

Three Realms 521

Chapter 521: The Utmost Pill Battle (I)

Shen Qinghong hadn't rushed to Jiang Chen's residence at first light after receiving the Skyspeak Cauldron. He'd gone back to make his preparations and adjust his condition to the most optimal state.

The next day, he brought a large retinue and set up camp on Jiang Chen's doorstep, ready to engage in a battle of the ages.

When he arrived, he found that Jiang Chen wasn't even at home. This left Shen Qinghong at a bit of a loss.

He'd sent out the challenge early yesterday morning! In his eyes, Jiang Chen should've been here, waiting. However, he discovered that his thoughts had been rather one sided. Compared to the other Rosy Valley geniuses, Jiang Chen didn't play by the book. If it'd been anyone else, they would've long since waited patiently had they heard that Shen Qinghong was arriving.

"That little thief Jiang Chen is truly petty!" Rong Zifeng had no place to vent his anger as he fumed.

Nie Chong called out to Shen Qinghong. "Senior brother Shen, I'll go cause a fuss."

Shen Qinghong waved his hand, his face frosty. "Don't be in a rush; this kid is definitely playing a mind game and wants to mentally exhaust me beforehand. How would I allow him to succeed?"

"Then we wait here?" Nie Chong asked with a bit of uncertainty.

"We wait!" Shen Qinghong waved his hand. "Proclaim to the entire Valley that I am waiting at his doorstep. If Jiang Chen doesn't emerge, then he has a guilty conscience and is afraid."

Rong Zifeng was delighted. "Fantastic! Jiang Chen wants to play mind games, but the senior brother's move shoves all the pressure on his side. Let's see how he cowers in his shell then!"

Shen Qinghong smiled proudly and sat down cross legged, growing quiet. He knew better than anyone present that Jiang Chen wasn't an easy target. He had to keep himself in peak form for this match.

Rong Zifeng had just sent out their proclamation when the doors to Jiang Chen's residence opened. Jiang Chen walked out, yawning and stretching. The vestiges of sleep were apparent on his face as he peered forward. "So early?"

Jiang Chen looked blearily at Shen Qinghong, astonishment filling his tone. "Yo, isn't this senior brother Shen?"

How would Shen Qinghong not know that Jiang Chen was doing this on purpose?

"Cut the blather, Jiang Chen. You can't avoid this match."

Jiang Chen stretched again, and his tone took an undercurrent of urgency. "Senior brother Shen, how many spirit stones did you bring?"

Shen Qinghong's face darkened. This Jiang Chen was just like an old miser! Talking about spirit stones every other sentence, how was this the kind of a bearing a genius disciple should have?

“I won’t keep you company if you don’t have the spirit stones.” Jiang Chen complained. “Wait for me, I’ll go wash up. Although, I’ll be blunt first. With senior brother Shen’s position, I’m not playing with you if you don’t have at least ten thousand upper rank origin spirit stones.” Jiang Chen plodded slowly back in after speaking.

When he saw Jiang Chen’s doors close once again, Shen Qinghong was almost overwhelmed by the urge to go on a rampage and disregard his mannerly demeanor. This Jiang Chen is simply too lazy! He’s treating me, the first ranked genius, like dirt! He shows not even a speck of basic respect! All he talks about are spirit stones, is he possessed by a destitute ghost?

It was a good thing that ten thousand spirit stones were still but a mere hair from his leg. No matter what tricks Jiang Chen was going to play, he wouldn’t give up! He was going to tear Jiang Chen’s facade into shreds and thoroughly step on him!

Execute one as a warning to a hundred!

Jiang Chen trudged back into his sight an hour later. “Senior brother Shen, show me the ten thousand stones first or I’m going back inside.”

Shen Qinghong smirked dismissively and waved his hand, having one of his followers lay out the ten thousand stones. “Jiang Chen, your breadth of vision is only worth this bit of wealth. If you can win over me, these stones will be yours.”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “I made a rough calculation. Senior brother Shen is the first ranked genius, and it’ll be tough to defeat you. I can at most come to a draw with you.”

How would Shen Qinghong know Jiang Chen’s words were a trap? He snorted coldly. “If I can’t defeat you, these spirit stones will be yours even if I lose.”

Jiang Chen’s eyes gleamed. “Really?? Everyone listen up! If I can fight to a draw with senior brother Shen, he’ll gift me these stones as a welcoming present!”

When Shen Qinghong saw how much Jiang Chen cared about the stones, his opinion of his opponent dropped by another notch. “Did this penniless Jiang Chen have the fear of being poor beaten into him from that poor backwater region? His breadth of vision is so low, he only cares about spirit stones. Even if this kind of person has some potential, his future is severely limited. He’s probably even less than Jun Mobai! Ah forget it, I cannot pay attention to this kind of drama in the future after today’s match. I must concentrate on assailing the sage realm.”

Shen Qinghong’s contempt for Jiang Chen only grew the more he thought about it.

Jiang Chen could naturally guess Shen Qinghong’s thoughts. He didn’t bother enlightening the other about his mistaken assumptions. “Senior brother Shen, you’ve waited so long already. Tell me, how would you like to bet?”

Shen Qinghong almost sobbed when he heard these words. He’d waited so long and arduously for them! He cut straight to the chase. “Jiang Chen, the assessment of a pill master ultimately has to be done with pill refining. I will bet on refining pills with you, with one match determining the victor.”

Jiang Chen nodded and ask faintly. "We can bet on the speed of refining pills, sure. What pill do you plan on refining?"

Shen Qinghong responded, "It's not up to you or me to decide what pill to refine. Let luck decide that."

"How?"

"You come up with five recipes, and so will I. We'll select one at random from the ten of them. That's the fairest."

Shen Qinghong was different from Shen Trifire. He was proud at heart and disdained using small tricks to try and put one over Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen rather admired this straightforwardness of his.

He didn't object to Shen Qinghong's suggestion and smiled. "What if the recipes we take out are quite obscure and the other hasn't seen it before?"

"So the recipes can't be obscure, and whoever suggests the recipe must also have the ingredients to refine the pill."

Whoever offered up the recipe would have to bring the ingredients. This was rather fair and would prevent someone from taking out a very obscure recipe. Jiang Chen thought for a minute. It seemed that Shen Qinghong had come prepared.

"Alright, we'll go with that then."

Jiang Chen didn't care what pills they were refining. His abilities in pill dao weren't anything that Shen Qinghong could estimate.

Jiang Chen thought for a moment and wrote down five pill recipes. Shen Qinghong also prepared five, and placed them all into wax balls he'd prepared. Mu Gaoqi represented Jiang Chen, and Nie Chong represented Shen Qinghong.

The two of them shook the bamboo container separately, completely mixing up the ten wax balls. No one could possibly cheat by the time the jumbling was done.

"Who will choose?" Shen Qinghong asked.

Jiang Chen smiled. "Doesn't matter, you go."

"You go." Shen Qinghong frowned. He didn't want to give others the chance to say that he'd cheated.

The two of them were trying to hand off responsibility to the other when a hearty laugh sounded from the side. "If the two of you trust me, then let me!" The person speaking was standing a hundred meters away, wearing the outfit of a Confucian scholar—Jun Mobai. He was waving a folding fan and looked the very picture of an elegant gentleman.

"Junior sister Ling, since you're here, why don't you do it." Shen Qinghong suddenly directed his words to corner, refusing Jun Mobai's offer.

Ling Bi'er had been standing off to the corner when Shen Qinghong called her out. She didn't hide as she walked out from the shadows. She was outfitted in a brilliant white robe that easily rivalled the delicate snow. Her face was as frosty as ever as she greeted everyone. As she walked forward, it was like a glacial

peak descending on everyone present. Behind her came a diminutive young girl who looked quite young, but had a pair of stunning weapons on her chest. She was wearing a short, leopard skin skirt which revealed a pair of snow-white thighs, full of the vigor of youth. The twin peaks of fatal attraction shook as she walked, swaying and rocking with her movement and dazzling the eyes. The girl behind Ling Bi'er was her twin young sister, Ling Hui'er.

Of the pair, one had an icy bearing and gave others the feeling of being inviolable. The other was young and sexy, full of the strength of a young girl. They were obviously quite different in terms of bearing.

"Jiang Chen, you won't mind if junior sister Ling selects the recipe, won't you?" It seemed that Shen Qinghong purposefully wanted to suppress Jun Mobai as he ignored the latter's offer to volunteer.

Jiang Chen smiled casually. "I didn't mind when it was senior brother Shen doing the picking, why would I mind senior sister Ling?"

Although Ling Bi'er had an indifferent nature, giving others the feeling of an ice beauty, she was still a relatively dependable person. She walked up with no change in expression or another word, reaching out her jade-like hand into the container, fishing out a wax ball.

It was rather Ling Hui'er who cocked her head, looking at Jiang Chen with a hint of a smile. "Jiang Chen, how did you know that my sister is your senior sister? Are you younger than her?"

Jiang Chen hadn't thought that Ling Hui'er would ask this kind of question. He grinned at her as he responded. "Those who entered the sect first are the seniors. With your sister's strength and status, calling her senior sister is only proper."

Ling Hui'er chuckled. "You've got a sweet mouth alright. No wonder my sister says you're quite a character."

Ling Bi'er's face frosted over even more as she admonished her sister. "Hui'er, be quiet! There's no place for you to talk here."

Ling Hui'er stuck her tongue out and made a funny face at Jiang Chen, "Jiang Chen, I'm favoring you! Remember, if you win, you have to teach me how to refine pills."

She giggled and then retreated behind Ling Bi'er like a little child who had made a mistake. She stayed docilely behind Ling Bi'er, allowing her sister to berate her as she would.

"Aeonian Dream Pill!" The pill chosen was revealed when the wax pill was crushed. Shen Qinghong smiled faintly. "Jiang Chen, it looks like luck is on my side. This Aeonian Dream Pill is one of mine."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Luck has never been important in the dao of pills. Your recipe is of a higher order and you need to prepare the materials. This time, I've actually saved on the costs of the ingredients."

Shen Qinghong smirked coldly. All Jiang Chen talked about was the cost of this and that. In his eyes, Jiang Chen wasn't fit to be presented in public at all. Yet Jun Mobai and Ling Bi'er kept cool heads, staying true to their role as bystanders.

They didn't think that Jiang Chen's attitude was one of saving on ingredients. In contrast, they were taken aback by his self-possessed attitude. The recipe was Shen Qinghong's and this should've put Jiang

Chen at a great disadvantage, but the latter didn't seem to think so at all! If it wasn't Jiang Chen missing a few screws in his head, then that meant that he didn't care what recipe was selected. To be so blithe was only something they'd expect from someone who was completely confident of success, confident that they'd worked everything out.

Had Jiang Chen's pill dao potential already reached the realm of firmly suppressing everyone else with ease?

Chapter 522: The Utmost Pill Battle (II)

Both of them had nine sets of ingredients. This Aeonian Dream Pill wasn't that obscure a pill recipe. It was primarily used to temper consciousness and strength of heart. Alternatively, if one's consciousness was damaged from an attack of the mind or soul, one could use the Aeonian Dream Pill to aid in recovery.

