiang Chen was taking them to his residence in the Sovereign Area, they were naturally very excited. Ye Chonglou was quite cognizant of the situation and didn't mention the others from the Precious Tree Sect. He was well aware that Jiang Chen didn't have much of a relationship with the others disciples of the Precious Tree Sect. They had to leave out Lian Canghai, Iron Dazhi and Xie Yufan for some matters.

Jiang Chen welcomed them into his residence and summoned a few more followers. There were eight in total, including Gouyu. "Folks, there are no outsiders here so I'll be speaking frankly. I've gathered you here today because I want to gift you an enormous stroke of fortune." **novE-lb-1n**

Ye Chonglou and Tang Hong had heard Jiang Chen mention this before, but Gouyu and the others had been completely oblivious. As for Huang'er, she was now an honored guest in his household and Jiang Chen had no need to exclude her from these matters.

"I have a wood spirit spring, a naturally formed place of qi. It can wash away the impurities within your bodies and purify the blood vessels, upgrading the potential contained within your bloodline. This is a rare opportunity to remake yourself and cast off the old." Jiang Chen cut straight to the point.

"Wood spirit spring? Naturally formed place of qi?" A hint of incomprehension formed in everyone's eyes. Only Huang'er possessed slight astonishment in her eyes.

"Sir Jiang, a wood spirit spring and naturally formed place of qi? The Regal Pill Palace has such a treasure?" Huang'er felt it to be a bit odd. "If the Regal Pill Palace possessed such a treasure, it shouldn't be only a fourth rank sect."

Jiang Chen smiled. "I brought this spring back from the outside world, so it doesn't belong to the Regal Pill Palace. In addition, apart from those present, only Mu Gaoqi knows of this matter."

Everyone snapped to stern attention. This meant that they were to keep this secret.

"Alright, I've made some plans. Since Miss Huang'er is the guest, I've arranged her to be the first to be baptized in the spring."

Huang'er laughed softly. "Sir Jiang, you should probably leave Huang'er out? How could I supplant the host?" Huang'er was the daughter of an eminent family and had a poised and dignified air about her. She didn't want to usurp the host's position.

It was rather Gouyu who twined her hands around Huang'er's slender arm. "Younger sister Huang'er, you hold yourself aloof from worldly success and are too kindhearted. No one will envy you. Not to mention that as the guest, you naturally go first."

Jiang Chen nodded. "Miss Huang'er, if my thinking is right, your potential may not need the purifying effects of the wood spring, but its waters are some of the purest in the world and very useful in cleansing the soul. It will be helpful in battling the vengeful aura of the Hundred Generation Curse. Not only should you go, but you should bathe in its waters every month. Don't worry, the spirit power within the spring will regenerate according to the planetary cycles. As long as its foundations aren't harmed, the wood spirit spring will never dry up."

"As for the rest of you, one baptism will be enough for a simple evolution of your bloodline. It won't be of much use to you if you enter the spring again, so each of you will have one turn ranging between three to seven days. Two or three can bathe in its waters at a time."

There was plenty of spirit qi in the wood spirit spring, and Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, and the Goldbiter Rats had all bathed in it at the same time. It was only because of the divide between men and women that he didn't arrange for them to all enter at the same time.

Indeed, when Gouyu heard this, she wrapped her arm around Huang'er's thin waist. "I will wash with younger sister Huang'er. Ziqi, will you join us?"

Wen Ziqi's tender face reddened. Her shy nature still hadn't improved all that much in the face of so many men. "As sister Gouyu says."

"Heh heh, us three girls will go first?" Gouyu smiled at Jiang Chen.

“Sure, that would be for the best.” Jiang Chen then looked at Xue Tong again. “Xue Tong, you and Lordmaster Ye, as well as Tang Hong, will be another group. Guo Jin, Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan will be the last.”

Jiang Chen brought them all to the cave after dividing them into groups. He had long since told Long Xiaoxuan his plans. If he brought others here, he was to coil up in a corner and not reveal himself, for fear of scaring others.

Long Xiaoxuan was quite satisfied with his current lifestyle. He had received so many benefits from Jiang Chen and would naturally not go against his wishes. Just as Jiang Chen arranged for everyone to be baptized in the wood spirit spring, all sorts of rumors started to spread in the outside world.

The content of the rumors all had to do with Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. They hinted at something at work behind the scenes regarding the two gaining spots for the Pill Battles. These rumors had obviously been packaged and sold by others. Not only were they targeting Jiang Chen, they were even more so targeting Elder Yun Nie. They insinuated that the elder had lost his impartiality in running sect affairs, and that he’d been too careless in allocating spots for the Pill Battles. There were so many geniuses in the Sovereign Area, yet these two newcomers to the area had already taken over two slots.

Even if Mu Gaoqi was of an innate wood constitution of high order, that still wasn’t enough to prove anything. After all, a constitution only represented future potential. It didn’t mean that his current pill dao potential was higher than that of those supreme geniuses in the Sovereign Area.

“Venomous scum!” Even someone as good-natured as Mu Gaoqi was truly angered this time. “Brother Chen, Shen Qinghong must be behind this! Hallmaster Elder Lian Chen of the Hall of Might and Hallmaster Elder Jin Gu of the Hall of Spring and Autumn must have joined forces to make trouble for my honored master. I say, they’re not merely setting eyes on the Pill Battle slots, but even my honored master’s position as Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall!”

Jiang Chen looked at Mu Gaoqi with a slight smile. He hadn’t thought that Mu Gaoqi’s breadth of mind would improve by so much, so quickly. He could actually consider matters and analyze them from this height now.

Chapter 513: Tempting the Ancient Cicada

“Be calm, Gaoqi.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly as he completely dismissed the rumors. “I only ask you this, is your innate wood constitution of high order pure fabrication?”

Mu Gaoqi shook his head. “Of course not.”

“And did you cheat your way into winning your Sovereign Area residence?”

“Of course not.”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “Then what are you worried about? A wise man does not believe every rumor that comes flying by. As long as you stay confident, what do you care if they circulate random falsehoods?”

Mu Gaoqi scratched his head. He truly admired Jiang Chen’s ability to keep calm in any situation. He could tell that his Brother Chen truly wasn’t panicked, and that was why he wasn’t all afluster.



“Brother Chen, I’m different from you. I still haven’t trained enough in strength of heart. Ai, I’m worried that they’ll make a move against my honored master.” Mu Gaoqi greatly venerated Elder Yun Nie.

“Is Elder Yun Nie worried about this?” Jiang Chen laughed.

“My honored master lives happily everyday and couldn’t care less about rumors in the outside world. His attitude is rather similar to yours, Brother Chen. But these scum have no reservations or qualms in any rumors they create! I’m worried that this will damage my honored master’s reputation if this continues.”

“Elder Yun Nie couldn’t care less because he has the confidence to do so. I will speak no grand words for your master, as he truly doesn’t hold the advantage in martial dao in the sect. But in terms of pills, whether it be the Hall of Might or the Hall of Spring and Autumn, everyone else would become a bystander.”

Mu Gaoqi sank into contemplation when he heard these words.

“Gaoqi, let them hop up and down for a while. I’ll step forward and clarify things when it becomes necessary, but when I do so, they should be prepared for a face-slapping then.” It wasn’t that Jiang Chen didn’t want to step forward, but that he was biding his time, waiting for the right moment.

Jiang Chen wasn’t angry about these fabricated rumors that sought to make trouble out of nothing. On the contrary, he was actually secretly delighted. He wanted these rumors to spread to their peak, until every soul in the sect had been informed. Then he would decisively stamp them out, destroying the schemes of those behind the scenes. As such, he played his part; refraining from responding and even staying within his residence, he purposely fed the misconception that he had a guilty conscience and didn’t dare address the rumors. The more he did this, the more the others would act and feel that they were in the right, justifying themselves by using Jiang Chen’s performance as proof of his guilt.

Then, their efforts would further intensify, culminating in a harsh slap to their faces when Jiang Chen finally stepped out. But of course, face slapping was secondary; what Jiang Chen wanted more was to strike it rich. He’d already set his sights on Shen Qinghong when he’d seen how rich the latter was. This whale of a target had presented himself at the opportune moment to solve all Jiang Chen’s spirit stone troubles for the Nine Gates Incineration Formation.

Jiang Chen was more aware than anyone else that it was Shen Qinghong behind the rumors, and how it involved the two great powers behind him.

“Gaoqi, ignore these troubles and go back first. Cultivate ‘Boulder’s Heart’ well and I’ll make an appearance in a few days to resolve things.” Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t step out right then because he’d actually been feeling the subtle stirrings that he was about to break through to the earth origin realm over the past couple of days. He knew that only a thin film separated him from the earth origin realm. He naturally didn’t want to pay attention to anything else at this critical moment.

Jiang Chen entered closed door cultivation after he sent Mu Gaoqi off. The baptism in the wood spirit spring would lead to long-term benefits, and refining the reservoir of origin energy in the Redscaled Firelizard’s core would be the key that would allow him to break through to the earth origin realm in such a short time.

All of his preparation came together as Jiang Chen successfully broke through to the earth origin realm after twelve days. He spent another few days consolidating his grasp over his level and reinforcing his various techniques. Now in the earth origin level, he quite valued the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Although the Lotus was strong in the fire attribute and had immense regenerative skills, it was still a bit weak in terms of durability.

Thus, he decided to combine the attributes of the magnetic golden mountain and the Lotus. Once the magnetic power was assimilated into the Lotus, its ability to withstand attacks would increase to the point of perfection.

Whenever he'd used the Lotus to set up a defensive perimeter in previous battles, there was always the possibility that a strong opponent could destroy the Lotus' actual body. Although the Lotus could regenerate infinitely, that was still highly disadvantageous when in battle.

Jiang Chen could now harness some two hundred ice and fire lotus vines at the same time. His defense and attack range had expanded by yet another step.

"I possess the Lotus, but the Lotus' attack is affected by the level of the Lotus itself and I can see no great breakthroughs in this area at this time. Only if I obtain a strong source of fire or ice energy will the Lotus' strength be further strengthened."

The Lotus was a renowned spirit entity beneath the heavens, very pure in its multiple forms. If one sought its weakness, the only qualm they would identify would be its slightly weaker defense and not quite strong offense. But its unique strength came from its flexibility with multiple forms and the regenerative abilities of its Flaming Heart of Ice. It was also an entity that could be assimilated with any item of a similar attribute.

The Lotus could devour almost all sources of fire and ice energy, with no conflict at all. Therefore, the Lotus' greatest strength lay in its devouring abilities. Each of the numerous vines that Jiang Chen could control was an enormous suction cup, imbued with terrifying devouring abilities.

"There are boundless sources of qi beneath the heavens and on this earth, and the ones with fire and water attributes are far too numerous to count. The Lotus has absorbed much along the way, but it has yet to meet a particularly dominating source that it can add to its offensive arsenal. This is why its attacking power has yet to reach an earth shattering level."

Jiang Chen knew that this also required a fortuitous opportunity. It had already been a great stroke of fortune to capture the Lotus. If he was able to absorb heaven defying sources of qi to boot, that would really be too perverse. Jiang Chen knew that these matters could only be wished for, not planned for.