However, it was a highly difficult pill to successfully refine. It required a very precise refining method. As a result, no one had been able to refine a supreme rank version of the pill thus far in the Regal Pill Palace. Apart from a few pill masters such as Elder Yun Nie, there were few who could even manage an upper rank version.

The two had an hour to familiarize themselves with the recipe and to consider how to refine it. For a pill masters, this was necessary preparation time. Jiang Chen had never refined it before, so he was at a disadvantage. Since it was Shen Qinghong's recipe, he must have given it a go before. His confident smile also betrayed that fact.

Shen Qinghong let out a long peal of laughter after an hour. "Time's up, let's begin."

Jiang Chen smiled. "Hold. How are we betting, what counts as a draw, and what counts as a loss? Let's lay out the rules first!"

"Naturally, the usual rules apply. We'll compete on the basis of the highest level pill from these nine sets of ingredients. If the quality of the pill is the same, then whoever completed refinement first will be the winner. If the quality is the same and we finish at the same time, then it counts as a draw."

Compared to winning, Jiang Chen cared much more about how to tie. After all, his only mission in the bet was to finish in a draw, and not actually win against Shen Qinghong.

The Skyeak Cauldron. The Skyweave Cauldron.

The two treasured cauldrons of the Regal Pill Palace appeared in front of everyone. Even the stern Ling Bi'er's eyes held a hint of thoughtfulness. The five treasured cauldrons were the highest honor in the Regal Pill Palace. They represented the utmost glory for a pill master.

All of their past masters had been tremendous personages of great importance in sect history. Which one of them hadn't achieved great accomplishments for the sect in the past?

And which of these treasured cauldrons hadn't had a venerated history in the Regal Pill Palace?

Now, two of them were in the hands of the younger generation. Ling Bi'er had a high self assessment of herself in the area of pills and felt that she was on par with Shen Qinghong. However, due to her background and patron, she hadn't been able to receive the legacy of one of the five treasured

cauldrons. Jiang Chen was but a newly ascended genius, but had already received the gift of the Skyweave Cauldron from Palace Head Dan Chi! Not only was this stunning, but it was also a bit jealousy inducing.

Pill refinement began!

All eyes were focused on this battle.

The Skyweave Cauldron versus the Skyepeak Cauldron!

This was a battle destined to go down in history. It represented the highest level of the younger generation and determined the future direction of the sect.

Jiang Chen didn't use any flashy techniques in preheating the cauldron, merely using an ordinary method. After an hour spent comprehending the Aeonian Dream Pill, he was already well versed in its refinement method. With his current level of training, this level of a pill didn't stump him at all. The difficulty lay in that he wasn't sure where Shen Qinghong's level was. What kind of level of pill should he refine to ensure that he would end in a draw with his opponent?

"Whatever, I'll try my best to make sure that I have a pill from each level. That way, I'll be able to respond accordingly no matter what level pill he refines." This laughable request of a tie was running Jiang Chen ragged straight down to the bone. Even more difficult than grasping the level of pill was making sure that they spent an equal amount of time refining. Jiang Cheng had to split some of his attention to keep an eye on Shen Qinghong's progress. He had to match his speed to a degree of precision that ensured they finished together. That alone imposed high requisites for his fire control. The slightest deviation would cause a difference in time.

It was a good thing that the observation skills of Jiang Chen's "Psychic Head's" were enough to parse the most minute of details. He didn't feel any pressure at all in observing his opponent's progress in an open-air environment like this.

In this regard, Jiang Chen's method seemed too much on the straight and narrow as he followed Shen Qinghong's progress. He sped up if Shen Qinghong was moving quickly, and slowed down if Shen Qinghong dragged. It was just that he did all this extremely deftly so that no one else could see his control. They were actually rather impressed by how focused Jiang Chen was. After all, it was his first time refining the Aeonian Dream Pill. It was already quite a feat to be on a similar level with Shen Qinghong.

There weren't that many secrets to this pill for Jiang Chen. He didn't want to show off any elaborate moves, so he just strictly followed the prescribed routine. As long as he did that and paid attention to all the details, Jiang Chen firmly believed that the level of his completed pill wouldn't be that low.

A pill master's foundations would be displayed in multiple aspects. Jiang Chen quietly observed Shen Qinghong's actions as he refined his pills. In his opinion, Shen Qinghong's methods focused overly on flashy techniques. He still lacked a bit of reliability in the details. This was the common fault of a young pill master.

Jiang Chen surmised, "It would be impressive if Shen Qinghong's cauldron could result in even an upper rank pill. However, it's impossible for him to refine a supreme rank. He's already made some small

errors here and there.” The flaws weren’t large, but in Jiang Chen’s eyes, they were enough to affect the final product.

After roughly two hours, Jiang Chen sensed the signs of a pill forming in Shen Qinghong’s cauldron. As for Jiang Chen’s side, it was about time as well. He adjusted his tempo to sync with Shen Qinghong’s rhythm. Suddenly, the Skyspeak Cauldron emitted a sound like a dragon’s croon or a tiger’s howl, with the Skyweave Cauldron doing the same at almost the same time.

This was a sign of a pill forming!

Everyone was taken aback. They’d formed a pill at the same time! How could such a coincidence have happened?

Even the knowledgeable and widely read Ling Bi’er and Jun Mobai looked at each other, incredulity shining in their eyes.

Ling Hui’er patted her surging chest. “That scared me, how come the tone of a pill forming sounded at the same time? Did they plan for it to happen at the same time?”

Ling Bi’er admonished her, “Don’t speak nonsense!”

Shen Qinghong was also looking over with a face of disbelief. As the only one aware of the true undercurrent of the duel, Jiang Chen naturally had to go through the full act now. He too put a look of astonishment on his face. Even Mu Gaoqi was taken in. The two contestants then looked at Ling Bi’er at the same time.

She said solemnly, “The two of you formed a pill at the same time. Time will not determine the victor. As such, the result will depend on the level of your pills.”

Jiang Chen smiled leisurely and looked at Shen Qinghong. “Senior brother Shen, I’d like to keep everyone in suspense first. You’re the guest, so you should take out your highest level pill first.”

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to take his out, it’s just that he really didn’t know which pill to bring out. He’d just discovered a supreme rank pill in the Skyweave Cauldron! This would instantly crush Shen Qinghong if he took it out.

But could Jiang Chen bring it forth? Of course not!

He could only have Shen Qinghong show his pill first so that he could respond accordingly. A draw, this has to be a draw.

Shen Qinghong smiled modestly, flipping over his hand to reveal an upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill. “Jiang Chen, my highest pill is an upper rank pill. Bring yours out. You’ll beat me if you can bring out a supreme rank version.”

Everyone gasped in astonished, an upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill! This was something that even only a few elders in the Herbal Hall could manage! Even Ling Bi’er’s heart suddenly trembled. She’d never known the depths of Shen Qinghong’s potential, but the questions in her heart had been swept away after she saw the upper rank pill. His potential would absolutely not be any worse than hers! Add to that his unique background, backer, and the Skyspeak Cauldron, his accomplishments in pill dao were only

likely stronger than hers, not weaker. Despondency filled her heart all of a sudden, and she looked involuntarily over at Jiang Chen.

Everyone's gaze flicked to Jiang Chen.

They all didn't think much of Jiang Chen now. The Aeonian Dream Pill wasn't that easy to refine. Even the elder heavyweights of the sect couldn't refine a supreme rank. My ass he can refine a supreme rank version!

Even Mu Gaoqi was a bit nervous. His palms were sweaty as he mutely looked at Jiang Chen. Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng had already started to swell in arrogance. They were just waiting for the sight of Jiang Chen to make a fool out of himself or see him outmatched.

Jiang Chen looked at each of them and laughed leisurely. "What need do I have for a supreme rank? If I remember correctly, a draw works just as well? I happen to have refined an upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill as well! Please verify it."

He stored all the other pills into a flask with a flourish of his sleeve, and came up holding an upper rank pill in his hand. When those assembled looked at his pill, they saw a pure, solidly upper rank pill. Even Shen Qinghong was rendered completely speechless at the sight.

The proudly prancing Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng were instantly petrified. As everyone froze, Jiang Chen swept away the ten thousand stones. He grinned, "We did agree just now! Senior brother Shen didn't win, but neither did he lose. If we tied, then the stones are all mine. Haha, I have no choice but to accept them then!" Jiang Chen's grating laughter and money hungry style instantly changed the atmosphere.

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What kind of person was this?

He cared about nothing in a match of pills but the ten thousand upper rank stones. Is this fellow that possessed by an impoverished ghost?

Shen Qinghong was speechless, but he also felt like he had narrowly dodged a bullet as cold sweat poured down his back. Although he hadn't won, he hadn't lost either. He'd retained face and found a way out of this situation. He smiled faintly. "We already talked about this beforehand, Jiang Chen. It's no big deal to gift you the stones." Without wasting any more time, he waved his hand and left, trailed by a crowd of followers who had yet to react.

Chapter 523: The Authority After One Battle

Although Shen Qinghong left in a heroic manner, inwardly he was utterly shellshocked. When he calmed down and reflected over the battle, he felt like there were too many suspicious points. But, he couldn't pinpoint anything in particular. The whole match had just felt... eerie. How likely was it to finish refining a pill at the same time? Yet, it had happened in this match!

Shen Qinghong would never believe that Jiang Chen had purposefully thrown the match in his favor. But no matter what, Shen Qinghong was certain that Jiang Chen's pill dao potential was absolutely not inferior his, but was possibly greater. This was because he'd more or less obtained what he wanted with the least expense possible in refining the Aeonian Dream Pill. He'd refined this pill before, but it was Jiang Chen's first time coming in contact with it.

It was because he had come to those conclusions that Shen Qinghong had left without a fuss. He knew that taking the easy way out was the best way to handle the situation given what had happened. Continued entanglement would just invite humiliation upon himself. He also felt it odd when he thought closely of Jiang Chen's greedy display. No matter how he looked at it, this Jiang Chen didn't have a reason to view wealth so highly, almost as if it were his life. Could it be that all of this was an act?

Shen Qinghong didn't dare keep thinking. The best of the thirty six stratagems was to retreat!

And this was how a battle that was supposed to be a clash between the greats concluded as a most bizarre tie.

Shen Qinghong naturally didn't care about the ten thousand spirit stones. This kind of loss to him was just a hair off his leg. It was Jun Mobai who looked meaningfully at Shen Qinghong's back and then at the absolutely delighted Jiang Chen. He suddenly smiled, "Congratulations junior brother Jiang Chen. There will be no more rascals who dare question your position and results in the future."

Jiang Chen smiled offhandedly. "Many thanks, many thanks. Thank you all for coming out."

His unspoken intent of refusing to entertain guests was obvious. Jun Mobai had wanted to strike up a friendship with Jiang Chen, but could tell from Jiang Chen's tone that he had no intention of inviting anyone in today. Jun Mobai smiled gallantly and raised a cupped fist salute to Jiang Chen. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, I extend to you the same offer. Come by my residence whenever you're free, I'll be waiting at any time."

"Your invitation is quite generous." Jiang Chen politely responded with some pleasantries.

When Jun Mobai left, Ling Bi'er glided up to Jiang Chen as if a jade tree piled high with snow. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, can I ask you a question?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "What is it?"