It was a good thing that although the Lotus couldn't display its full potential in offense, it was enough to help him in challenging others stronger than him. He'd put the Lotus' illusionary abilities to good use in his most recent battles, using the Lotus to befuddle his opponent and successfully evade powerful blows.

Apart from the Lotus, the magnetic golden mountain was also a valuable treasure. Jiang Chen's first task after entering the earth origin realm was to summon the Thundercloud Golden Cicada.

The Cicada had been spending its days peacefully in the magnetic golden mountain and was a bit put out to be summoned. "Human big brother, you said that you wouldn't disturb me for ten years after I gave you the Thundercloud Tree branch!" The Cicada was a bit unhappy, pouting like a little girl throwing a small tantrum.

"Haha, Little Cicada, I wanted to ask you how far along your bloodline evolution's gotten?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

"Far from any progress!" The Cicada responded in a miffed tone. "Human big brother, I'm going to go back and train if there's nothing else."

Jiang Chen naturally had something to discuss since he'd summoned it.

"Little Cicada, what are you in a hurry for?" Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "I have a great stroke of fortune here that can absolutely accelerate your bloodline evolution."

The Cicada made a moue. "Don't lie to me, Human Big Brother."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and summoned the Goldbiter Rat King. "Little Cicada, look at Ole Gold if you don't believe me. Remember how far along he was when you last saw him?"

The Cicada focused for a second, and began to shriek, "How is this possible? Big Golden Rat, you've awoken your heritage of memories? How come your bloodline has increased by so much all of a sudden? It's at least ten times stronger than before!"

The Rat King chuckled. "Young master Chen helped me, of course! Little Cicada, don't you be too hoity toity. My bloodline's of of the ancient Goldbiter Ratkings, but even I am willing to follow the young master. A young Cicada like you wants to talk terms with young master Chen? A great stroke of fortune is in front of you, yet you don't seem that willing. How laughable!"

The Cicada stared at the Rat King, tsk'ing with amazement. "Odd, how odd!" It suddenly tilted its head to the side and asked Jiang Chen, "Human Big Brother, do you really, really have the ability to facilitate my bloodline's evolution?"

Jiang Chen nodded faintly.

"Alright, you won't be giving it to me for free. Tell me, what are your conditions?"

"Didn't Ole Gold say so? Follow me and I'll gift it to you."

The Cicada thought for a bit and said, "Human Big Brother, you're not a bad man. Following you and accepting your orders isn't a big thing. However, you must promise that you will never harm me."

Jiang Chen spoke seriously. "Little Cicada, your body is of no great use to me. Although the ancient Golden Cicada can be refined into pills, that would be a true waste of a heavenly treasure. I, Jiang Chen, would never do such a thing such as kill a chicken for its eggs. Little Cicada, your bloodline have yet to evolve and so your memories haven't fully awakened. You likely don't know your potential."

The Cicada and Rat King both started. Judging from Jiang Chen's tone, he seemed quite familiar with the former, but he was only a human around twenty years of age!

“Human Big Brother, do you know how much potential I have?” The Cicada grew curious.

“Heh heh, I won’t say anything else, but a Golden Cicada’s wings are one of the precious few types that can instantly regenerate, the Cicada Shell has an art named Cicada’s Counterfeit which can even deceive heavenly experts, its bloodline is one that’s impervious to all poisons and its body can withstand ten thousand strikes of lightning.”

“Impervious to all poisons? Withstand ten thousand strikes of lightning?” The Cicada was astonished, and the Rat King even more so.

The Rat King’s eyes spun like crazy. “Young master Chen, this tiny Cicada is that strong?”

“Old Gold, if you could recover your level of a Kingrat, your strength would surpass the Cicada’s. All beneath the heavens would tremble at the sound of your name.”

The Rat King chuckled and curled its whiskers, as proud as if he could already see the day waving at him in the not-so-distant future.

The Cicada was uninterested in the Rat King’s look of almost unholy glee. Instead, it turned its attention to Jiang Chen, “Human Big Brother, you say you have a way to help evolve my bloodlines. What is this method? I will certainly serve you if you help me awaken my heritage.”

“Good! I’ve been waiting for this!” Jiang Chen laughed leisurely and calculated the time. Gouyu and the others should be about done. The wood spirit spring was absolutely a timely gift for the Cicada, anxious to advance its bloodlines. Jiang Chen had been counting on this. It was why he’d summoned the Cicada. The more he himself cultivated, the more he would need the Cicada’s bloodline to increase his own strength.

#### Chapter 514: A Dominating Proclamation

After coming to an agreement with the Cicada, Jiang Chen decided to officially let the Cicada bathe in the spring ten days later. Apart from agreeing to follow Jiang Chen, the Cicada had to offer up one drop of blood after its bloodline underwent evolution.

Even though it was just a single drop of blood, if the droplet was one refined from an ancient bloodline, it would copy all of the Cicada’s memories and heritage. That would be enough to obtain most of its talents.

Jiang Chen was rather excited as he thought of all the talents the Cicada had. The wings would allow him to refine shapeless wings and soar through the air. This was something only sage realm experts would be able to do! If he obtained this flight skill, it would be an even more stable ability than the sage realm’s flight skill. After all, there were all sorts of restrictions to flight in the sage realm. Only when one reached the sky sage level would one be able to make full use of their own strength to glide through the air. But even so, such flight was still inferior to truly possessing wings.

After all, the flight of human cultivators were often supported by spirit energy. It made heavy demands on the amount of energy from the body and consumed quite a bit of the body’s resources. Even the strongest expert couldn’t remain indefinitely afloat, whereas having wings meant that flying was a type of instinct, an art. There was no need to consume an enormous amount of spirit power to maintain it.

That was the advantage.

Apart from the Cicada's wings, there was also its Cicada's Counterfeit art in the Cicada's Shell. This was tantamount to an extra life to a cultivator. Moreover, the bloodline of an ancient Golden Cicada was impervious to a multitude of poisons and impenetrable even when hammered by ten thousand strikes of lightning. This was the stuff of dreams for a cultivator. If any cultivator possessed even two of these gifts, they would become a top genius in any great sect.

However, Jiang Chen's goal wasn't to become a top genius in just the Profound Continent, but to become an existence that stood at the peak of this world and on the boundless heavenly dao. Therefore, he wouldn't let go of any opportunity to strengthen himself.

He had many techniques to wield now. "God's Eye", "Ear of the Zephyr", "Boulder's Heart", and "Psychic's Head" were all improving steadily. The power of "Supernova Point" had also explosively increased after he'd broken through to the origin realm. The power of the Evil Golden Eye was one that always increased with the cultivator's level, and Jiang Chen felt that there was still much potential hidden within this eye art.

Apart from an immense immobilizing ability, the Evil Golden Eye could also counter many other eye arts. Yet, Jiang Chen felt that this was far from enough. There were many uses for such arts. One could use it to entrance an opponent, or put an opponent under compulsion, or even destroy another's consciousness. The more one studied the various arts of the eyes, the more incredible they became. One look could disturb the clouds in the sky, and one glance could topple mountains.

But of course, these wouldn't be accomplished in a day. Apart from the Evil Golden Eye, Jiang Chen had also trained the "Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods" to the fifth level, to the point where it was refining his inner energy. He'd been unable to break through this stage.

Well, frankly, it wasn't that he couldn't, but that he didn't want to at present. This art's fifth level was a crucial turning point. Everything prior to the fifth level was a foundation for what the art could truly blossom into, an advanced art.

The most ideal situation for refining inner energy was to proceed with all five elements.[1] That meant one would refine the energies of the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth all at the same time at the same pacing.

Jiang Chen currently had the Lotus representing the fire and water attributes, and the magnetic golden mountain for metal. Thanks to his baptism in the wood spirit spring, his inner wood attribute potential had greatly increased as well. The only thing he lacked was a fortuitous occurrence with the earth attribute. Once he collected a source of that power as well, then he'd truly be able to proceed with all five elements. If he could reach this most ideal state, then his momentum in advancing through this art in the future would be unstoppable.

It was because of this that Jiang Chen wasn't in a rush to break through to the fifth level. Even if he had to wait, he wouldn't give up on the earth element. The "Nine Transformations" wasn't something that could be completed in a night either.

It was actually the first two techniques Jiang Chen had started training, “Vast Ocean Current Splitter” and “Divine Aeons Fist”, that were beginning to fade away. Although these techniques were not bad, they were starting to fall behind as his opponents grew stronger.

“The ‘Vast Ocean Current Splitter’ has fully displayed its brilliance in the way of the blade, but it isn’t the pinnacle of its path. Yet, I cannot give this path up.” Jiang Chen toyed with the nameless saber in one hand. It looked so simple at a glance, so humble that it gave one a feeling of not having the slightest edge at all. Yet, he knew that this was an extraordinary blade. What Jiang Chen didn’t understand was how such a mysterious blade ended up in a small place like the Eastern Kingdom? And the most intriguing thing was that it had lain in the warehouse of a corrupt official, unused by anyone, as if a bright pearl hidden in a pile of sand with its light completely obscured.

Jiang Chen was mulling over this strange event when a message glyph broke his train of thought. “Young master, we have completed our baptism.”

Jiang Chen rose and walked out of the secret chamber. When he saw his retainers, all were glowing with health and vigor. They each exuded a presence that spoke of them casting off their old selves. Tang Hong in particular had broken through to the origin realm!

Lordmaster Ye Chonglou had also charged to the peak of the minor origin realm as well, and was only one step away from the earth origin realm. Gouyu was a spirit king now, and was only separated from the origin realm by a thin piece of paper that could be poked through at any time. Xue Tong’s cultivation level was also at the peak of the ninth level spirit realm. Although he was one step away from Gouyu, it was only a matter of time before he broke through to the origin realm. Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan had both entered the sky spirit realm as well. The changes were exceedingly stunning.

Even a sage realm cultivator would be thoroughly remolded in the wood spirit spring, let alone spirit realm cultivators. The lower one’s cultivation level was, the greater the benefits, and the higher the level they’d break through.

“Good, it looks like you guys haven’t disappointed me. If you maintain this momentum, it’ll be enough to stand shoulder to shoulder with the core disciples in the sect.” Jiang Chen was in a great mood. These people had followed him all the way from the Eastern Kingdom, and he naturally needed to make preparations for their respective futures.

“Miss Huang’er, it looks like the wood spirit spring does indeed have some purifying effects on the Hundred Generations Curse. I see that the bad luck about you seems to have greatly dimmed. It appears that I can be at ease. You can live here peacefully before Elder Shun finds the Requiem Wood.”

Huang’er nodded softly, her voice ethereal as she expressed her thanks. “It’s many thanks to Sir Jiang’s for offering shelter.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “I’m rather fearful now that Miss Huang’er has said so. You are a part of the family here. How could this be considered offering shelter?”

Gouyu giggled and enfolded Huang’er’s arm with hers. “In my eyes, since younger sister Huang’er is family, you’ll just live here in the future!”

“Mm! Younger sister Huang’er, we’ll have company here if you stay!” Wen Ziqi overcome her bashful nature in a rare moment of speech.