"I'm just purely curious, can I take a look at your leftover Aeonian Dream Pills?" Ling Bi'er's tone was indifferent, the icy representative of the broad, cold moon.

Jiang Chen's thoughts raced. Has Ling Bi'er detected something? He'd purposefully put away the remaining pills just now to avoid the eyes and ears of others. He was deathly afraid of someone detecting the supreme rank pill. The entire game would go up in flames if anyone discovered it, and his goal of a tie would be a failure.

"Heh heh, I was lucky and refined an upper rank pill. All the rest are low quality dregs and not fit for senior sister's eyes." Jiang Chen chuckled as he glossed over the topic.

Ling Bi'er nodded slightly, a meaningful look in her expressive eyes as she looked at Jiang Chen deeply. "Since this is the case, I will take my leave now." She turned to speak to Ling Hui'er, "Hui'er, we're going back."

The baby-faced and well endowed Ling Hui'er bounded over to Jiang Chen like a little deer on her vigorous legs. Combined with her leopard skin miniskirt, she was overflowing with a youthful wildness. "Jiang Chen, even senior brother Shen couldn't beat you. It looks like I well deserved that loss that time!"

“Heh he, junior sister Hui’er, your pill dao potential isn’t low either. When you reach my age, your pill dao potential just might surpass me!” Jiang Chen humored her.

Ling Hui’er chuckled. “You speak like you’re that much older than me. I’m 17 this year, and my sister is 20. How old are you Jiang Chen?”

This girl was innocent and naive. Her baby face made it very difficult for feelings of resistance to develop in one’s heart. Jiang Chen smiled. “I’m 21, I guess.”

“What do you mean, you guess? Don’t you know how old you are?” Ling Hui’er pouted, seeming to detect that Jiang Chen was only humoring her.

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. He really didn’t care much about his age in this life. If he really put his mind to it, he seemed to be around twenty one years old.

Ling Bi’er frowned slightly; she really was at a loss when it came to her younger sister. She’d even revealed her age! “Hui’er, why aren’t you leaving yet?”

Ling Hui’er stuck out her tongue again when she saw her sister irritated. “Remember Jiang Chen! You have to teach me how to refine pills when you have time! I’ll come find you next time!”

Mu Gaoqi sighed as he watched the sisters leave. “One is as proudly aloof as the frosty moon, the other as enthusiastic as fire. Two sisters from the same womb, and yet how come their personalities are so different? They each have their own strengths as well. No wonder they’re the most accomplished sisters in the Regal Pill Palace!”

Jiang Chen sent him flying with a kick. “Look at all you’re good for!”

Mu Gaoqi flipped over and stood up, dusting off his butt as he chuckled. “Brother Chen, don’t be like that! I have no intentions of taking your woman from you. A gentle and graceful young woman is a gentleman’s best mate. I feel that these sisters will be unable to escape from Brother’s Chen’s grasp sooner or later... Ah!!”

Another kick sent him flying a dozen or so meters.

“Brother Chen, can you not be this harsh!” Mu Gaoqi clutched his butt as his cry of agony came from far away.

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“Sister, why did you want to look at Jiang Chen’s leftover Aeonian Dream Pills just now? Are you interested in failed pills?” Ling Hui’er purposefully changed the topic because she was afraid her sister would grow angry with her for speaking to Jiang Chen.

Ling Bi’er suddenly halted in her tracks. Only when she looked at her younger sister would her chilly gaze have some hints of warmth to it. “Hui’er, could you bother using your brain sometimes?”

Ling Hui’er felt quite aggrieved. “Sister, what did Hui’er do now? Why are you lecturing me again?”

“Why did you tell him our ages?” Ling Bi’er asked.

Ling Hui'er giggled. "Sis, are you angry because of that? Anyone who really wants to would easily be able to find out our ages. I don't think senior brother Jiang Chen is a bad person!"

Ling Bi'er sighed lightly and shook her head slightly, saying nothing more. She was both fond of and exasperated by her younger sister, and no idea what to do with her at all.

When she saw her sister ignore her again and start walking, Ling Hui'er laughed lightly and scampered up, tugging on Ling Bi'er's arm, "Sis, you still haven't told me why you wanted to look at the failed pills? Or do you actually like Jiang Chen and trying these crude methods to get close to him?"

Ling Bi'er was completely petrified. This thick headed sister of mine will say anything! "Ling. Hui'er." The elder sister's face darkened. "You won't be calling me sister anymore if you keep spouting this kind of nonsense."

"Hehe, it's just that I think it's weird. Everyone says you're a frigid beauty, but the frigid beauty asked a boy to look at his trash pills today, then..."

Ling Bi'er suddenly asked, "Hui'er, do you think the pills left over really are trash ones?"

Ling Hui'er could hear the oddness in her sister's tone. She lifted her small face and asked quizzically, "Didn't Jiang Chen say so himself? He said they were all dregs."

"And this is why I say you're too naive." Ling Bi'er exhaled a breath as fragrant as orchids, her tone profound. "I was standing quite close after he took out the upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill, and I subtly sensed that the spirit power pulses from his Skyweave Cauldron were far more concentrated than from Shen Qinghong's Skyspeak Cauldron."

"So what of that?" Ling Hui'er blinked her large eyes, her curly eyelashes fluttering and dancing with the motion.

"I suspect that he even had a supreme rank pill hidden within his cauldron! There's no explanation for the strengthened spirit pulses otherwise. He also concealed it very quickly, as if afraid that someone would see and hastily stood up after putting away all the Aeonian Dream Pills."

There were no outsiders here apart from her own sister, so Ling Bi'er spoke freely of her suspicions.

However, Ling Hui'er seemed to be acting as if she was listening to a myth. Her skepticism showed in her words as she asked, "This can't be, sis? If I'm Jiang Chen and Shen Qinghong bullied me that badly, to the point of creating rumors to slander me, there's no way I wouldn't take out a supreme rank pill to slap his face!" She shook her head like shaking a rattle drum, continuing, "Even the elders of our sect are unable to refine a supreme rank pill! Although I know that Jiang Chen is quite amazing, but is he stronger than Elder Yun Nie? And, he could've thoroughly crushed Shen Qinghong if he'd taken it out and replaced Shen Qinghong as first in the Rosy Valley. What reason would he have had to not do so?"

Her multitude of reasons made quite a bit of sense. Ling Bi'er had naturally thought of this as well, but she still stuck to her original convictions in her heart. Perhaps it was a misconception, but she felt deep down that Jiang Chen was still holding something back, that his mysteries hadn't been fully brought to the surface. If he really had done what she'd thought, then his pill dao potential and cultivation level was... monstrous.

This was more frightening than winning over Shen Qinghong!

Everyone knew that it was easy to win in a pill competition, but it was rather difficult to create a tie. Only when one had a complete advantage and absolute certainty would they be able to do with such ease.

A sliver of doubt circled around Ling Bi'er's heart. Although things weren't as full blown as Ling Hui'er had said, she was indeed a bit curious about Jiang Chen and a trace of an investigative desire had sprung up in her mind. This was a new development to the icy beauty Ling Bi'er.

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News of the tie quickly spread throughout the Rosy Valley and Regal Pill Palace. Then, the Palace Head, Hallmaster of the Hall of Might and the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall jointly issued a statement asking for all disciples to stop propagating rumors. It also named and complimented Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's pill dao potential, as well as made reference to the legendary battle between the Skyweave and Skypeak Cauldron. It also encouraged the youngsters of the Regal Pill Palace to interact more and to oppose each other less.

When this statement was made, it squashed all the rumors. Everyone grew truly conscious of the fact that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's rise were out of solid, real ability, and it became an incontrovertible fact. Even Shen Qinghong's martial dao master had publicly admitted to this.

Jiang Chen didn't actually care about slander from the outside world; he cared much more about Elder Lian Cheng's word. The elder was a man of his word, and his conditions were secretly delivered the next day, along with three thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills.

"I'm rich!" Jiang Chen was just about capering inside when he saw his war trophies piled in front of him.

Chapter 524: Formation Preparations

The various matches that Jiang Chen had accepted in the ring had already brought in thirty thousand spirit stones for Jiang Chen. The five thousand each from Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie made for ten thousand. Elder Lian Cheng had sent over another ten thousand, and Jiang Chen had fleeced another ten thousand from the fat target that was Shen Qinghong when they tied. Add all that to Jiang Chen's store of spirit stores brought him to a sum total of close to sixty thousand upper rank origin spirit stones—a full threefold increase over his original expectations.

"These sixty thousand stones can power fifty to sixty percent of the formation. Once it's set up properly, it can be maintained for ten years." Jiang Chen made a couple of quick mental calculations. According to his initial plan, roughly twenty thousand stones would've been enough for thirty percent of the formation. There was great hope for sixty thousand stones to bring forth fifty to sixty percent of its power.

"When it comes to formations, naturally the more powerful the better. If I can activate all of the power behind the Nine Gates Formation, then even an emperor realm expert will be hard pressed to break through it. Even fifty to sixty percent of its power will be enough to defend against a sky sage realm expert." It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't trust those of the Regal Pill Palace, but that the wood spirit spring was of such importance that he didn't wish for its existence to be revealed.

If its existence was leaked, it would incite mass chaos across the Myriad Domain and even attract attention from still stronger powers to come seize it. While this formation may look like it was preventing those from the Regal Pill Palace from intruding, it was also protecting the sect from the disaster that could strike if the wrong news was spread.

After he'd obtained his newest ingredients, Jiang Chen had collected everything he needed for the formation. But of course, when it came to formations, especially such a big one, it wasn't something that could be completed in two or three days.

Jiang Chen was in no hurry. The first step was to refine the flag formation. The fifty kilograms of aubergine gold he'd gathered from Elder Lian Cheng had been for the flag formation. This material wasn't the optimal material for the formation flag, but it was already an exceedingly good material in the Myriad Domain. He would likely be unable to find better here, or not in the Regal Pill Palace.

The starcloud dust and vermilion cinnabar were all materials needed to set up the formation and to carve the runes. A formation would cover a broad area, but it was made up of many small details. It had to be completely flawless, since a slightly weaker link in the chain would affect the quality of the entire formation.

Since Jiang Chen had gone to so much effort and cost for all this, he naturally wouldn't allow any errors to develop. This formation would be one of his guardians for at least the next decade. But of course, his goal wasn't satisfied by simply stopping here. This formation could be continuously improved, and his aim was to deploy the full power of this formation so that it could truly defend against an emperor realm cultivator. This would naturally be a long term endeavor and not something to be completed overnight.

Refining a flag formation would require specialized equipment. He didn't have any such facility in his residence. It was a good thing that there was a Hall of Refining that specialized in all matters of weapon forging. It ranked sixth amongst the nine halls of the Regal Pill Palace.

A minimum of eighty one flags would be needed to have the formation realize its maximal potential. Since Jiang Chen didn't have such high aspirations at the moment, he was looking to refine only thirty six flags. This would only decrease the formation's power and range.

He had made a promise with the little Cicada last time that he would let it bathe in the waters of the spring after ten days. There were still a few days left until the promised time, so Jiang Chen decided to refine the flags first. Since time was of the essence, he didn't linger and headed straight for the Hall of Refining.