Huang’er was quite touched. If she could choose, she would truly want to stay here and just live with everyone in this simple and happy lifestyle.

“Lordmaster, Tang Hong, my residence has a radius of fifty kilometers. Even a couple thousand people taking up residence wouldn’t find it crowded. Why don’t you stay here for now and think about leaving when you’ve consolidated your strength?”

Tang Hong chuckled loudly, obviously having the same thoughts. “Boss, I plan on mooching off you here until I break through to the origin realm!”

The Sovereign Area was filled with abundant spirit energy, and it wasn’t at all comparable to Mt. Great Drum, the area reserved for the sect’s inner disciples.

After he settled the group in, Jiang Chen did some rough calculations, and realized that almost a month had passed. He hadn’t set foot outside his doors for almost a month now. He had neither inquired about or listened any of the matters outside of the residence. He had rejected all the guests, no matter who they were, and hadn’t even opened his doors. Therefore, he had no idea just how crazily the rumors in the outside world had spread.

Since he’d spent a month behind closed doors, the outside world had speculated without limit and felt that he was utterly undeserving of his reputation. They felt that he’d retracted his head into his shell ever since obtaining the Sovereign Area residence and didn’t dare come out to meet people.

Not only did people suspect that there was someone helping him cheat his way to a spot in the Pill Battles, but even that his residence had been won unfairly. These speculations had only been circulating in a small circle, but gained substance in the face of Jiang Chen refusing to set foot outside.

It was said that three people spreading reports of a tiger could make the world believe in the tiger’s existence. When it came to rumors, the longer and greater they spread, and the more delayed the subject’s reaction to step out and correct them, the more it would be construed as truth. Apart from being aimed at Jiang Chen, it was very obvious that they were also pointing at Elder Yun Nie, and judging from how it was spreading, it might embroil Palace Head Dan Chi as well.

The Palace Head had brought in Jiang Chen, so suspecting Jiang Chen meant suspecting the Palace Head. On the other hand, Mu Gaoqi had done his best to suppress his emotions and continue practicing “Boulder’s Heart” to consolidate his strength of heart. Still, he was still a bit antsy about the rumors. He felt that it was high time to step out, but Elder Yun Nie always lectured and warned him to learn from Jiang Chen, to ignore the disturbances of the outside world.

However, on that day, the doors to Jiang Chen’s residence were suddenly thrown open as a heaven-battering proclamation was made.

“If anyone in the Rosy Valley cannot accept the glory and position that I, Jiang Chen, possess here, you can bring forth a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones and commence a battle of pill dao with me in my residence. No matter who comes, as long as they bring the proper amount of spirit stones, I will

meet them in battle. Whoever triumphs over me will gain both the Pill Battle spot and the Sovereign Area residence.”

This proclamation instantly demolished the tide of questioning like a great ball of explosives.

Wasn't it Jiang Chen who was afraid of facing the speculations? Wasn't Jiang Chen running from reality?

But now, Jiang Chen had stepped forth!

Whoever didn't accept this situation could come challenge him, but they had to bring forth a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones. What did this mean?

Too obvious!

I don't have that much time to waste, so pay up if you want to fight me!

Also a Buddhist belief that each element corresponded to one particular organ. Only through cultivation of each and other practices would one reach the highest plane of existence.

Chapter 515: The Dao of Wealth

“What? Jiang Chen is willing to accept challenges?” *no v E) 1b*-In

“Tsk tsk, this kid hasn't set foot outside for a month. Was he in closed door cultivation to train in pills and pray for emergency help at Buddha's feet?”

“Very likely! Elder Yun Nie must've put him through special training during this month!”

“Tsk tsk, whoever triumphs over him can have a Pill Battle slot. Looks like I should look into whether I want to challenge him or not!”

“Do you have a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones to spare?”

“Ai, looks like it's a game for the rich.”

As conversations about Jiang Chen's proclamation started to overtake Rosy Valley, many people started to hatch their own schemes. Evidently, the allure of a Pill Battle spot was hard to resist. But the thousand upper rank origin stones was a severe entry barrier, so much so that people felt lacking in strength even when they had the heart. It was impossible for one to possess such wealth if one wasn't born of a wealthy family in the Regal Pill Palace.

In Dan Chi's residence, Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie were casually chatting, their expressions relaxed.

“Palace Head, where on earth did you find such an impressive genius? It's rare to find a young man with such maturity.” Elder Yun Nie smiled.

“To be honest, allying with the Precious Tree Sect was a gamble. But it seems my wager paid off. Jiang Chen has become the touchstone for the sect, winking out all the mediocre talent within.” Palace Head Dan Chi sighed softly.



Elder Yun Nie nodded with a slight smile. "Not only a touchstone, but even more so a mirror revealing monsters. All of the malicious characters in our midst have caught themselves in various embarrassing positions this time and revealed their true forms."

Palace Head Dan Chi shook his head lightly as his expression turned grave. "Elder Lian Cheng, Elder Jin Gu, and Ouyang De of your Herbal Hall... who else?"

"Just these three alone are enough to shake the foundations of our Regal Pill Palace." Elder Yun Nie's tone grew stern. "Palace Head, we need you to put on an obvious display of strength this time. It's the only way we can thoroughly cow them."

"Yun Nie, the one to suffer the most from my actions has been your Herbal Hall, and yet you have been the hall that has supported me the most staunchly. Selecting you as a venerated elder that year was the most outstanding thing I've done."

Yun Nie spoke quite seriously, "I, Yun Nie, simply act in the best interests of the sect. Personal interests rank second. Although Palace Head has a stern and sweeping manner, you do not act for personal interests either. In terms of the bigger picture, you and I are cut from the same cloth. Who would I support if not you?"

Although the two had slightly different mindsets, they were both acting for the future of the sect and men who truly cherished the same ideals.

"Just as you say, the rumors this time act as a mirror for detecting monsters. Who would've thought that even Elder Lian Cheng, one who has demonstrated a high caliber of morals and principles would stoop to involve himself in those murky waters." Palace Head Dan Chi's tone was a bit regretful.

"Elder Lian Cheng is a straightforward person. Although he has some selfish motives, he isn't a great villain. I rather think that his involvement in this matter wouldn't venture too deeply. It should be mostly due to Shen Qinghong borrowing the elder's name. With what I understand of Elder Lian Cheng, he isn't someone who will incite trouble and bring disaster to the sect."

Elder Yun Nie's words actually mildly surprised Palace Head Dan Chi. It wasn't that long ago that the two elders had been screaming at each other across a table at an upper echelon meeting. It could even be said that the two had formed quite a grudge between them on that day. Who would've thought that Elder Yun Nie would be speaking on behalf of Elder Liang Cheng this time?

"Yun Nie, your exemplary conducts speaks of your noble character. You do not flout public law for personal gain and have the true presence of a sage." Palace Head Dan Chi sighed in appreciation.

"Palace Head gives me absurd praise above and beyond what is due. Compared to your great actions, I am only doing my job."

"Haha, don't be overly humble. Yun Nie, when it comes to great actions, Jiang Chen is truly making a great move this time. He first ignored everything in the outside world for a month, then suddenly opened the doors of his residence to issue his challenge. This move will crush the rumors like dry tinder and spread his name far and wide."

"Jiang Chen does indeed often make stunning moves." Yun Nie smiled. "He also seems to have a magic about him that enables those by his side to become more and more outstanding. Take Mu Gaoqi for

example, who would've thought that he'd be so remarkable? This time, Jiang Chen brought a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones as his fee for a public challenge. What a move. On one hand, it resolves his resource dilemma, and simultaneously weeds out those who lack sufficient strength by acting as a barrier for entry."

Elder Yun Nie smiled at this point. "I'd like to see how these people will clean up after themselves."

Palace Head Dan Chi's eyes shifted. "Yun Nie, this means you possess great confidence in Jiang Chen's pill dao potential? Even the original geniuses in the Sovereign Area can't successfully challenge him either?"

"Even Mu Gaoqi with his innate word constitution of high order admits defeat in front of Jiang Chen. As for those in the Sovereign Area, even Ling Bi'er might not be able to surpass Jiang Chen. If the others wish to challenge him, they'll only be bringing embarrassment down on themselves." Yun Nie possessed absolute authority in the area of pill dao. His judgement was unconditionally peerless. Palace Head Dan Chi had no reason to doubt his words.

He had made an alliance with Precious Tree Sect purely for Jiang Chen. This had brought a great deal of pressure down on him from within the sect. Several senior elders had strongly objected to it, but Dan Chi had somehow overridden them. Now, the more eye-catching Jiang Chen's performance was, the more justified Dan Chi would be in supporting Jiang Chen.

He hadn't blatantly supported Jiang Chen from the beginning because first, he wanted to see how adaptable Jiang Chen was; and second, he hadn't wanted to leave any ammunition for the senior executives to use. He didn't want to leave the impression that Jiang Chen could only find his footing in the sect because of the Palace Head's help.

Now that Jiang Chen was using all sorts of truth to demolish the rumors, it continuously provided more validation to Dan Chi's original decision.

One had to say, Jiang Chen's domineering proclamation had thrown a wrench into everyone's plans.

Within Shen Qinghong's residence, Shen Qinghong and his group were all sitting around, faces grave.

Rong Zifeng bit off his words as he broke the silence, "That vermin Jiang Chen is indeed slippery. A public challenge, but with the requirement of a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones. Which ordinary genius has enough capital to challenge him?"

Nie Chong also nodded. "Some expert must be teaching him in the background. How else would that little thief suddenly come to possess such smarts? Senior Brother Shen, this proclamation has instantly quieted much of the speculation stirring around."

Shen Qinghong was also quite irritated. It'd been his team who'd masterminded this malicious rumor mongering. He'd even had the Hall of Might and Hall of Spring and Autumn helping them from behind. In the month that Jiang Chen had remained in closed door cultivation, they'd almost convinced the majority of the sect that Jiang Chen's lack of a response came from his guilt. But suddenly, his one announcement had destroyed all of their conspiracies.

"Senior Brother Shen, how about I answer the challenge and probe Jiang Chen's ability in pill dao?" A Sovereign Area genius took a proactive approach to the matter. This genius was Shen Anyang, also

known as Shen Trifire. He was called thus because he'd had the opportunity to refine three kinds of fire beneath the heavens, thanks to a certain encounter. His pill dao potential was quite renowned amongst the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. He wasn't much weaker than Ling Bi'er.

When he saw Shen Trifire step forth, Shen Qinghong displayed an expression of encouragement. "Good, Trifire, it'd be best for you to go figure out this kid's limits. If you win, the thousand upper rank stones belong to you. If you lose, count them on me."

Shen Qinghong's reign on the throne of the Sovereign Area came from three factors. First, his potential and cultivation level, second, his esteemed birth, and last, his generous ways.

Shen Trifire was delighted to hear this. "Many thanks to Senior Brother Shen!"

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In the Sovereign Area outside of Jiang Chen's residence, Jiang Chen had set up a pill dao ring and was awaiting challengers. One had to say, a Pill Battle spot possessed great allure. The very day he set up the ring, he immediately had two challengers.