With his current reputation, no one dared treat him lightly when he arrived. Who didn't know that he was the favorite of Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie? Even Hallmaster Lian Cheng of the Hall of Might had accepted Jiang Chen's current position. Therefore, although Jiang Chen didn't command the same treatment and prestige as Shen Qinghong, he wasn't far off.

Although the Hall of Refining was an important organization, there was still quite a difference between it and the Hall of Might or Herbal Hall. When an administrator saw Jiang Chen, he used an almost fawning tone to ask, "What pleasant wind has blown you to our hall, junior brother Jiang Chen? Do you need to

refine some sort of weapon? Our Hall of Refining specializes in solving these kinds of problems for sect geniuses!”

Jiang Chen smiled and looked at the administrator. “Is it possible for me to borrow your refining room?”

An awkward expression appeared on the administrator’s face. “Borrow the refining room? Junior brother Jiang Chen, there... there is a strict rule that no one outside of the Hall of Refining can borrow our facilities.”

“Please make an exception in my favor.” Jiang Chen reached out his hand and shook the administrator’s hand, handing over a pill flask.

The administrator clutched a pill flask and beamed at him. “Junior brother Jiang Chen is the premier genius of our Regal Pill Palace. There are always some exceptions to the rule! I’ll go make the request for you in a bit. There will be no problem at all if the Hallmaster nods in assent.”

“Then I’ll ask the senior brother to speak a few more good words on my behalf.”

The administrator understood completely, smiling, “Of course, of course. It’s also the honor of our Hall of Refining to put forth some effort on behalf of junior brother Jiang Chen!”

The administrator knew that Jiang Chen was a genius at pill refining. The items that he gifted would certainly be uncommon. How would the administrator not put forth some effort on Jiang Chen’s behalf now that he had received some benefits? He gave an order, “Treat junior brother Jiang Chen well, I will go discuss with the Hallmaster.”

When the administrator entered the inner hall, he surreptitiously took out the pill flask and peeked inside. It was ten upper rank Origin Fostering Pills! His heart rate doubled at the sight. One had to know that an administrator like him only received a stipend of roughly thirty Origin Fostering Pill a month, and all of them at lower rank at that. These ten upper rank pills were the same as thousands of lower rank pills! This was a good ten months of his stipend!

“Tsk tsk, he who has wealth speaks louder than others! He’s a pill refining genius alright! It looks like growing close to one is the only way forward!” The administrator was delighted and even more resolute that he had to handle this properly for Jiang Chen. If he could use this opportunity to build a relationship with Jiang Chen, he’d have no end of good benefits if Jiang Chen randomly bestowed some pills on him in the future.

Hallmaster Lu Duan personally came over after a short while. This hallmaster was a big fatty, resembling a rolling meat ball as he walked over with quick steps. “Jiang Chen, I am so ashamed that I didn’t come welcome you!”

It was the first time that Jiang Chen had met this hallmaster, so he was rather surprised by this hearty greeting. A fleshy hand grasped Jiang Chen’s and shook it vigorously. “Jiang Chen, my Hall of Refining rarely sees an honored guest like you. Come come come, come sit, come sit. Your presence graces my hall, and I will personally prepare a cup of tea for you.”

Jiang Chen was rather embarrassed by Fatty Lu’s fervor. “How is Jiang Chen worthy of Hallmaster Lu’s hospitality?”

“Haha, worthy indeed, quite worthy!” Lu Duan grinned and tugged Jiang Chen into walking inside. Jiang Chen could only follow him inside out of resignation. Jiang Chen was a bit at a loss for words to have a fatty, and a male fatty nonetheless, holding onto his hand.

It was a good thing that Fatty Lu went off to brew tea after heading inside. Jiang Chen sat down, attended by the administrator.

“Come Jiang Chen, have some tea. Our Hall of Refining is a bit crude and there’s nothing particularly good here. Don’t mind our weak tea, I hope you don’t mind.” Fatty Lu had come back bearing tea. He was enthusiastically offering Jiang Chen high quality tea, but describing it as weak tea.

“Hallmaster Lu, I’m here to borrow the refining facilities of the Hall of Refining. This request may be a bit out of line, so if it’s possible, I’d like to make some reparations.” Jiang Chen wasn’t willing to stand on pleasantries as he once again explained his intentions.

Fatty Lu chuckled so much that his cheeks and jowls jiggled. “The rules don’t allow it, but Jiang Chen, you’re an utmost genius of the Regal Pill Palace, so you should naturally be treated as an exception.”

“Then I must thank Hallmaster Lu for helping me achieve my aims. Consider this as a small token of appreciation from me, I hope the hallmaster doesn’t look down on it.” Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t be miserly since Lu Duan had agreed so forthrightly. He pushed a flask of pills to Hallmaster Lu.

The fatty chuckled but didn’t accept the flask. He pushed it back to Jiang Chen. “Jiang Chen, if you really want to thank me, I have a favor to ask.”

Jiang Chen started, then said, “Please feel free to speak frankly, Hallmaster Lu. If it’s something that Jiang Chen can do, then I will surely try my best!”

“The matter is this. My cultivation level has dithered at the peak of the origin realm for two decades. Whenever I start to sense the sage realm, I’ve always been afraid to try because I lack that bit of skill. It all comes down to missing a Hexarune Dragon Pill. I’ve heard that you helped Elder Yun Nie refine that pill, but don’t know if...”

Jiang Chen knew what the other meant when he heard these words. He took a glance at Lu Duan. This fatty truly had halted at the peak of the origin realm and was lacking that final step.

Lu Duan sighed dejectedly. “Jiang Chen ah, I am 160 years old this year and past the prime age to break through. Once a young man like you enters the peak of the origin realm, it wouldn’t be too farfetched for you to break through to the sage realm, even with the tribulations from some internal demons. But for someone like me with immense internal demons, I’m afraid that the tribulations will be too strong when I attempt to break through. If only I had a Hexarune Dragon Pill, my chances would be so much greater. I’m not afraid of death with this fat body of mine, but my poor eight year old daughter and five year old son...”

As the fatty poured out his heart amidst sobs, his style and acting skills reminded Jiang Chen of an old acquaintance in the Eastern Kingdom, Fatty Xuan.

Two fatties, similar styles and the same acts.

“Hallmaster Lu, the Hexarune Dragon Pill belongs to Elder Yun Nie. I really don’t have any, but if you can collect all its ingredients one day, I can help refine it for you. I can’t promise a supreme rank, but certainly a mid rank version.”

Fatty Lu’s eyes gleamed. “Do you mean that?”

Jiang Chen laughed. “I am a disciple of the Regal Pill Palace and my words carry weight.”

Fatty Lu laughed heartily. “Good, great! In that case, the facilities of my Hall of Refining are always open to you. Use them as long as you’d like, however you’d like! Let me know if there’s anything you need me for!”

Chapter 525: Assimilating the Golden Cicada’s Bloodline

It actually wasn’t that Jiang Chen didn’t want Fatty Lu to get his hands dirty, because to be honest, as the hallmaster, he was certain to be more skilled than Jiang Chen in the area of refining items. The reason Jiang Chen decided to do it himself in the end was while he had been familiar with refining in his past life, he’d rarely had a chance to practice in this life. If he had a few chances for practical application, he’d be a first rate refiner, if not a top master refiner. Also, something like refining a formation flag was best done personally. Even if he could, he wouldn’t be at ease handing it over to anyone else either. It was a good thing that he’d received more than enough aubergine gold from Elder Lian Cheng, so he had the materials to waste if need be.

He successfully refined the required thirty six formation flags after seven days. He’d actually refined more than fifty, but he wasn’t quite satisfied with the initial ones and destroyed them all. The ones who remained were the finest of his creations.

With the formation flags completed, Jiang Chen didn’t linger and prepared to leave the Hall of Refinement.

Fatty Lu made several attempts to keep him back. “Jiang Chen, it’s rare for you to visit; let me play host this time. Come, let’s have a few drinks.”

Jiang Chen really didn’t have the time to stay and drink. “Hallmaster Lu, if you don’t think it beneath you, please come stay as a guest at my residence next time. I’m rather short on time these days and need to make many preparations for the soon to come Pill Battles.”

Fatty Lu nodded and sighed. “I won’t be keeping you since this is the case then. Come by as much as you like when you have the time. You can treat the Hall of Refining as half a home too.”

The fatty’s socialization skills were nothing to laugh at, and he had quite the glib tongue. He’d managed to quickly struck up a brotherhood with Jiang Chen. His behavior was easily explained though. Whenever Sovereign Area geniuses came by the Hall of Refining, they weren’t entirely enthused at the sights. After all, since this hall was neither the Hall of Might or Herbal Hall, it was of little value to them and destined to not have much in common with them. Therefore, even though Fatty Lu was an honorable hallmaster, very few of those top geniuses was willing to open their hearts and be friends with him.

Jiang Chen was the first, and that was why he was so highly valued.

To put it bluntly, Fatty Lu's position as the Hallmaster of the Hall of Refinement wasn't even necessarily on par with the top five elders of the Hall of Might or Herbal Hall.

"Hallmaster Lu, please come find me at my residence any time when you've collected all of the ingredients for the Hexarune Dragon Pill." Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to be ungrateful and burn a bridge after he'd crossed it.

"I will, I will." Fatty Lu was utterly delighted. He'd wanted to ask Elder Yun Nie to refine the pill for him, but his position was far too distant from the master of the Herbal Hall, so he hadn't dared make the request. After all, Elder Yun Nie was a venerated elder and one of the three heavyweights of the Regal Pill Palace.

When he returned to his residence, it was time for Jiang Chen to make good on his agreement with the Golden Cicada. He didn't go back on his words, summoning the Cicada and sending it to the wood spirit spring. When the Cicada saw the spring, it was wholeheartedly convinced of Jiang Chen's words and joyously hopped into the waters.

The Cicada was different from any other spirit creature. It was the type that dined on the wind and supped on dew. Not only would this spring baptize its body, but it would also serve as the Cicada's food. Absorbing its waters would naturally give it an edge for reforming its bloodlines. And of course, it wasn't that other spirit creatures couldn't drink the waters, but that the effects of them drinking the waters was vastly inferior to the little Cicada's.

The Cicada's baptism was destined to be a long process, and Jiang Chen didn't want to watch over it every second of the day. He spent his days setting up the formation, and his nights in training.

The little Cicada completed its bloodline evolution after roughly a month, and its form had undergone great changes. It had changed from the size of a fist to the size of a watermelon. It was a full meter when it extended its wings. "The little Golden Cicada greets the master."

According to their previous agreement, the Cicada had to submit to Jiang Chen after completing its bloodline evolution and take Jiang Chen to be its master.

"No need to call me master, little Cicada. I'm called Jiang Chen, so you can call me young master Chen like the others."

"Then I'll call you big brother Chen." The little Cicada had spent a long time with Jiang Chen and was familiar with his personality. It knew that this human master wasn't one of those immensely evil and violent villains. It also knew how lucky it was to have such a master.

Although the Golden Cicadas possessed a noble bloodline, their attack strength was limited, so they had to seek succor from other races throughout the harsh worlds. Of those who offered shelter, humans were a race that the Cicadas turned to more often than not. In taking Jiang Chen for his master, the Cicada had found a great backer and didn't have to spend his days in fear and apprehension anymore.

"Haha, call me whatever you like." Jiang Chen was in a great mood as he asked, "Now that your bloodline evolution is complete, have any of your heritage of memories awakened?"

The little Cicada was also incredibly astonished when they spoke of this. "It's just like you said, big brother Chen. We are indeed impervious to all poisons and lightning."

As for the arts of the Cicada Wing and Cicada's Counterfeit, it had long since known of those two abilities. For Jiang Chen, his memories from his past life had laid out the little Cicada's abilities in crystal clear fashion. But to the little Cicada, all of this was quite wondrous. Big brother Chen had known of all this before his heritage of memories had awoken. Does he have the ability to see the future?

"Don't look at me like that, little Cicada. Actually, if your memories fully awaken, you'll know that the arts of metamorphosis that your tribe possesses are even more amazing. When you train them to their peak, you'll have the ability to transform into all sorts of shapes. This is something that's even more incredible than what you see now."

The Golden Cicadas' combat ability was indeed pretty much trash. But in return, they were talented in almost every other field. In particular, their metamorphosis arts could bewilder anyone, shifting into any shape and form imaginable. This was how this race had survived in the worlds despite their poor battle strength. However, these methods were equally useful for the other stronger races.

The Cicada tittered. "Big brother Chen, you'll have to wait until I enter the sage realm to get the art of metamorphosis! Do you want to learn it?"

Jiang Chen was indeed a bit green eyed with desire for this particular art. But although the little Cicada had awakened its memories and had its bloodline improve rapidly, this rapid advancement of its cultivation had only brought it to the level of the human minor origin realm. There was still a long way to go if it wanted to enter the sage realm.

"Teehee, big brother Chen, I'm teasing you. I'll now give to you the drop of blood I promised! When I learn the art of metamorphosis and shift into human form, I'll give you another drop of blood essence so you also have the chance to train this art."

Such were the Golden Cicadas. They were very opposed to humans before they took a master, but once they did, they were the epitome of loyalty. Every decision they made from that point on would place their master as their highest consideration, carefully taking in all aspects.

The little Cicada squeezed out a drop of essence blood as it spoke. A drop of rain, filled with an ethereal spirituality, landed in front of Jiang Chen. He opened up his hand and absorbed this drop of blood, assimilating into his own blood.

It was a common thing for a human cultivator to absorb beast blood, but this drop of blood from the Cicada bloodline was extraordinary. To Jiang Chen, it was temporarily more valuable than even dragon blood!

After all, the bloodline of the dragons could strengthen one's energy and blood, increase the purity of the human bloodline, enhance the cultivator's aura, and help the cultivator practice many more stronger arts. However, the bloodline of the Cicada could help Jiang Chen receive the heritage of the entire Cicada race. Arts such as the Cicada Wing, and Cicada's Counterfeit, as well as inherent abilities such as immunity to all poisons, and a defense that could withstand ten thousand strikes of lightning were all things that the dragon bloodline couldn't possibly supply.

Of course, this wasn't to say that the bloodline of the Golden Cicada was more noble than the dragon's, it was just that the Cicada's bloodline was more suited for Jiang Chen. The dragon bloodline could help him obtain more battle power, but that wouldn't occur overnight. Jiang Chen also had many ways to

increase his battle strength, so he wasn't limited to just using the dragon bloodline, but the arts available through the Cicada's were irreplaceable.

If Jiang Chen's bloodline would show a high degree of fusion with the Cicada's and his powers of comprehension were high, he'd be able to grasp all of the arts of this race. The only pity was that the little Cicada itself still couldn't train the arts of metamorphosis. Otherwise, this drop of blood would've been even more valuable.

"Little Cicada, train near this wood spirit spring in the future. I'll plant the Thundercloud Tree next to the spring, and it'll surely grow into a patch of Thundercloud Trees in the future."

Jiang Chen needed a certain amount of time to assimilate the drop of blood after absorbing it from the Cicada. How this process went would directly determine how much of the Cicada's legacy he'd be able to obtain. Jiang Chen didn't dare treat it lightly and immediately announced a seven day seclusion.

It was a commonplace occurrence for cultivators to go into closed door cultivation. There was someone doing so every two or three days in Jiang Chen's residence. Because Jiang Chen had understood much of the Golden Cicadas in his past life and had his own unique views on assimilating bloodlines, he made enormous gains during this time and used an almost perfect way to meld this bloodline with his.

Having done so, Jiang Chen noticeably felt the additional attributes of his body. "My body is truly impervious to all poisons and durable to the point of repeated lightning strikes. I finally don't have to worry about becoming scorched and burned when I met a strong thunder genius in the future, or anyone who specializes in the thunder attribute."

Boundless confidence suddenly rose in Jiang Chen's heart. He'd already had a certain immunity to thunder ever since he'd refined the stick of Thundercloud Tree, but now that he'd refined the bloodline of the Cicada, his immunity to the arts of thunder had risen by more than tenfold! Ordinary arts of thunder posed absolutely no threat to him now.

As for poison, he was a master of poison to begin with, and his immunity to poison had been extremely high even before assimilating the Cicada's bloodline. Now that he had this additional inherent defense, it acted as an extra layer of insurance. Jiang Chen could now no longer think of any poison that could harm him in all the planes beneath the heavens. As for Cicada's Wing and Cicada's Counterfeit, those arts couldn't be obtained overnight, but they were the two arts that he'd yearned for the most. Particularly Cicada's Wing, the temptation of flight was greater than anything else in Jiang Chen's heart. If he was able to fly during the origin realm, that would absolutely be a great advantage!

Chapter 526: Successful Formation Setup

The Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage drew closer and closer as time went on.

Having assimilated the Golden Cicada's bloodline, Jiang Chen spent his days either cultivating or setting up the Nine Gates Formation. If he concentrated wholeheartedly on setting up the formation, it would only take a month or so. But doing so while training on the side meant that it would take him at least three months to complete it. It'd been two months since he'd started setting up the formation, and there was still two months more to the Pill Battles. There was still plenty of time.

Gouyu, Ye Chonglou and the others didn't understand the way of formations, and could only guess randomly when they saw Jiang Chen busying himself day in and out.

One fine day, Tang Hong's hearty laughter rang out from the rear mountain. He had broken through to the origin realm! He seemed to have set off a chain reaction as Gouyu also broke through not long after, followed closely by Xue Tong. They had both finally grasped their respective dao.

In this way, Tang Hong could rightfully take up residence in the Rosy Valley, and Jiang Chen decided to have a serious chat with his followers, Gouyu and Xue Tong. "Gouyu, Xue Tong, now that you have broken through to the origin realm, you're qualified to become a core disciple in the Regal Pill Palace. If you remain my follower, you won't be able to have your own residence. If you join the Regal Pill Palace, you can become a core disciple and have your own place."

Xue Tong immediately understood Jiang Chen's meaning. He shook his head and spoke with a resolute tone. "I, Xue Tong, will only follow the young master in my life. Talk of being a sect disciple is nowhere as attractive as following the young master."

Gouyu flicked a disapproving look over. "Jiang Chen, have you been considering how to get rid of me all this time? Even if I can't be your woman, I'm still going to follow you. That so-called identity of a sect disciple is completely meaningless to me."

Jiang Chen laughed ruefully as he looked at the steadfast duo. At least for the time being, he knew that they wouldn't turn their backs on him no matter what.

Gouyu glared at him, "If you give us this choice again in the future, we won't let you off this easily! Hmmp!"

Amongst Jiang Chen's followers, Gouyu was one who had the bearing of a boss sister. As long as she was in the right, she would even dare shout at Jiang Chen. Hers was a forthright personality.

The other followers, provoked by Gouyu and Xue Tong's breakthroughs, increased their efforts at cultivating. As a result, their strength improved rapidly as they all entered the peak of the spirit realm.

This sent the outside world into an uproar. When Jiang Chen had arrived, the strongest of his followers had only been earth spirit realm. But now, two of them had reached the origin realm, and the rest had firmly consolidated themselves at the peak of the ninth level spirit realm! That such miraculous changes had occurred in them in such a short amount of time left the entire Regal Pill Palace astonished and motivated by the pressure. The martial dao potential of those from the sixteen kingdoms were all so frightening, so what reason did the rest of the others from the Precious Tree Sect have to rest on their laurels? One had to say, Jiang Chen's appearance had brought an unexpected momentum to the Regal Pill Palace overall, encouraging the younger generation to take their training more seriously.

Jiang Chen finally finished setting up the formation with a month to go until the Pill Battles. With that done, he too breathed out a long sigh of relief. He had ensured that the formation possessed at least sixty percent of its full strength and would be enough to block all those at sky sage realm and below when activated.

He refined another five formation jade tokens, giving one to Ye Chonglou, Gouyu, Xue Tong, and Huang'er, leaving one for himself. The first three were his own people and didn't need further

instructions. When Huang'er received the token, she smiled slightly. "Huang'er will certainly look after the formation carefully given such trust from Sir Jiang."

Huang'er spent much time inside and rarely ventured out during her days, occasionally visiting Gouyu and Wen Ziqi. She lived an exceedingly simple yet content life, and was entirely happy. Therefore, she had long since regarded this place as half her home in the depths of her heart, and viewed it as a place worth defending.

"Miss Huang'er, the wood spirit spring will be highly beneficial for you if you bathe in it monthly. It's just that knowledge of the spring's existence is of utmost importance and cannot be revealed, which is why I've spent enormous time and effort to set up such a formation and enclose all of the inner residence into its defenses.

Huang'er spoke sweetly. "Sir Jiang is highly talented; this formation is surely extraordinary."

Jiang Chen chuckled. "It's merely a small thing, but can be activated in times of danger. It will just remain so in normal times. Miss Huang'er, please remember to go to the spring every month. If you like it and wish to go when you have nothing else to do, that's just as well."

"Many thanks to Sir Jiang's generous care. Huang'er will remember this well." Huang'er was indeed touched. She'd purposefully masqueraded an ugly appearance because she hadn't wanted to show her true form to others, but she now felt that her gesture had been rather superfluous.

Jiang Chen was an open and straightforward person. He was striving his best to take care of her due to Elder Shun's charge and didn't keep her away from something as important as the wood spirit spring, allowing her to use it as she would. He had never ostracized or ignored her for her looks. It was apparent that he wasn't one who judged people on the basis of their appearance.

Now that she gave it some thought, Huang'er grew deeply ashamed of her move to conceal her features. She wasn't a girl who put on such airs to begin with, but had disguised herself with ugliness thanks to a stray fancy. But now, she didn't know how to deal with the situation.

"Ai, let's have things develop naturally. It's just that my actions are a bit untoward given how sincerely everyone is treating me." As Huang'er watched Jiang Chen's retreating back, there were some soft ripples stirring her heart. For some reason, she always felt quite relaxed when interacting with Jiang Chen, and felt none of the repulsion she usually did when facing the young men of her homeland.