Jiang Chen had been quite generous and allowed his opponents to set the rules and bet. The two ended up slinking away in less than two hours, not daring to even voice a single tough word, and two thousand upper rank stones silently made their way into Jiang Chen's pocket.

"Gaoqi, I've had a revelation. Pill ring battles are definitely the way forward." Jiang Chen joked. "Do you think I should raise the stakes and make it so that only those with three thousand stones can challenge me?"

Mu Gaoqi was deeply admiring of Jiang Chen's high spirits and completely relaxed air. He knew that his Brother Chen's bearing was an innate aspect of him, and something that he would likely never be able to learn.

Several figures dashed forward as they conversed.

Jiang Chen chuckled, "Some more fat targets have presented themselves."

The newcomers were Shen Trifire and a few of his followers, striding towards them in a domineering fashion. Shen Trifire had originally been ranked number seven amongst the eight, and his level of cultivation was at eighth level origin realm, but he was weaker than Rong Zifeng. But when it came to pill dao cultivation, he was far superior.

Shen Trifire wore the accoutrements unique to the Sovereign Area geniuses, embroidered flames decorating his robes, making them stand out quite a bit. "Jiang Chen, Shen Anyang of the Sovereign Area has come to answer your challenge."

Mu Gaoqi spoke next to Jiang Chen's ear. "Brother Chen, Shen Anyang is also known as Shen Trifire. He has extraordinary pill dao potential and is one of Shen Qinghong's most steadfast supporters."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, his gaze sizing up Shen Anyang's face. Jiang Chen laughed. "Shen Anyang? A genius of the Sovereign Area like you naturally can't be as low class as those junior brothers. If you want to challenge me, you must offer up three thousand upper rank origin spirit stones."

This move took Shen Anyang down a peg and caught him off guard. Shen Qinghong had only given him a thousand stones. If he bet three thousand, he'd have to front two thousand. If he lost, Shen Qinghong might not reimburse him after the fact.

His dominating momentum was instantly halved. Jiang Chen's move was pure genius. Even though Shen Anyang knew that Jiang Chen was denying him face, he hesitated for a bit. Once he did, his momentum took a large hit.

A thought struck Shen Anyang as he inwardly cursed at Jiang Chen. "This brat is wiley alright! This has thrown everything into doubt, and once I hesitate, cracks will appear in my dao heart. If I bet with him, I must pay two thousand stones myself. Can it be that this kid was prepared exactly for this development and has done so precisely to generate this effect?"

Shen Trifire knew that he was caught between a rock and a hard place. It'd be difficult for him not to agree. If he didn't battle because of the spirit stones, it would leave a shadow on his psyche, and he'd find it incredibly difficult to advance in the future.

#### Chapter 516: Jiang Chen's Amazing Arts

Shen Anyang grit his teeth and took out three thousand upper rank origin spirit stones, placing it on the table.

Jiang Chen's expression at the sight of the three thousand stones could only be compared to the merrily beaming face of a landlord or an old moneybags with eyes filled with treasure. "Very good! Shen Trifire, anyone willing to be a bearer of gifts is an honored guest of my residence. Tell me, shall we drink first or cut straight to the chase?"

The more relaxed Jiang Chen's tone was, the greater Shen Anyang's ire grew. This Jiang Chen looks too much like a poser. He's just a foreign kid, and he's only made it to the Sovereign Area through sheer luck. How dare he put himself on such a high pedestal in front of a member of the Sovereign Area's old guard? This irked Shen Anyang to no end.

He felt that Jiang Chen was purposefully playing at being relaxed and putting on airs. This would only make sense if their roles were reversed! It'd always been the senior playing up his glory in front of the junior disciples; when had it ever been a junior strutting in front of a senior brother?

"Jiang Chen, I have no interest in drinking with you. Stop dilly-dallying around. I'm here today to do one thing, rip off that fake facade of yours and unmask this great con of the ages. Who would want to drink with you? Not to mention, who the hell are you?! Are you even worthy of me drinking with you?"

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "Well aren't you spurning my good intentions, taking them for ill will? Well, I won't hold it against you this time since you come so urgently to offer a lovely gift of money. So, how do you want to bet? Set down the terms."

Shen Anyang had come prepared. He snorted coldly, "I wish to have contests of fire control, pill recipe, and pill refinement with you."

"Use these three topics to determine the victor?"

“Yes, these three!” Shen Trifire’s tone was quite resolute, but he was sneering inside. These three topics were his strongest points in pill dao. He’d been prepared for Jiang Chen to try and negotiate, but Jiang Chen had unexpectedly accepted his suggestions without hesitation. Shen Trifire was absolutely delighted beyond measure.

Jiang Chen smiled. “This isn’t a ring for fire, so how do you propose we compete in fire control?” There were usually special rings used for competitions in controlling fire, and Jiang Chen hadn’t prepared this particular one for fire control.

Shen Trifire waved his hand and laughed. “That’s laughably easy. You and I are both pill masters, and there are many ways to compete in controlling fire. How about this, I’ll produce a cauldron and you and I can both deploy our arts. Whoever heats up the cauldron the fastest will be the winner.”

Preheating a cauldron was one of the steps of pill refining. It would prep a cauldron appropriately for all later steps. When the cauldron reached its optimal temperature, it would emit a resonance. When this sound appeared, it meant that the refiner had succeeded in successfully preheating the cauldron.

“Shen Trifire, you’re a Sovereign Area genius after all, do you have any self respect at all? Reaching out for a yard after being granted an inch just because my Brother Chen isn’t quibbling with you?! You’ve determined how the bet works, you’ve brought the cauldron, and you’ve set all the rules. Do you dare say that you’re not hiding any schemes in your heart?”

Shen Anyang was indeed plotting something. The cauldron he was going to bring out was one that he always used when he was pill refining. As such, he was intimately familiar with it, so preheating it was essentially child’s play. But it seemed he had quite a thick face, since he only snorted derisively when Mu Gaoqi revealed his schemes. “Mu Gaoqi, is this your ring? What nonsense are you blathering about? I’ll come challenge you whenever you have the balls to set up your ring!”

Mu Gaoqi opened his mouth to retort, but Jiang Chen interrupted first, “Gaoqi, take a break for now.”

Mu Gaoqi looked to Jiang Chen the most, and since Jiang Chen had told him to back down, he could only quietly walk to Jiang Chen’s rear. However, he still wore a look of contempt as he turned to Shen Anyang and clenched his right hand into a fist with his thumb pointing down.

In this world, this gesture was a complete dismissal of the other; an indication of the other’s utter helplessness. Shen Anyang was already feeling guilty, so although he was incensed by this gesture, he was unable to erupt in response.

“Shen Trifire, we can go with these rules out of consideration for your three thousand stones. Take out your cauldron.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

When it came to pill dao, whether it was Shen Trifire, Shen Qinghong or even an elder of the Herbal Hall, Jiang Chen still viewed all of them as nothing more than dirt. When Shen Anyang observed Jiang Chen’s arrogant attitude, he felt both humiliated and secretly joyful for his plan’s imminent success.

He didn’t put on airs as he took out a cauldron, placing it on a stone plinth and pretending to speak very generously. “Jiang Chen, don’t accuse me of cheating later. You can inspect this cauldron first.”

The inner workings of the cauldron was clearly visible to Jiang Chen with a single sweep of God’s Eye. He clearly understood that it was a cauldron that Shen Trifire used often. A cauldron that a pill master was

well acquainted with was as familiar as his own arms. When it came down to it, he could indeed be suspected of using trickery when his own cauldron was the competition's focal point. But since Jiang Chen had dared to agree to the terms, he naturally thought nothing of Shen Trifire's tiny advantage.

"You first or me?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

Shen Trifire thought of a moment and said generously, "The person who goes first is at a disadvantage. I won't take advantage of you, so I'll go first."

Jiang Chen knew precisely what his opponent was thinking when he saw Shen Trifire so on his guard. He was worried that Jiang Chen would somehow sabotage his cauldron so he wanted to go first. However, he phrased it so self-righteously that he seemed to be taking a loss by going first.

"Since the first to try is worse off, I don't mind taking the hit." Jiang Chen smiled.

Shen Trifire's expression changed as he hastily responded, "Allow me."

Jiang Chen had wanted to poke fun of the other to begin with, so he was perfectly willing to let the other go first. He waved his hand, "You go."

"Someone come, mark the time."

In this world, one could mark time through burning incense, turning over hourglasses, or a variety of other methods. When time started, Shen Trifire immediately assumed the proper stance and circled the three fires within his body. The immense fire elemental energy swirled in his palm, dancing like a lively sprite beneath the cauldron.

Jiang Chen nodded inwardly to himself as he watched this spectacle. Shen Trifire's fire energy was indeed something. Although he didn't possess an innate fire constitution, he was close enough. However, Jiang Chen couldn't help but turn his nose up when he observed Shen Trifire's fire manipulation abilities. One had to say, when compared to the methods of the divine experts, the Regal Pill Palace's heritage of fire control was unquestionably childish!

Apart from having some merits due to his fire energy, and even if Shen Trifire's methods in fire control were far in excess of his peers, he was still somewhat unpracticed in the end. However, such showy fire manipulation skills were enough to take Mu Gaoqi aback, as tendrils of respect grew in his heart.

The stick of incense which they were using to keep time had a rough length of fifteen minutes. The cauldron emitted a happy resonance when the burned part of the incense was creeping towards the halfway mark.

The preheating was complete.

The incense was then extinguished to preserve Shen Trifire's time record.

"Jiang Chen, I didn't even use half of the allotted time. Your turn." Shen Trifire was full of pride. He was absolutely confident that Jiang Chen wouldn't be able to beat him. He had many years of history using this cauldron; it was akin to his right arm. If it hadn't been for this, Shen Trifire would've taken a lot longer to preheat a cauldron.

As talented as Jiang Chen is, he'll never surpass me!

Shen Anyang was supremely confident in his results.

When the cauldron cooled down, Jiang Chen waved his hand. "Start the time." Another stick of the same incense was lit.

Jiang Chen spread his hands upwards, and various sources of fire rose in the heart of his palms. It was as if he was performing a magic trick as he kept forming seals, causing the shape of the flame to change with each hand seal.

The fire eventually resembled a stacked tower as it grew in height. Forty nine levels of flames danced around him in an orderly fashion, as magnificent as a towering, resplendent building.

This method made Mu Gaoqi whoop and holler. What was a flashy technique?! This was a flashy technique! Shen Trifire's fire manipulation skills weren't fit to be seen in comparison.

When Shen Trifire saw just how wondrous Jiang Chen's fire control was, he too was struck with disbelief. One can actually layer fire upon itself? I've never heard of such a method!

Jiang Chen's face was calm as his seals changed again, adding on more flames. Soon enough, the forty nine levels formed a nine by nine grid of eighty one flames, nine levels high. In the heavenly levels, this method of fire control was called the "True Fires of Ninety Nine". Using this method to preheat a cauldron would cut down the amount of time needed to preheat a cauldron to one ninth of the original time.

The incense hadn't even burned down to a fifth of its length when the pill cauldron emitted sounds of happy resonance.

"What?!" Shen Trifire's mind was thrown into disarray. He stared incredulously at the cauldron, categorically unable to fathom why his cauldron had been preheated so easily.

Jiang Chen gave a peal of laughter. The incense had barely just managed to burn to a fifth of its length. They didn't even need to compare the incense for Shen Trifire to know that he had utterly lost. The amount of time Jiang Chen had used was less than half of his. Even a halfwit would be able to tell who had won and lost.

Mu Gaoqi guffawed loudly. "Brother Chen, you're absolutely amazing! What kind of fire manipulation was that? That looked so cool!"

Shen Trifire's face was ashen. It was impossible not to admit defeat, but in his heart of hearts, he still didn't accept it. "You were lucky in the first round, but we're competing based on best out of three. You've only won the first round, so don't get uppity!"

Jiang Chen nodded with a slight smile. "That's right, a victor is declared only after two wins. If I recall correctly, the basis of the second bet are pill recipes. How would you like to compete?" He was being quite generous, completely willing to play along no matter what Shen Trifire wanted to do.

Shen Trifire responded, "You and I will both produce a pill recipe and conceal three of the supplemental ingredients within. We will analyze each other's recipe for an hour and fill in the missing ingredients. Whoever fills in more of them wins. If we tie, then whoever finishes first is the winner. How about that?"

“Must it be the ingredients originally listed in the recipe? Or are substitutes allowed?” Jiang Chen asked.

There were numerous ingredients in pill dao that could act as substitutes for each other.

“Substitutes are fine, but they must be reasonable. If the other has doubts, we can ask the Herbal Hall to mediate.” Shen Trifire responded.

Jiang Chen nodded. “Since this is the case, you and I will prepare two copies of the same recipe. One of them will retain all of the ingredients, and the other will conceal three of the supplemental ingredients. This will make it easier for us to compare and decrease controversy when the competition comes to a close.”

Shen Trifire thought for a moment. “That’s doable, but we must swear to the heavens that the pill recipe is correct. The contest is meaningless if we randomly change the contents of the recipe.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “Naturally.”

The two went off to a side to prepare their respective recipes.

#### Chapter 517: Shen Trifire Bows in Defeat

One had to say, Shen Trifire was destined for a tragic outcome if he wanted to compete with Jiang Chen with pill recipes. Even if one searched through every nook and cranny of the Divine Continent, one wouldn’t be able to find someone on the same level as Jiang Chen in pill dao.

Jiang Chen’s mind ran swiftly through a variety of obscure, unpopular pill recipes. He selected one at random, making down two copies and obscuring three supplemental ingredients from one of them.

Shen Trifire had obviously come prepared. He also had an exceedingly obscure pill recipe in hand, one he’d obtained from one of the sect elders. This pill wasn’t an ordinary pill at all, and its application was rather odd as well. It followed an obscure offshoot on the path of divergent pills. A hint of a cold smile played about Shen Trifire’s lips when he was finished preparing his recipe. If Jiang Chen could decipher this recipe, then he was a genius indeed.

When the two were finished with their preparations, they both swore using the heavens as witness that they weren’t using a fake recipe to cheat. When they finished their oaths, they traded their recipes with each other.

Jiang Chen swept his eyes over Shen Trifire’s half completed recipe and smiled faintly. “Tsk tsk, Shen Trifire certainly came prepared. If I don’t mistake my guess, this is a recipe from the divergent pill faction.”

Jiang Chen had been a great pill master that had cast his eyes and ears over everything beneath the heavens in his past life. His knowledge of pill dao encompassed everything and anything. How would he not know this about the divergent pill faction?

They were called thus because they specialized in using medicine in the most devious way possible. They walked on the edge of a blade, seeking the most bizarre and strange way to craft pill recipes. The only common point of their pill recipes was that it would always contain something unexpected.



The pill masters of this faction were all great geniuses. Their greatest hobby was to use uncommon methods and ridiculous approaches to complete a pill recipe. The odder a method was, the happier and prouder they'd be.

Although they weren't a mainstream faction in pill dao, they weren't one to be easily overlooked. Jiang Chen was quite familiar with their ways, so he could put himself in their shoes. He looked over the recipe, managing to assemble a basic structure of the recipe after a little bit of analysis. He thought for a bit longer and began to slowly deduce the answer, filling in the missing three ingredients after a short while.

The ingredients had a couple of substitutes, so Jiang Chen also wrote in two more alternatives for each of the ingredients, just to be safe. According to the rules, writing in substitutes would also count as the right answer, but he could only write down two substitutes each. This meant that he could write down a total of nine ingredients for the three supplemental ones.

When Jiang Chen finished, he looked at the time to discover that less than half the allotted time had passed. When he looked at Shen Trifire again and how his forehead was tightly furrowed, it was obvious that his opponent hadn't a clue about his recipe. Jiang Chen snickered coldly to himself. Doesn't Shen Trifire fancy himself clever, hmm? Coming to bet against me with a recipe after receiving one from the divergent pills faction?

His opponent was just looking for humiliation with these actions. Jiang Chen had supplied a recipe that wasn't particularly obscure, but it wasn't one that Shen Trifire would know of at his current skill level. In addition, with his level of pill dao and knowledge, Shen Trifire didn't have the ability to deduce the right answers either. Thus, Jiang Chen was certain that Shen Trifire was at his wits end right now.

He didn't pity his opponent as he laughed with ease, "Daoist Shen, I've already completed your recipe. It's just you left."

Shen Trifire's heart suffered a great shock as he stared incredulously at Jiang Chen. When he saw the other's confident smile, Shen Trifire couldn't help but wonder, can Jiang Chen actually see through a recipe from the divergent pill faction?

"Impossible! Utterly impossible! He must have given up after seeing such a complex recipe. He's just guessing wildly and filling in random ingredients, trying to get lucky and beat my time." Shen Trifire did his best to shore up his confidence, but that undercurrent of worry still managed to gnaw at his heart. As time dragged on, he searched for any clues in the recipe, but to no avail. It wasn't until time was almost up that he blindly filled in a couple of answers out of resignation, hoping to score some points out of sheer, dumb luck. After all, even a blind cat could run into a dead mouse.

However, there were millions upon millions of spirit herbs in the world, and it was almost impossible for him to correctly identify the right ones when relying solely on luck.

The two recipes from earlier were laid out for the two to compare answers.

When Shen Trifire looked at Jiang Chen's original answer, he was immensely depressed. He couldn't help but curse, "Jiang Chen, what kind of recipe is this?! You're cheating!"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "We've made our oaths to the heavens and earth. They will naturally punish me if I have. Don't you worry about that."

In the world of cultivation, oaths to the heavens and earth were highly effective. No one dared violate an oath sworn to the heavens and earth since retribution was always swift and calamitous, almost always occurring in this life.

Jiang Chen's answers were right on point for Shen Trifire's recipe. As a result, the latter had utterly lost this round, and further, had wholly and completely lost the bet.

Mu Gaoqi applauded. "Brother Chen has won two out of three matches. Shen Trifire, you've lost!"

Shen Trifire's face was ashen; he couldn't accept the reality in front of him at all. He hadn't even been able to see through the three matches he'd come prepared with to the end. He had lost miserably.

"Jiang Chen... you... you..." Shen Trifire was so furious that he began to splutter, incapable of speaking a full sentence.

"Shen Trifire, do you still not accept the outcome?" Mu Gaoqi laughed coldly.

Shen Trifire's mind was immediately cast back to the scene of the previous two rounds. No matter how he looked at it, Jiang Chen has trounced him as easily as beating a three year old! Could he not accept the outcome? There was no way he could reject it. n.-Ove1BIn

In that instant, Shen Trifire deflated. Like a defeated fighting cock, his head fell in dejection as he put away the pill recipe, only looking up at Jiang Chen to fix him with a meaningful glance. "Jiang Chen, if this is your true pill dao level, then you are already capable enough to take up residence in the Herbal Hall and fight for an elder's position. I, Shen Trifire, acknowledge my defeat." He was rather straightforward now; he had nothing left to lose anymore. When Shen Trifire realized that he really couldn't contend with Jiang Chen, his heart was flooded with a sense of peace.

When Jiang Chen saw Shen Trifire ceding the challenge, he smiled faintly. "You have a natural born fire constitution and possess three fires refined into yourself. You have a great potential and should've been a unique genius in terms of martial or pill dao. Why are you content with relaxing under the shelter of another's strength?"

Shen Trifire's expression suddenly changed, sighing lightly. He didn't say a word as he packed up his items, and took his leave without turning back. It was obvious that Jiang Chen's words had hit a soft and tender part of his heart.

Geniuses were supposed to go their own way and rise above the common herd. Jiang Chen's words at Shen Qinghong's residence that day had struck a nerve, and now Shen Trifire himself had tasted defeat at Jiang Chen's hands. The words he'd just heard had struck an even deeper chord in him.

He thought back, back to when he was proud and confident, back to his vigorous spirits from when he'd first made his way into the Sovereign Area. But ever since entering the area and coming face to face with the conflict between Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai, he had subconsciously taken Shen Qinghong's side.

Seeking succor from the strong and powerful was but human nature. It wasn't a grave mistake that Shen Trifire had made, but he'd gradually lost himself in the mindset of a vassal and had grown content with his current condition. He had come to accept that it would be a good thing to become Shen Qinghong's trusted right hand man.

After they'd fully grown into their power and took charge, if Shen Qinghong was the Palace Head, then he would least be in charge of the Herbal Hall, no? His contentment with the current situation and daydreams had made Shen Trifire's steps grow heavier and heavier. He had lost his own personality in the haze of his daydreams.

However—

Jiang Chen's words now acted like a morning bell, tolling through his mind and waking him up with a start, making him reflect deeply on his current situation. The more he thought, the more he began to sweat heavily. He'd finally taken a clear look at the path he'd been walking on to learn that he'd long gone astray from the path of a genius!

"Young master, do we return to senior brother Shen's residence?" A follower asked carefully.

Shen Trifire spread out his hands, his gaze still introspective. "No. I'm going into closed door cultivation and never becoming involved in the conflicts of the Sovereign Area ever again."

The follower blanked, then became lost in thought himself.

The news of Shen Trifire's defeat didn't spread. Shen Qinghong waited and waited, but didn't even receive a hint of response. When a couple of hours passed, his rage was writ all over his face, but an uneasy feeling also reared its head in his heart.

If Shen Trifire had won, he should've been back by now. If he'd lost, there would've been time enough for him to report back in. But now, it seemed like he'd simply vanished into thin air, leaving no echo whatsoever. This greatly perplexed Shen Qinghong.

"Da Yong, go check outside Jiang Chen's residence to see what happened with Shen Trifire." Shen Qinghong gave one of his followers an order.

Da Yong was Shen Qinghong's right hand man, as competent as they come. Within the hour, he had returned with news. "Young Master, apart from Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi leisurely sampling tea in front of his residence, there is no one else. Shen Trifire has disappeared without a trace."

Shen Qinghong was slightly astonished. "What? Where on earth did Shen Trifire go?"

Rong Zifeng was taken aback. "Can it be that Jiang Chen's offed Shen Trifire?"