It boiled down to the fact that although those young men were exemplary and accomplished, they always felt a bit too forced, as if they were putting on an act. It was difficult to feel close to them, whereas Jiang Chen was open and stood in the light. He neither withheld favors to elicit gratitude or judged others by their looks, nor did he pretend to be elegant or dashing in front of her.

Once he settled everything in the residence, there were only a few concerns hanging over Jiang Chen's heart.

When he finished up everything, Palace Head Dan Chi sent over a message glyph, inviting him to come over. The palace head had done him many favors and helped him a great deal, so Jiang Chen naturally didn't drag his heels and immediately got up, making his way over to Dan Chi's residence.

“Jiang Chen, you’ve been rather busy these days hmm? Not bad at all kid, it looks like you’re going to break through fifth level origin realm!” Dan Chi could see with a glance that Jiang Chen was at the peak of fourth level origin realm.

“I’m going to strive to break through to the fifth level before the Pill Battles.” Jiang Chen didn’t need to put on a facade in front of the palace head.

“What an incredibly insane genius!” Palace head Dan Chi sighed. “I feel absolutely no sense of superiority about my cultivation speed in front of you. I spent two years to ascend from first level to fifth level origin realm, but you’ve spent less than a year! I daresay that even the geniuses of the Upper Eight Realms are barely capable of matching that.”

Jiang Chen laughed. “It comes down to the Regal Pill Palace possessing superior resources, and that is wholly thanks to you, Palace Head! If you hadn’t brought me here, where would I have gotten so many resources?”

The vast quantity of Origin Fostering Pills had indeed been of great use to Jiang Chen.

“Oh pfft. Although those pills can induce faster cultivation, they’re not nearly as incredible as to produce this speed. You must’ve had some other fortuitous encounters. Never mind, I won’t keep asking. I’ve called you here because I want to ask you; where did you get your Nine Magnificence Dew Wine?” Dan Chi chuckled.

“The Nine Magnificence Wine?” Jiang Chen was startled, but spoke honestly. “I was once taught by an extraordinary expert when I was small and learned some tricks from him. This was when I learned how to craft the Wine.”

“Oh? You know how to craft it?” A hint of something else crept into Dan Chi’s tone.

“Yes.” Jiang Chen didn’t deny it. It wasn’t that difficult to refine this wine, and with his current cultivation level, it was a remarkably easy task that he didn’t need to expend much effort on at all. His abilities had been limited in the Skylaurel Kingdom because of limited resources, but now in the Regal Pill Palace, he almost didn’t think much of a spirit rank Nine Magnificence Dew Wine.

“Good, wonderful! Jiang Chen, the Myriad Domain has a particular tradition of wine tasting whenever we meet up. Ever since my Regal Pill Palace has been founded, we’ve yet to have taken out a decent wine. Instead, the Walkabout Sect has claimed the limelight in this area. I feel that if we can take out the Nine Magnificence Wine in the Pill Battles, we’ll be able to beat down their proud stance a bit. It certainly helps that the Walkabout Sect has always been our greatest opponent in pill competitions.”

Jiang Chen smiled as he immediately understood the palace head’s meaning. The Nine Magnificence Wine wasn’t any sort of secret that couldn’t be passed on, so he had no reason to keep it to himself.

“Palace Head, there are ranks to this wine as well. Those would be mortal, spirit, origin, saint, earth, and sky rank. Which one would you like? Let’s set aside the earth and sky rank, I don’t know how to craft those.”

But he actually did. It was just that these two levels were too frightening—the Regal Pill Palace probably couldn’t even prepare all of the materials.

“I tasted the spirit rank last time, correct? Then we can taste the origin rank.”

“No problem. We can try even the saint rank as long as we have enough materials.” Jiang Chen thought, since you want to use wine to make a stand, then I’ll give you a saint rank version so that the Regal Pill Palace can really bask in glory.

The Regal Pill Palace had treated him well, so this bit of payback was only right.

Palace Head Dan Chi was delighted. The spirit rank had been so stunning already, and the saint rank was a full two ranks ahead of that. This would certainly be a heavenly brew that the Myriad Domain had never seen before in all its history. “Alright! What materials do you need? I’ll collect them all for you even if I have to dig through all ten thousand miles of the Regal Pill Palace.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “We don’t have to go quite that far. I’m sure the Regal Pill Palace can prepare them all. Please take out brush and ink, I’ll write down the recipe for you.”

“Good, good! Jiang Chen, I owe you one!” Dan Chi was in great spirits. Although he wasn’t one who lusted after the delights of a cup, infusing wine with spirit herbs was still a genteel pastime in the world of martial dao. Almost every cultivator liked the pleasures of a cup, it was just a matter of how much they did.

The palace head often crafted wine for himself and tried adding all sorts of spirit herbs into it, but he’d never had great gains. It was either too much medicine and mediocre wine, or good wine but a simple product. The Nine Magnificence Dew Wine tasted sublime and was hailed as an ethereal brew. Dan Chi could only imagine how much of an impact they would have throughout the Myriad Domain as soon as they brought it out.

Using wine to spread their name and gain profit to enhance the Regal Pill Palace’s influence was also setting the foundation for rebuilding the Myriad Empire in the future!

Chapter 527: The Ling Family Sisters

Jiang Chen casually handed over the recipe for the sage rank Nine Magnificence Dew Wine to Palace Head Dan Chi. As for actually crafting the wine himself, when he saw how eager the palace head was to try, Jiang Chen knew that he probably didn’t have to do that himself.

“Haha, Jiang Chen, this recipe is worth cities!” Joy danced on Palace Head Dan Chi’s brows as he became fired up with high spirits.

Jiang Chen teased, “Surely Elder Lian Cheng wouldn’t think so.”

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed heartily when he heard this. “You kid! You make even Elder Lian Cheng the butt of your jokes. However, your words only goes to show that you don’t know Elder Lian Cheng well. He’s the number one alcohol fiend of our Regal Pill Palace. When it comes to drinking wine, the elder will surely be the biggest fan of the saint rank Nine Magnificence Wine. Perhaps he’ll even become your fan after he hears about it.”

Jiang Chen hastily said, “Palace Head, this recipe is just a small thing, please don’t out me. The glorious results from this kind of achievement is only appropriate when attributed to you, Palace Head.”

It wasn't that he didn't want the credit to his name, but that there was no need for so many halos around him right then. He also didn't want everyone to come asking for him to craft this saint rank wine for them wherever he went. That would bring no end of trouble onto his head.

Palace Head Dan Chi started, but immediately understood Jiang Chen's conscientiousness. "Jiang Chen, it is truly rare that one at your age is not vainglorious and greedy for adoration. This is your biggest difference when compared to Shen Qinghong."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and didn't compliment himself. "Palace Head, I will head back to my residence now."

"Go on, I await your stunning accomplishments at the Pill Battles." Dan Chi encouraged.

When Jiang Chen left, Dan Chi looked at this recipe with astonishment. If this recipe was in the Upper Eight Realms, it would be fiercely fought over by many people, to say nothing of the Myriad Domain. And Jiang Chen had taken it out just like this, with no dithering at all.

This action alone was excellent evidence of his bearing and charisma. He had taken out such a precious recipe with no expectation of gratitude or favors in return, and hadn't even mentioned payback.

"Ai, it seems like allying with the Precious Tree Sect and inducting him into the Regal Pill Palace wasn't just a fortuitous occurrence for him, but also a stroke of fortune for me as well." Dan Chi sighed in his heart, recalling Elder Shun's reminders and his pointers. Only a few short days had been enough for him to cast off his shackles and see rapid improvement in his cultivation. He was now in sixth level sage realm and was fully qualified to assail the sky saint level. Once he did, he would become a premier existence in the Myriad Domain.

Dan Chi was an ambitious person with great plans, and he saw the hope to realize his goals in Jiang Chen!

"What a pity that Elder Shun only taught me for a few days. If I could've benefited from his pointers for half a year or even longer, I might even have the right to make for the emperor realm."

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Back in his residence, Jiang Chen once again tried assailing the fifth level origin realm. With so many Origin Fostering Pills at his disposal, he had no reason not to try. According to his calculations, there was still roughly a month until they had to set out for Mt. Rippling Mirage.

"A month's time is plenty!"

Just as Jiang Chen entered closed door cultivation, news came from the Herbal Hall that the list of the eight participating in the Pill Battles had finally been decided.

From the senior generation were: Hallmaster Yun Nie, Vice Hallmaster Wang Yue, Second Vicemaster Ouyang De, and a regular elder of the Herbal Hall, Che Ziwu.

From the younger generation: Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, Ling Bi'er, and Shen Qinghong.

Jun Mobai and Shen Trifire, as well as Ouyang De's grandson Ouyang Chao had all been passed over.

Those from the older generation were all elders with noble character and immense prestige. The others naturally had no objections to this outcome. Although Ouyang De and Che Ziwu's cultivation weren't as high as Palace Head Dan Chi or Elder Lian Cheng, it wouldn't do for the two heavyweights of the Regal Pill Palace, the palace head and hallmaster of the Hall of Might to participate in the Pill Battles themselves.

It was rather the younger generation that would always suffer controversy no matter who made the cut. Jiang Chen was actually the subject of the least protests now. After all, his performance in repeated pill challenges had been perfect, and the three heavyweights within the sect had all affirmed Jiang Chen's pill dao potential. There could be no wrong about that.

In the same vein, Mu Gaoqi's innate wood constitution of high order was enough to shut down all speculation. Even if he wasn't a representative of the highest level of pill dao, considering the sect was cultivating him as the long term premier genius in pill dao left his appearance on the Pill Battle list without question.

As for Ling Bi'er, she had been the first in pill dao in name long before the Sovereign Area had recruited Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, but even so, there were still those who didn't accept her placement. Because she usually remained in the Sovereign Area, she didn't have many opportunities to display her abilities.

As for Shen Qinghong, the top genius amongst the younger generation, although his pill dao potential was unknown, enough could be gathered from his draw with Jiang Chen. But apart from that, he hadn't had any convincing displays of prowess. Therefore, there were also those who privately felt that he was going based of his background and martial dao potential, and that Ling Bi'er had been chosen for her pretty face.

Of course, these speculations were all whispered behind closed doors. No one dared come out to publicly accuse anyone. To be honest, those speculating didn't have the slightest confidence that their level of pill dao could be better than Shen Qinghong or Ling Bi'er's.

Regardless, Jiang Chen wasn't affected by the list's publication. He wasn't that surprised when he learned of the results, and was prepared to enter closed door cultivation when guests came knocking outside his residence.

"Oh it's you?" Jiang Chen was slightly surprised to see his guests, the Ling sisters.

"Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you not welcome us?" Ling Hui'er widened her eyes as her long lashes danced, exuding a playful demeanor.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't welcome guests, but that he really didn't have time to cater to guests when he was about to go into seclusion. However, he had a good impression of these girls, so he had no reason to keep them at arm's length. He chuckled and said, "Come in, come in!"

Gouyu was also slightly astonished to see these sisters visit. "What a pair of dazzling sisters!"

Ling Bi'er was as flawless as white jade and as radiant as the jewel of a frozen mountain. Ling Hui'er was the picture of youth and as beguiling as a dancing flame. Even one as confident as Gouyu felt that she paled slightly when compared to Ling Bi'er's looks. Of all the girls she'd ever seen, likely only Dan Fei of the Skylaurel Kingdom could compare to them. Ling Hui'er's youthful radiance and her surging chest that

seemed like it would break through her clothes at any moment made even the sexy Gouyu feel that she didn't measure up to the little girl.