Nie Chong snorted coldly. "What kind of crazy talk are you spouting? This is the Regal Pill Palace! He'd be courting death if he dared kill his own peer. Even still, though this kid has some achievements in martial dao, he's still not enough to kill Shen Trifire."

Rong Zifeng also smiled ruefully. He knew that Shen Trifire was eighth level origin realm, that the former's cultivation was also slightly worse than his own. Although Jiang Chen did have some skill to his name, his prowess was entirely due to a couple of unorthodox tricks. He wouldn't be able to believe it either if Jiang Chen had truly killed Shen Trifire.

“Then where’s Shen Trifire gone? Did he go make his challenge at all?”

A witness ran in as they hurriedly conversed. “In response to Senior Brother Shen, Shen Trifire left without a word after battling Jiang Chen outside his residence. He went straight back to his own residence and is said to have permanently sealed himself in for cultivation, not to emerge until he reaches a goal.”

This news made everyone’s mouth drop. What was Shen Trifire doing? He should’ve come back! Even if he had lost, he should’ve come and said something, or at least sent someone with a message for his senior brother even if he’d entered closed door cultivation!

“That bastard Shen Trifire! How boorish and rude!” Rong Zifeng cursed loudly.

Chapter 518: Elder Lian Cheng

Shen Qinghong’s face was as cold as permafrost as the temperature dropping several degrees around him. Shen Trifire’s actions had obviously enraged him. He had never imagined that Shen Trifire would take his spirit stones to challenge Jiang Chen and then just enter closed door cultivation without another word.

“That trash must’ve lost!” Nie Chong took the opportunity to add fuel to the flame.

Shen Trifire’s actions had caught the entire Shen Qinghong group on the back foot. Multiple people had gone to challenge Jiang Chen and failed in the attempt. If they let this go and didn’t continue to challenge Jiang Chen, then all their momentum, all their previous plans and carefully created slander, would go down as a pitiful whimper. Instead, all it would serve would be prime marketing service for Jiang Chen!

On the other hand, who would be their next challenger when even Shen Trifire had failed? Rong Zifeng? Nie Chong?

These two were Shen Qinghong’s strongest confidantes, but their pill dao potential wasn’t necessarily stronger than Shen Trifire. Then, who would go? Shen Qinghong himself?

Shen Qinghong rather wanted to, but reason told him that he had to be exceedingly cautious before making any decision. With his position as the top genius in the Sovereign Area, his every action against Jiang Chen would be minutely examined and exaggerated in the telling. Whatever the result, it would be spread far and wide.

If he won, it would be a natural course of order because he was the top genius. But that wouldn’t be enough to prove Jiang Chen as a fake. But if he lost, then his reputation would be ruined, and he would inadvertently raise Jiang Chen to becoming the representative of the Regal Pill Palace’s younger generation. And there was no way he would ever accept that.

“You guys are dismissed for now. I’m going to make a trip.” For all his faults, Shen Qinghong was a decisive man. He didn’t hesitate as he made his way to the Hundred Elders Peak. He appeared at the doors of a certain residence before long.

This residence was tElder Lian Cheng's, the foremost of the venerated elders. Shen Qinghong's grandfather, the Hallmaster of the Hall of Spring and Autumn, Elder Jin Gu also happened to be there as well.

"Qinghong, you've really gone overboard this time. It'll be difficult for you to salvage the situation now." Elder Lian Cheng was an old, bald man, but his brows and eyes were as sharp as a hawk's.

Elder Jin Gu sighed lightly. "Old brother Lian Cheng, who would've thought that this Jiang Chen would be so wild and intractable? Qinghong should've been respected as the highest ranked personage in the Rosy Valley, but this Jiang Chen didn't even have the most basic of manners. We can't blame Qinghong for growing angry in this."

Elder Lian Cheng smiled slightly, a shrewd light flickering in his eyes. "What do you say we do then, Jin Gu? Challenge Jiang Chen? If Qinghong wins, it will be seen as nothing more than the natural course of nature. If he loses, then all our previous efforts are lost."

Elder Jin Gu was also exceedingly dejected. "It's all Elder Yun Nie's fault in the end. If it hadn't been for him ardently backing his proposal, how would Jiang Chen had made it to the Sovereign Area if it'd just been decided by martial dao?"

His was a typical personality of blaming everyone else for his faults, the type to fault the latrine if he was unable to take a dump.

Elder Lian Cheng however, was completely dismissive of his complaining. "Jin Gu, you're just deceiving yourself if you truly believe your words. If Jiang Chen is a true genius, he would have made it into the Sovereign Area sooner or later. In my view, the older generation has no need to overly intervene now that things have developed to this point. Let the youngsters handle it. Whether they succeed or fail will be up to their methods and plans."

Elder Jin Gu hastily spoke up. "Old brother Lian Cheng, Qinghong has too many problems to cope with in this situation. He's the first genius of the sect and exists in an environment of unfair competition to begin with. There's nothing to it if he wins; everyone will think that it should've happened. But if he happens to fall behind by just even a tad, he is destined to be mocked. This isn't fair!"

Elder Lian Cheng shook his head slightly, a bit speechless at Elder Jin Gu's method of education. He couldn't be bothered to respond and turned to Shen Qinghong. "Qinghong, do you think yourself that your position is unfair to you?"

Shen Qinghong had nothing to say in response. He didn't know what his honored master meant.

Elder Lian Cheng's voice was quiet, "Your current position is one that receives the pinnacle of treatment and resources. Have you ever considered that it is likewise unfair to others? If you wish to complain now about unfairness, I will be sorely disappointed in you."

Shen Qinghong grew solemn. He'd actually come to ask his honored master for advice for his next step, but he hadn't expected his master to lecture him even to the extent of a verbal smack on the head. He was at a loss of what to do for the moment.

Elder Lian Cheng sighed softly. "For you, Qinghong, a noble birth and a high start is both a boon and a crutch. Your cultivation path has been smooth and easy, having experienced almost no obstacles in the

Regal Pill Palace before. Unfortunately, it is also the reason why you now find yourself at the end of your rope.”

“What say you, Jin Gu?”

Elder Jin Gu was actually rather dissatisfied at the moment. You’re Shen Qinghong’s martial dao master; are you going to sit there and allow your disciple be met with setback after setback on your watch?

Even though Elder Lian Cheng did make some sense, Elder Jin Gu didn’t care about that in the slightest. What he minded was that his grandson’s position was being challenged! This was no different than his own territory being threatened. Why would Elder Jin Gu bother spending any time thinking about theory and philosophy? The only thought he would spare was to defend his territory, and destroy anyone who even considered threatening him.

“Old brother Lian Cheng, I feel that no matter what, Qinghong can’t lose this amount of face. If we let that petty character Jiang Chen succeed, then Qinghong’s position in the Sovereign Area will certainly be impacted in the future. Furthermore, with this recent uprising, Jun Mobai and Ling Bi’er have started to make their moves as well. I’m afraid that this is causing a chain reaction!”

Jun Mobai and Lin Bi’er had cast covetous eyes on Shen Qinghong’s position to begin with. With the addition of an even more unreasonable Jiang Chen, Shen Qinghong had to deal with three hotly ambitious disciples harrying his position. This did not bode well for him. As such, Elder Jin Gu didn’t want to foster the development of such an atmosphere. He wanted to suppress this ill wind and make an example out of Jiang Chen.

Elder Lian Cheng was momentarily speechless by Elder Jin Gu’s resolve. He is truly so short sighted! He turned to his disciple, “Qinghong, you speak. How do you intend on resolving this? What kind of help would you like from your master?”

“Your disciple still harbors hope, and I wish to put an end to things with a decisive fight against Jiang Chen in the pill competition.” Shen Qinghong didn’t hold back his true thoughts

“Are you certain?” Elder Lian Cheng asked slowly, a look of judgement in his eyes.

Shen Qinghong nodded firmly. “Jiang Chen has already affected my dao heart. If I don’t suppress him, then cracks are sure to form.”

Elder Lian Cheng sighed softly. “We are born with nothing into this world, and we leave with nothing in our hands. Troubles do not exist innately in our hearts, but are shoved in as we pursue material goods and psychological enjoyment. Qinghong, your master read these words a long time ago in an ancient tome and reflected on them for sixty years before comprehending them. You think far too much, which creates the chance for your dao heart to be affected by others. If you followed the dao with a resolute heart and avoided creating so much trouble, paying no heed to contests of pride, then you wouldn’t have caused so many things to happen at all.

“Your martial dao potential is extraordinary, and you are a genius but half a step away from entering the sage realm. Why are you so inflexible as to not have this slightest bit of tolerance? With your level, would you not gain a spot for the Pill Battles? Even if Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi have claimed two, there

is no question that you and Ling Bi'er would take the other two with no contest at all. But now? You're merely using your position of utmost genius to hassle a few newly ascended geniuses.

"Don't you think that your goal should be placed at the Myriad Grand Ceremony yet to come? Or even the mysterious Myriad Paramount Realm?" Elder Lian Cheng spoke persuasively, but his gaze never left Shen Qinghong's face. It was as if he wanted to see through all of his disciple's thoughts.

Shen Qinghong's reply was wooden, "Honored master's teachings make sense. Your disciple is indeed a bit blinded by the circumstances, and not seeing Mt. Tai. However, I have made up my mind regarding this challenge and wishes that the honored master will support me."

A trace of disappointment flashed through Elder Lian Chen's heart. He really wished that Shen Qinghong would experience spontaneous enlightenment and let go of his convictions towards this challenge, forgetting the troubles that Jiang Chen had brought him. In all honesty, his disciple had never personally placed himself on the opposing end from Jiang Chen. He could absolutely remove himself with grace and dignity at any moment, displaying his bearing as the first genius. It was even possible to become friends with Jiang Chen.

And yet—

Shen Qinghong hadn't made this decision.

Elder Lian Cheng was disappointed in him. He absolutely did not look favorably on Shen Qinghong's decision to battle. Although he and Elder Yun Nie had yelled at each other and pounded on a table at each other, they still admired the other. However, neither of them would ever admit that.

Seeing Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both so supported Jiang Chen, Elder Lian Cheng would never believe that this youth was someone who'd cheated his way to where he was. When Shen Qinghong had made trouble for Jiang Chen all along and slandered his name a month ago, none of this had been Elder Lian Cheng's idea. It was just that he was Shen Qinghong's martial dao teacher, and he naturally couldn't take a public stance to pour cold water on his disciple. At the same time, he wanted to make use of this opportunity to thoroughly assess Shen Qinghong's will. It now seemed that although his martial dao potential was exceptional, his maturity still needed to undergo necessary tempering.

"How do you plan on competing with him?" Elder Lian Cheng asked.

"Your disciple wishes to compete in pill refinement with him, with one match declaring the winner. Therefore, your disciple would like to borrow the Skypeak Cauldron."

Elder Lian Cheng's gaze sharpened as he looked thoughtfully at Shen Qinghong. "As I understand it, Jiang Chen's cauldron is the Skyweave Cauldron that Palace Head Dan Chi gifted to him. Borrowing my Skypeak Cauldron would place you on the same footing." ~~novel-10~~.In

There were five treasured cauldrons in Regal Pill Palace history. They were the Skyscatter, Skyweave, Skypeak, Skyorigin, and Skywood Cauldron. Of them, the Skyscatter and Skywood Cauldron were honored in the Hall of Ancestors in the Regal Pill Palace. There was yet anyone to appear who was destined to use them.

Palace Head Dan Chi owned the Skyweave Cauldron, and he'd given it to Jiang Chen. Elder Lian Cheng owned the Skypeak Cauldron, and Elder Yun Nie owned the Sky Origin Cauldron. These five treasured

cauldrons had witnessed the Regal Pill Palace's rise and glory. The Skypeak and Skyweave Cauldrons hadn't appeared in public for a hundred years. Therefore, Elder Lian Cheng hesitated when Shen Qinghong made his request.

When the five divine level cauldrons were used against each other, it would become one of the great, momentous occasions for the sect and be recorded in the annals of history. The elder was hesitating because he didn't want this battle to become a public and memorable record of Shen Qinghong's failure.

#### Chapter 519: An Opportunity to Get Rich Comes Knocking

"Please agree, honored master!" Shen Qinghong dropped to one knee as his voice grew determined. "This challenge weighs on my heart like a knot. Whether or not I win, I will immediately enter closed door cultivation and break through to the sage realm in one go."

Elder Lian Cheng sighed lightly. To begin with, he doubted that Shen Qinghong would have any issues in breaking through to the sage realm, but the elder really didn't want him to challenge Jiang Chen. At this moment, his disciple's thoughts about Jiang Chen were simply a matter of pride. But a loss here would cement the event as Shen Qinghong's humiliation and cause his heart to become clouded with hate.

Even if Shen Qinghong broke through to the sage realm, his dao heart would be tainted by this hate. This would just be disadvantageous for Shen Qinghong in the long run.

Elder Lian Cheng had high expectations for Shen Qinghong's heights in martial dao. He even felt that his disciple had a bit of hope of assailing the emperor realm. Even if he had no idea how big this hope was, having the sliver of one was better than none. But if Shen Qinghong was caught up in other things, then he would find it hard to concentrate on the path of martial dao. Failure to concentrate on his martial path would cause his hope for emperor realm to vanish.

Yet, when he saw how resolute Shen Qinghong was, Elder Lian Cheng knew there was no stopping his disciple. "Fine. Qinghong, this is your choice. Here is the Skypeak Cauldron, take it." Elder Lian Cheng took out the cauldron.

"Many thanks to the honored master!" Shen Qinghong was delighted.

Elder Jin Gu also displayed a happy expression. "Old brother Lian Cheng, you chose to support your disciple after all! If Qinghong wins over that Jiang Chen, then he will no longer have any opponents in the arena of pill dao in the younger generation."

Elder Lian Cheng waved his hand. "Qinghong, you and I have had the destiny to be master and disciple. In that stead, I give you one piece of advice. Think less of gains and losses, and lesser of victory and defeat. If you are able to do so, then regardless of the final result, you will have obtained something from the match. Go ahead. Be well." The elder waved his hand after speaking. "You are dismissed."

Elder Jin Gu took Shen Qinghong away with him when he saw Elder Lian Cheng's gesture. As they departed, Shen Qinghong spoke up.

"Grandfather, honored master seems to disapprove of me fighting Jiang Chen?" Shen Qinghong still very much respected Elder Lian Cheng.



Elder Jin Gu smiled. "He's the Hallmaster of the Hall of Might. He's naturally not happy if you choose to compete with others on the basis of pill dao. Pay no heed to any of it anymore. If you can suppress Jiang Chen, you will remain the king in the Sovereign Area in the future. Whether it be Jun Mobai or Ling Bi'er, none of them will be able to contend against you in the future."

"Your grandson will do his best." Shen Qinghong travelled rapidly back to the Rosy Valley after taking his leave of Elder Jin Gu.

When Elder Lian Cheng saw Elder Jin Gu and Shen Qinghong leave together, a trace of pity glittered in his eyes. It was obvious that he didn't think much of this fight against Jiang Chen at all. He thought for a moment and sighed. "Ah, alright then. Qinghong is still my disciple. Let me take a trip on his behalf and see if this matter can be salvaged." He'd already risen to his feet as he murmured to himself, and walked outside.

Elder Lian Cheng arrived in Dan Chi's residence before too long had passed.

"Haha, what wind blows Elder Lian Cheng by?" Palace Head Dan Chi was slightly surprised to see who'd come knocking.

Elder Lian Cheng didn't hide anything as he sighed wryly. "It shames me to speak of it, but I'm here on behalf of my good-for-nothing disciple, Shen Qinghong."

"Oh? What makes you say that?" Palace Head Dan Chi wasn't sure what was going on.

"This kid and Jiang Chen are keeping themselves busy being hostile to each other in Rosy Valley. This old man is here this time to see if there's any room to maneuver. When two tigers fight, one is certain to be hurt. To our Regal Pill Palace, it might not be a good thing for geniuses to overly clash. Palace Head, I'm here with a thick face to request that you make an appearance and see if you can convince Jiang Chen to take down the ring?"

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed lightly and personally handed a cup of tea over. "Have some tea, Elder Lian Cheng. It is indeed inappropriate for the young to go overboard in a matter of pride. However, so many things have happened in the past month that have greatly affected Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's reputation. Some of the ill winds have even blown onto me and Elder Yun Nie. Elder Lian Cheng, I'll be frank. The situation's a bit difficult to have me step out and convince Jiang Chen to take down the ring, and it is similarly difficult for him to stop as well. After all, you didn't prevent this from happening when the situation could've been controlled."

"Yes, indeed, I've been remiss in this matter." Elder Lian Cheng quite clearly blamed himself. "I hold great responsibility in how this matter developed. If I could've stopped this matter earlier, it might not have grown to this point. Jiang Chen's actions are born out of his frustrated anger. I can understand that well."

Dan Chi was silent for a moment and said, "Elder Lian Cheng, you and Elder Jin Gu both highly favor Shen Qinghong. Why are you opposed to him contending with Jiang Chen this time?"

Elder Lian Cheng smiled ruefully. "Palace Head, it's because I know Qinghong well that I anticipate he has no chances of winning at all."

“Oh?” Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. “If I guess correctly, Elder Jin Gu must not be holding the same views?”

“Ai.” Elder Lian Cheng sighed. “It’s precisely because Elder Jin Gu doesn’t think so and insists on traveling down this path that he has brought Qinghong to this step. Palace Head, I’m setting aside my face only in the hopes that you will think of the greater picture of the sect, and see if you can convince Jiang Chen to take down the ring.”

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled faintly. “Shen Qinghong is overbearing and threatening. The only thing he wishes to do is fight. If I have Jiang Chen take down the ring, I’m afraid that with the temperament of a young man, they will both be unable to accept this outcome.”

Elder Lian Cheng laughed in extreme ruefulness. “Must we damage one in the fight between two tigers? Qinghong’s martial dao potential is extraordinary, and he is the greatest hope to spread the name and glory of our Regal Pill Palace in the Myriad Grand Ceremony. If he is injured over this, then it is a blow to our sect as well!”

Palace Head Dan Chi might’ve agreed with these words before Jiang Chen’s appearance. But now, he didn’t feel that Shen Qinghong was the sect’s only hope in the Grand Ceremony.

However, the greater picture was important, so the palace head nodded. “Elder Lian Cheng, you would surely think that I didn’t try my hardest in convincing him if I went alone. Why don’t the two of us, and Elder Yun Nie, go together? If Jiang Chen can take a step back and let it all dissolve, I would be happy to see this outcome as well as you.”

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Jiang Chen had received no end of challengers since he’d set up his ring. But now, he’d already gathered all the spirit stones he needed.

“Brother Chen, after Shen Trifire’s defeat, unless senior sister Ling Bi’er herself comes to challenge you, I’m afraid no one else will dare come anymore.” Mu Gaoqi smiled.

Jiang Chen was about to respond when his expression suddenly flickered. The light of his God’s Eye sparkled rapidly as he looked to the skies. “Important personages are coming!”

“Jiang Chen, open the restrictions around your residence. I, Elder Lian Cheng and Elder Yun Nie have come to visit.” A message descended from the skies.

Jiang Chen was slightly surprised and passed down his orders. “Open the residence, it’s the Palace Head and two venerated elders!” He welcomed the three heavyweights who held the greatest authority in the sect into the guest side-palace a moment later, and also took out his remaining flasks of Nine Magnificence Dew Wine without hesitation.

The fragrance from the wine instantly drifted through the air. *novel* (In

“Hmm? It’s the Nine Magnificence Dew Wine?” Elder Lian Cheng’s nose twitched slightly. “I’ve heard that the Walkabout Sect is skilled at making this wine, but to think that the sixteen kingdom alliance possesses this wine as well?”

Although Dan Chi and Yun Nie weren't those who lusted after the delights in a cup, they had more or less dipped their fingers into the topic of alcohol. After all, when wine was infused with spirit herbs, it was both a pleasure and a way of nourishment for cultivators.

"This disciple is seized with fear at the combined arrival of the three great ones. How could I not take out some of my best wine in flattery?" Jiang Chen said half jokingly, completely at ease even at the arrival of these distinguished guests. These three were the three most powerful people in the Regal Pill Palace.

"Jiang Chen, I've never liked to beat around the bush." Dan Chi set down a cup of old vines. "Elder Lian Cheng has come to find me this time representing Shen Qinghong in reconciling the two of you. He wishes for you to take down the ring. We won't force you to either way; we've just come to ask if this possibility exists."

The slight smile of Jiang Chen's face suddenly froze. "You are the elders of the sect, and logically speaking, Jiang Chen should follow your words. However, the flying rumors of the past month have slathered me with mud. If I take down the ring, it will only perpetuate the slander and leave the outside world to speculate that I actually do not live up to my reputation, that I've made it into the Sovereign Area and obtained the Pill Battle slot only through connections. All three of you are elders who have high morals. You all should understand this disciple's awkward situation?"

Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both looked at Elder Lian Cheng to see what he would say. After all, Jiang Chen spoke the truth. Taking down the ring would tell the outside world that he had a guilty conscience. This was simply too much to ask of him!

"Jiang Chen, even Shen Trifire has been unable to triumph over you in the past couple of days. That has already indirectly dispelled the rumors from the outside world. Of course, it's easy to understand the rage in your heart at being slandered. If I wasn't Shen Qinghong's martial dao master, I would've never made this request." Elder Lian Cheng's attitude was quite sincere. "To be frank, Shen Qinghong has borrowed the Skyspeak Cauldron from me to battle it out with your Skyweave Cauldron. The battle between the five divine cauldrons of the Regal Pill Palace will surely be written into official history. I also know that Shen Qinghong has almost no chance of winning. This is why I've come with a thick face to ask you to take down the ring. It is indeed somewhat unfair to you, and I'm not an unreasonable person. Let me know whatever conditions you have for taking down the ring."