Jiang Chen remained serene as usual, showing no sign of entrancement by this pair of bedazzling sisters. It wasn't that he was putting on an aloof act, but that he'd seen too many beauties beneath the heavens in his past life and had long since developed an immunity to them. He'd even tactfully declined to share his bed with the most stunning of them.

Gouyu didn't linger after serving tea.

"Senior sister Ling, what insights might you have to impart with your visit this time?" Jiang Chen asked courteously.

It was Ling Hui'er who grew unhappy with this line of questioning as she pouted, "Senior brother Jiang, you're too much! I'm obviously here with my sister, but you only ask after her and not me!"

Jiang Chen laughed ruefully and rubbed his nose. "Alright, that's my fault. It won't happen again."

Ling Bi'er's delicately arched eyebrows wrinkled slightly and she spoke to Ling Hui'er, "Hui'er, you promised me before we came that you wouldn't joke around and take this lightly. This is why I let you come. We'll go straight back if you continue to behave like this."

Ling Hui'er was obviously quite spoiled by her sister as she tittered and leaned back on the chair. She was supported by a pair of slender, jade-like arms as her legs swung to and fro. She began swaying leisurely.

"Junior brother Jiang Chen, please forgive our intrusion from this visit." Although Ling Bi'er looked the part of a frosty beauty, she still understood the social niceties of the world.

"Not at all, please feel free to speak frankly if senior sister Ling has anything to ask."

Ling Bi'er nodded. "I was lucky enough to obtain a spot in the Pill Battles, but I still have some questions with regards to pill dao and would like to discuss the dao with junior brother Jiang Chen, to verify our thoughts and help each other improve."

So she's here to discuss thoughts on pill dao. Normally, Jiang Chen wouldn't be opposed to this, but since he was preparing to go into seclusion to assail the next rank of martial dao, how would he have the time to do so now?

Ling Hui'er was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen not immediately respond. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, are there any difficulties?"

Jiang Chen didn't beat around the bush as he smiled wryly, "I was planning on going into closed door cultivation to assail the shackles of martial dao. Senior sister Bi'er's timing is a bit unfortunate, but what area would the senior sister like to discuss about?"

Ling Bi'er bit her lip slightly to hear this, a bit disappointed, but she wasn't the sort to force what she wanted on others. Regret tinged her tone as she said, "Martial dao cultivation is an important matter. In that case, I will not disturb you, junior brother. I'll come call upon you at the next opportunity then."

“You flatter me greatly.” Jiang Chen hastily responded. “I’d be more than delighted to engage in a discourse of pill dao reflection.”

Ling Hui’er couldn’t bear to hear them be so polite to each other and spoke loudly, “Are you serious, senior brother Jiang Chen? A beauty like my sister has come knocking to share thoughts with you, but you turn her down! Are you a man or not?!”

Ling Bi’er flushed red when these words rang out as she snapped, “Hui’er, what are you going on about?!”

Even Jiang Chen was feeling a bit awkward at these words.

“What, sis?? You speak bluntly to even Shen Qinghong. Don’t think I don’t know that you rejected his invitation to be his dao partner! Senior brother Jiang Chen, in my seventeen years of living, this is the first time I’ve seen my sister speak to a boy first...”

“Ling Hui’er, Shut. Your. Mouth!” Ling Bi’er’s face had frozen into a crimson mask as she looked like she wanted to crawl into a hole in the ground.

This younger sister of hers, who wasn’t good enough to accomplish anything but was more than enough to spoil things, was such a buffoon! Ling Bi’er was experiencing the height of embarrassment.

“I won’t shut up! You always say I’m young and too small for things. I’m 17 already! How am I too small!” Ling Hui’er grew more agitated as she started to really feel her speech, and leaped up, sticking out her impressive assets. “I’m even bigger than you in some areas!” She puffed out her surging chest again.

Jiang Chen was instantly speechless. This Ling Hui’er really dares to speak of anything!

Ling Bi’er just wanted to die in that moment. She had really humiliated herself this time! Her idiot of a sister was trying to compare chests with her in front of a young man!

Chapter 528: Ling Bi’er’s Trouble

Jiang Chen’s involuntary glance at Ling Bi’er’s chest when he heard these words almost made her want to faint in shame.

Oh heavens!

She flushed crimson as she suppressed the urge to unsheathe her sword and fall on it. Although Jiang Chen hadn’t meant to act frivolously towards her, and his actions had been a natural reaction to her sister’s words, she still felt like her body had been completely seen through by that look.

Jiang Chen coughed lightly when he saw how awkward the situation was. “Please wait momentarily, I’ll be back with some snacks.”

He was a smart man, and knew that if he didn’t duck out of sight at that moment, Ling Bi’er would be hard pressed to resolve things. She held onto a chair for dear life after Jiang Chen left, slowly patting her chest as she glared at her sister. “Hui’er, do you want to anger your sister to death?”

Ling Hui'er thought nothing of it. "Sister, this senior brother Jiang Chen is too wicked! When a beauty like you comes knocking at his door, that's such fortune that he's spent several lifetimes cultivating for! How dare he not give you face! Hmph! This kind of man deserves to be single for his entire life!"

Ling Bi'er was completely speechless. She'd honestly only come to trade reflections on pill dao, but now her sister had twisted her intentions into seducing a man! How would the proud Ling Bi'er be willing to accept this? "Ling Hui'er, if you spread any more groundless rumors, I'll ground you for three years of closed door cultivation after we get back!"

This was Ling Bi'er's ultimate move, and it had the desired effect. Ling Hui'er's face changed drastically as she clapped one hand over her mouth, a look of horrified panic on her face. "I won't say anymore, sis! Hui'er just thought that you felt something for senior brother Jiang Chen and so wanted to give the two of you a push. It's a perfect match; what's not good about it?"

Ling Hui'er hastily waved her hands with an ashen face as her sister leveled a look that could kill at her. "I won't say a single word more, I promise!"

Ling Bi'er clutched her chest with her hands as her gentle, tender face began to drain of color. Tears began to pool in her eyes. "Hui'er, mama passed away early and papa ventured into all sorts of strange places to support the two of us. Then he was afflicted with an exotic poison when I was seven and you five. He grasped my hand on his sickbed and reminded me to bring you up well and take good care of you. After we entered the Regal Pill Palace, even the elders of the Herbal Hall were powerless in the face of this strange poison. Do you truly understand the burden on our shoulders? I wanted to gain some inspiration from Jiang Chen after observing that he is a rare genius in pill dao, but you keep leading the conversation astray and speaking nonsense. Do you think I don't know senior brother Shen's thoughts? Do you think I still have any time for the follies between men and women? I will not marry as long as papa is still afflicted with his poison. What would it matter if I were to dedicate the rest of my life to whoever can cure papa? Hui'er, my reputation is one thing when you start sprouting nonsense, but won't that cause junior brother Jiang Chen to think less of us? Won't that make papa suffer some more?"

Ling Hui'er wasn't a heartless person as her tears started plopping down her face the more her sister talked. She grabbed onto her sister as Ling Bi'er started sobbing. "Sister, I was wrong! Don't cry, please! It's Hui'er who did wrong, Hui'er who acted poorly. I'll listen carefully to you from now on sister! I love papa too, Hui'er will be just like you! Hui'er will dedicate the rest of her life to whoever can cure papa's poison too!"

The two sisters hugged each other tightly and cried together.

It was Ling Bi'er who came back to her senses first as she suddenly realized how unseemly it was to be bawling like this in Jiang Chen's territory. She wrested her emotions under control with great effort and wiped away the tear tracks that trailed down her cheeks before helping her younger sister. "Don't cry, Hui'er. No matter what, I'll find the spirit herb that's the antidote to papa's poison on Mt. Rippling Mirage this time."

The two sisters were both a bit embarrassed for a while. After all, this was Jiang Chen's residence, and although he wasn't with them at the moment, it was still rather embarrassing for the two of them to

have engaged in a crying session like this. It was a good thing that it took a while for Jiang Chen to return with some spirit fruits. The time had given the two the chance to grasp some degree of equanimity.

“My apologies, junior brother Jiang Chen. Please excuse our behavior.” Ling Bi’er’s voice was a bit subdued, whereas Ling Hui’er hid behind her sister and looked at Jiang Chen with bright eyes.

“Junior sister Hui’er is cute and innocent, with a deeply endearing temperament. Why would I have to excuse her behavior?”

Ling Bi’er’s clear eyes snuck a glance at Jiang Chen as she sighed dejectedly. “Since junior brother Jiang Chen is about to go into closed door cultivation, us two sisters will take our leave first.”

Ling Hui’er suddenly stepped out from behind her sister to walk in front of Jiang Chen. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, since everyone says you have the highest pill dao potential in the younger generation, do you dare let me quiz you?”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “What would junior sister Hui’er like to test me with?”

“Do you know of an unparalleled poison amongst the list of rare and exotic poisons in the world called Divine Befuddlement Miasma?”

Jiang Chen started. Why would Ling Hui’er suddenly raise this poison as a topic? He caught a sudden tremor running through Ling Bi’er’s body in his peripheral vision as her sister brought it up. It seemed that she was equally interested in this topic, but was just too embarrassed to bring it up. He thought briefly, “I once heard a learned expert speak of all the rare and exotic poisons in the world, and the Divine Befuddlement Miasma is hard pressed even to rank in the top 100 out of all poisons that exist. It’s not a particularly strong poison, so it seems a bit over the top to call it an unparalleled poison, no?”

Ling Bi’er’s body shook again when these words were spoken, barely managing to stay on her feet. Ling Hui’er however, had an incredulous expression. “Not even in the top hundred? Senior brother Jiang Chen, are you making stuff up? I’ve heard that no one can cure this Divine Befuddlement Miasma!”

It truly was difficult for this poison to rank in the top 100, but perhaps it was a more obscure and hard to cure poison in the Divine Abyss Continent. Jiang Chen smiled carelessly and nodded. “I only heard the expert speak of it casually. Its rank may not be accurate.”

He naturally didn’t want to argue with a little girl. Indeed, the slight expression that had appeared on Ling Bi’er’s face dimmed immediately after he spoke these words, and Ling Hui’er hopped from foot to foot in her anger. “How can you speak so firmly of things you’ve only heard of?!”

Jiang Chen only smiled at Ling Hui’er’s censure. Arguing with a little girl was a futile and exhaustive effort. He would never do something so pointless.

Ling Bi’er however, was someone intelligent within and beautiful without. When she saw Jiang Chen act thus, she guessed without a doubt that there was something that he wasn’t speaking of. When she came to this conclusion, she was struck by an impulse and blurted out, “Junior brother Jiang Chen, did the expert you spoke of ever say if there was a way to cure this poison?”

She was deathly afraid that Jiang Chen would think that she wasn't being sincere, so she solemnly performed the curtsy of one asking for tutelage. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, Bi'er sincerely requests your knowledge and will be gratified if I receive any pointers."