When Jiang Chen saw that Elder Lian Cheng wasn't suppressing him in a dominating manner, he knew that the elder was wary of the palace head and Elder Yun Nie. To be honest, Jiang Chen wasn't much interested in slapping Shen Qinghong's face. His interest solely lay in spirit stones and resources. Now that the palace head and Elder Yun Nie had come, although they didn't say anything outright, it was apparent that they too wished for things to be minimized. As for why? Naturally it was for the greater picture of the sect.

Jiang Chen wasn't a miserly person. It had been a conflict of pride up to this point and hadn't yet developed to a death feud. It wasn't impossible for him to take a step back and take down the ring.

Of course, the caveat was that it had to be worth his while. If he didn't receive enough benefits, it would be impossible for him to voluntarily take a step back and forgive the other's provocation.

Judging from Elder Lian Cheng's words, the elder was willing to be fleeced on Shen Qinghong's behalf if Jiang Chen stepped down. This is a rare opportunity to get rich that's come knocking! Jiang Chen was immensely tempted.

Chapter 520: Demanding A High Price *novel* Lb/In

"Can I really propose any condition?" Jiang Chen chuckled, an utterly innocent and harmless expression on his face.

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. "Jiang Chen, if you take down the ring, it'll be you who's making a sacrifice. It's fine for you to have some conditions. The sect clearly delineates between punishment and reward. Of course we can't sacrifice your benefits for the sake of others."

"Alright then, a poor person like me has bigger priorities than fighting over pride. Solid, tangible benefits are much more important." Jiang Chen spoke in an accommodating tone. "Then this disciple will be so bold as to make his requests. Ten thousand upper rank origin spirit stones, fifty kilograms of aubergine gold[1], fifty kilograms of starcloud dust, and fifty kilograms of vermillion cinnabar. Mm, if Elder Lian Cheng has any upper rank Origin Fostering Pills, please bestow a couple thousand of them as well. This junior won't mind at all."

To any of the younger generation, this kind of price would've absolutely been a heavy fleecing. But to the three heavyweights, even though the amount wasn't that little, it wouldn't stretch their coffers too much either. After all, at Elder Lian Cheng's age, his accumulated wealth was astonishing, and this little bit of items were just like the hairs on an oxen.

Elder Lian Cheng blanked momentarily, then burst out into a hearty laugh. "Good, good! A young man who doesn't hide and conceal his thoughts, cutting straight to the point and voicing his mind. That's how it should be! I'll take care of these for you. They will arrive in your residence in three day's time."

Jiang Chen laughed. "Elder Lian Cheng is indeed decisive. Alright! I'll take down the ring whenever the three elders wish me to."

Elder Yun Nie suddenly spoke up. "I rather think the ring should remain."

"Hmm?" The other three looked at Elder Yun Nie in puzzlement. Wasn't everything settled already?

Elder Yun Nie nodded. "Since this match-up was going to happen, removing the ring now will not dissolve their internal demons. I rather think that this is a chance that we should capitalize on."

"A chance? What do you mean?" Elder Lian Cheng asked solemnly.

"Shen Qinghong aims too high and has no shortage of arrogance. If Jiang Chen takes down the ring, he is certain to continue making trouble and spread rumours of Jiang Chen's cowardice. While this isn't good for Jiang Chen, it also doesn't address the underlying problem of Shen Qinghong's personality and the need for him to face some setbacks. Without appropriate tempering, his internal demons will continue to remain as they are. If we want to address everything, I think the match should continue, but it should end in a tie. The battle between the two divine cauldrons will be a wondrous tale told through the ages, and the battle between two geniuses will certainly elicit curiosity throughout the Regal Pill Palace. The other disciples will yearn after the geniuses even more, and this will also serve as an equal source of motivation for them. It will enhance their sense of belonging in the sect."

“End in a tie?” Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Lian Cheng looked at each other, vaguely feeling that Elder Yun Nie’s words made sense.

“Indeed, a tie. This will make Shen Qinghong retreat in the face of difficulties and will retain face for him as well. This maintains both his and Jiang Chen’s face, and make him understand in his heart of hearts that there is always a higher peak, a stronger expert. This is equally advantageous for his development.” Elder Yun Nie continued.

Shen Qinghong’s greatest problem to this day was his overconfidence, and that no one within the sect had truly made him experience the feeling of defeat. No one could give him the feeling of an insurmountable obstacle. Speaking positively, this meant that he was confident. On the flip side, it had also bred his blindly arrogant personality.

Palace Head Dan Chi relaxed and smiled, seeming to understand something. “Yun Nie, your suggestion is nice. But how difficult is it to ensure that the match ends in a tie?”

Elder Lian Cheng also nodded. “Indeed, a tie would be perfect, but a victor will be determined easily if this isn’t managed well.”

Elder Yun Nie cast a profound look at Jiang Chen, a hint of a smile playing about his face. “We’ll have to ask the person in question whether this can be done.”

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose, smiling ruefully. “Elder Yun Nie, this is too much of a test for me, isn’t it?”

“Heh heh, Jiang Chen, I know that you’ll have the ability to do this.”

Jiang Chen sighed. “Why do I feel like I’ve wandered unsuspectingly into a trap?”

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed heartily. “Jiang Chen, be more decisive and just tell us yes or no.”

“Can I say no?” Jiang Chen asked dejectedly.

Elder Lian Cheng smiled. “If this match can end in a tie, I’ll still pay the conditions we settled on.”

“I’ll add on another five thousand upper rank origin spirit stones.” Palace Head Dan Chi chuckled.

Elder Yun Nie also smiled when he saw this. “Then I can’t be miserly either; I’ll throw in another five thousand stones.”

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. “Jiang Chen, can you do it now?”

Jiang Chen beamed in satisfaction. “I think that’ll be enough? I’ll be blunt first, none of you can dodge your debts after the fact, hmm!”

Palace Head Dan Chi also purposefully kept a stern look on his face. “Remember, it has to be a tie! I’m not paying up if it’s not a tie!”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “Don’t worry, don’t worry. I’ll make it a tie for the clink of wealth.”

Dan Chi and Yun Nie smiled at each other to see Jiang Chen act this way. Although Elder Lian Cheng was also smiling happily, he was secretly shocked. Just how great is this disciple’s pill potential that he dares agree to this? His potential and cultivation in pills must be overwhelmingly higher than Qinghong’s.

Otherwise, where would he have the confidence to accept? A tie can't be had just because one wants one. How would he be able to maintain a fine control over this if he lacked extreme potential and strength?

Although he was stunned, Elder Lian Cheng spoke, "Good! Then I'll await the good news of this match from my residence." Even he had to admit that Elder Yun Nie's proposal was the best. It was more preferable to have the match than to take down the ring, and a tie was the best outcome. This would allow Shen Qinghong to retreat in the face of difficulties and not have him lose face, resulting in a shadow over his heart.

Jiang Chen was absolutely delighted when the three heavyweights left. What a haul! The three heavyweights had offered twenty thousand stones in total. When added to his original pile, it was enough to have his Nine Gates Incineration Formation operate at half power. His original hopes had only been for thirty percent, but if he could power it at half of its full power, it would be enough to withstand a sky sage realm expert. This was an unexpected surprise for Jiang Chen!

Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both sent over the promised five thousand stones not long after they went back. It was obvious that they were very confident in Jiang Chen and had sent over the stones early.

They wouldn't ask for the stones back even if he didn't manage a tie. This was their encouragement for Jiang Chen. They knew him very well by now. He would only use spirit stones as the stakes only if he was in urgent need of them. Therefore, this was their way of helping Jiang Chen, using a method that couldn't be traced, to support him. Jiang Chen naturally knew this as well.

"Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie are wise men who are open and aboveboard. I am not so heartless to ignore how well they're treating me; I must help them realize their great wishes." Jiang Chen knew that whether it was Palace Head Dan Chi or Elder Yun Nie, they both wished for the Regal Pill Palace to flourish vigorously and develop into a third rank sect; rebuild the Myriad Empire; and unite the Myriad Domain.

"If I am to leave the Regal Pill Palace in the future, I must first help them attain this long cherished wish!" Jiang Chen made a private vow. "Elder Lian Cheng doesn't seem like a villainous person either, just one who sides with his young more. Since he's Shen Qinghong's martial dao teacher, he won't treat me as candidly as Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie. He will send over the promised payout only after my match concludes with Shen Qinghong."

A tie!

One had to say, this was a type of bet that Jiang Chen had never encountered before. It would certainly be a challenge to accomplish, but he was confident. Since he'd made an agreement, he was even more motivated. This was a match of pill dao that had twenty thousand spirit stones and a bunch of other materials at stake! At the same time, he also felt pity for Shen Qinghong. A Sovereign Area genius had sunk so far that his master had to secretly buy off his opponents. Was it because Shen Qinghong had led too good a life? He really was overdue for a lesson about pride.

Shen Qinghong made a proclamation the next day— he would personally come to Jiang Chen's residence on the morrow and engage in a tremendous battle with him.

The entirety of Rosy Valley boiled over when this news hit the streets. Shen Qinghong's existence in Rosy Valley was a vaunted existence, almost at the level of myth. If the youngsters in Rosy Valley were to pick someone they admired and envied, eight out of ten would choose Shen Qinghong. The remainder might choose Jun Mobai or the recently hot Jiang Chen.

However, when looking at the length of time Shen Qinghong had held his position as first ranked, his impressive background and his untouchable backer, the vast majority of the younger generation guessed that he was most likely the next palace head.

Even if he wasn't, he was likely one of the most favored candidates. Such a unique genius wanted to compete with Jiang Chen, a newly ascended genius, in pills? Emotions of all sorts, from surprise and speculation to shock and enthusiasm suffused the Rosy Valley.

"Is that Jiang Chen really that impressive that even senior brother Shen needs to make a move himself?"

"Senior brother Shen's potential has always been a mystery. Is he finally going to show himself?"

"I really envy Jiang Chen! Even if he loses, there is great honor in his defeat."

"Indeed, Jiang Chen is really something. His rise is explosively meteoric!"

"He has the skills to his name as well, otherwise he wouldn't have moved into the Sovereign Area. I've also heard that those who have challenged him lately have all failed, even Shen Trifire!"

"Those are just rumors; how many of you saw that with your own eyes? I just refuse to accept this Jiang Chen!"

"Me too! What right does a foreign disciple have to bask in the limelight of our sect?"

"That Mu Gaoqi is suspicious as well. How come he suddenly has an innate wood constitution of high order?"

"Has someone really helped Jiang Chen cheat? Let's see how senior brother Shen tramples him!"

Some Rosy Valley core disciples still found it hard to accept Jiang Chen. They didn't have any grudges with Jiang Chen; they just couldn't accept a new person suddenly becoming so strong and overtaking all of them. It was a purely emotional reaction of envy, admiration or just simple greed. However, there were also those who retained their senses. Through their coolly logical assessment, they were certain that Jiang Chen wasn't a product of cheating, but the genuine article. But of course, they naturally wouldn't step out to defend him.

Jiang Chen didn't care about the rumors and discourse that swept the Rosy Valley up in a storm. Words were no more tangible than the floating clouds in his eyes. Only that twenty thousand stones were real, tangible benefits in his eyes.

He couldn't wait for Shen Qinghong to come knocking.

Black-purple gold