Ling Bi'er was different from Ling Hui'er. If it'd been Ling Hui'er, Jiang Chen certainly wouldn't taken her seriously and just waved the matter away. But Ling Bi'er wasn't one to easily ask for help, and thus if she did, it was a serious matter indeed.

Although Jiang Chen didn't want the spotlight, Ling Bi'er had come knocking and was requesting his aid so sincerely that he wasn't at liberty to continue to playing the fool. "I suppose one could identify the Divine Befuddlement Miasma as an exotic poison. The crux of the poison's complexity lies in the fact that it's an amalgamation of many poisonous gases. There are even instances of various Miasmas coming together to form a unique one. As such, the antidotes and cures required for each Miasma is also unique. This complexity is why it is listed among the rare poisons. Those afflicted with it will see their consciousness sink into a foggy state, spending their days in a coma. If one has ways to extend life, then the patient can hang on. But If the patient is poor and without such methods, then they are unfortunately destined for death."

Jiang Chen was familiar with the Miasma, and his words were only the shallowest theories behind it. Yet these words were enough to send Ling Bi'er's chest heaving with feeling. If it wasn't for the fact that she was used to controlling her own emotions, she probably would've already burst into tears.

In all these years, she had broken her heart with worry over her father's matter. She'd flipped through almost all of the tomes in the Regal Pill Palace, but had never found an inkling of the cure to the Miasma. All these years, she had held onto her belief in the cure, but her hopes had been dashed year after year. She'd visited all of the elders in the Herbal Hall in search of aid, and even Elder Yun Nie, one who had made slight study of the Miasma, was helpless after seeing her father's symptoms.

In the entire Myriad Domain, the sect most adept at poison was the Walkabout Sect. She'd visited them in person once when she was 17. However, no one had paid any attention to her there. There were a few elders who seemed a bit interested, but placed the condition of taking Ling Bi'er to be their dao partner and have her offer up her body first before coming to the Regal Pill Palace for a look.

They only said they would take a look, and had left the matter of whether or not they could cure her father untouched.

Ling Bi'er was the type who rather die to preserve her chastity. Even a foreign man touching her hand would elicit a vehement reaction from her strong personality, much less offering up her body. How would she ever agree to using her body in exchange for a promise to come evaluate her father? Of course, she never agreed to anything of the sort.

But from then on, she swore that she would even be willing to become the servant of the one who could cure her father's Miasma, and if no one did, then she would remain chaste her entire life.

That vow was also a signal to those old men with lewd thoughts in their heads that although she could sacrifice herself for her father, she wasn't a girl that anyone could easily philander. You will never hoodwink me with a promise!

And now, she had received information about the Miasma from a newly inducted disciple. Although it was just a few words, it was more dependable than anyone she'd met before since Jiang Chen's description of the symptoms were an exact match for her father's. It was as if he'd seen her father with his own eyes. She was certain that Jiang Chen had absolutely not known of her father's matter before this. n//σ)-v()E--ℓ--b/-l/-n

The spark of hope that had been extinguished again and again involuntarily flickered to life in her heart. She wasn't willing to give up even the slightest bit of hope. Her voice shook slightly as the anxiety for a favor and worry of losing hope again warred in her expressive eyes. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, according to what you say, is there a cure for the Miasma?"

She felt her entire body grow weak after asking this, barely able to remain standing. The storm of emotions roiling through her made her both anxious to know the results, and also deathly afraid that Jiang Chen would say that there was no cure possible.

Chapter 529: A Crazy Ling Hui'er

Jiang Chen's God's Eye had long caught the hints that Ling Bi'er had betrayed with her reactions. He quickly came to the conclusion that someone related to her was afflicted with the Miasma. He naturally wouldn't ask who, but anyone who could cause a cold, reserved beauty such as her to lose her composure would absolutely be someone she loved deeply.

Jiang Chen was a smart man and didn't want to force the situation, so he thought for a bit and nodded. "The Miasma is hard to cure. Ah, to be more accurate, it's not difficult to cure, but difficult to diagnose. If one can come to a precise diagnosis, then the antidote is not hard to engineer."

A light flickered in Ling Bi'er's eyes as her heart was awash with roiling emotions. Indeed, Elder Yun Nie had said something of that nature before, but he hadn't been this clear about it. He'd only said that he was unable to give a proper diagnosis for the Miasma. If he could, perhaps he could come up with an antidote according to the symptoms.

Although the elder hadn't been as straightforward as Jiang Chen, their meaning was similar in that this was hard to diagnose. Conversely, there was more hope in being able to come up with a cure if they were able to pinpoint the causes.

Ling Bi'er stared blankly for a moment. She actually didn't know how to raise the question now that it was staring at her in the face. Beg Jiang Chen to heal her father? Pledge to marry herself to him? These were things that Ling Bi'er would be willing to swear to, but voicing such embarrassing words in front of a young man was something she'd never be able to do. One as young and handsome as Jiang Chen made it even more difficult for her to broach the subject. n//σ)-v()E--ℓ--b/-l/-n

It was rather Ling Hui'er with her happy obliviousness who looked at Jiang Chen up and down with a bit of an assessing gaze. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, speak honestly, do you know of the vow that my sister once swore?"

Jiang Chen was completely baffled, and had no idea what she was talking about. "What vow?"

Ling Hui'er's jaw dropped. She wasn't sure if Jiang Chen was acting, or that he really didn't know. But she came up with another brilliant idea with a cock of her head. She smiled mischievously and flashed an exceedingly cute smile. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you think Hui'er is cute?"

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose, completely unused to Ling Hui'er's style. Why is she suddenly asking whether she's cute or not? Of course, he was well aware of how disastrous it'd be for him if he dared say that a girl wasn't cute. He could only nod, "Junior sister Hui'er is innocent and cute, the epitome of a child's heart. Naturally you are very cute."

"Then would you smile even in your dreams if such a cute Hui'er became a maid for you to order about?" Ling Hui'er giggled but her eyes were fixed intently on Jiang Chen's face. "You're not allowed to change the topic; this is a very serious question! You must answer!"

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh and cry. "Junior sister Hui'er has immense potential and is doing just fine in the sect. Why would you want to be my maid? If I order you about as my maid, how many geniuses would come fight me to the death for doing so?"

Ling Hui'er became even prouder when she heard Jiang Chen's words and puffed out her chest. "What business is it of theirs? What can they do if I'm doing what I like?" She then flashed what she thought was a crafty smile. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, if you help me, Hui'er will be your maid in the future! You can have me warm the bed if you want, or ask me to serve you in bed too. You can do whatever you want~"

Ling Bi'er was aghast at these words. "Hui'er, what are you blathering on about!?"

Ling Hui'er wasn't willing to back down. "Sister, do you think you're the only one who's worried about papa? Can't Hui'er do something for papa? Being a maid for senior brother Jiang Chen is so much better than serving those gross, old bats!"

Jiang Chen couldn't bear to listen any longer as he smiled ruefully. "Hold on, junior sister Hui'er. Please, what favor is it that you'd like of me? I'll help you if I can, but speak no more of being a maid. I don't want to lose years off my life!"

Please. If I have the most popular sisters in the Regal Pill Palace serve as my maids, I'd become public enemy number one!

Ling Hui'er smiled charmingly and flashed a proud smirk at her sister. "Do you see that, sis? You twisted and turned and beat around the bush so much, but none of that was as useful as Hui'er's direct honeypot! I told you senior brother Jiang Chen is a good man and he'd help! You should've just spoken directly."

Ling Bi'er sighed lightly. If this was an ordinary matter, she would've shut Ling Hui'er down by now for speaking like thus. It wasn't that she didn't want to cut straight to the heart of the matter, but that her personality destined her to be unable to speak as wildly as her younger sister, completely carefree. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, I'm sure you've guessed some of what's at hand here. My father mistakenly ventured into a taboo zone when I was young and happened to be struck by the Divine Befuddlement Miasma. He slept groggily for a few days after he returned and has since been lost in a coma. More than a decade has passed now and us two sisters have been completely powerless after trying all the ideas

we had. If junior brother Jiang Chen has any ideas, Bi'er will be happy to repay you even if I am to be a cow or horse for the rest of my life."

Ling Bi'er immediately flushed crimson after speaking these words. The scarlet shade crept all the way to the back of her ears and even down to the nape of her neck.

Jiang Chen could tell that these two sisters weren't putting on a show. One was sincere, and the other direct. He could tell from the looks in their eyes that they had indeed tried everything over these years. Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to leave someone in the lurch, not to mention they were of his sect. "Senior sister Ling, the Miasma is indeed hard to diagnose, and I don't dare make any guarantees. However, I will pay a visit after my seclusion to make plans after assessing your father's condition. I promise that I will try my best as long as I am able to."

The Divine Befuddlement Miasma wasn't a typical poison, so Jiang Chen didn't quite promise he'd heal the patient before seeing him.

Ling Bi'er was overjoyed at hearing these words and nodded rapidly. "Mhmm! We will be deeply grateful as long as junior brother Jiang Chen goes to take a look, even if you cannot heal our father."

Jiang Chen waved his hand. "Speak not so gravely; it's but a small matter."

Ling Bi'er knew that Jiang Chen was going into closed door cultivation and politely took her leave with her sister.

Jiang Chen was in no mood to keep entertaining guests as he'd set his goal of reaching fifth level origin realm before the Pill Battles. After all, an additional bit of strength in the Pill Battles would entail a greater chance of winning.

After seeing the Ling sisters out, he was about to turn around when he heard the patter of footsteps behind him and saw that Ling Hui'er had snuck back. Her face was red with exertion and she had a somewhat odd expression on her face. The beautiful scenery on her chest trembled as she jogged, giving others the impression of great motion. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, can I talk to you?"

Jiang Chen was puzzled as Ling Hui'er dragged him behind a patch of trees before he could open his mouth. "What is it, junior sister Hui'er?"

Ling Hui'er bit her thin lip lightly as tears swam in her large eyes, seemingly conflicted. She suddenly grabbed Jiang Chen's hand and pressed it onto her full chest. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, take a good feel. Hui'er is the real deal! If you can cure my papa, Hui'er will let senior brother Jiang Chen feel whenever you'd like in the future."

Jiang Chen wasn't a sanctimonious person, but as his hand was pressed into Hui'er's well rounded chest and he felt how springy it was, he felt that he was committing a crime as he looked into her still young face at seventeen years old. His expression shifted as he snatched his hand back like he'd stuck it into lightning. "Junior sister Hui'er, you don't need to be thus."

Ling Hui'er didn't understand as a somewhat lost expression appeared on her face. She seemed to be frightened to the point of tears by Jiang Chen's move. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, when I listened in on the other senior brothers, they all say that they like this part of a girl. Don't you like it?"

Jiang Chen laughed ruefully. If one were to describe this girl as clever and someone to think out of the box, then alright, that was indeed her. But when she behaved naively... she was simple almost to the point of being idiotic.

“Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you think Hui’er is being too easy? It’s not like that! Apart from Hui’er, no one else has touched me here! This is just paying interest up front. Senior brother Jiang Chen will try your best to cure papa only after you’ve tried the goods. Hui’er promises that no matter who it is in the future, Hui’er won’t let anyone else touch me here...”

She then seemed to think that her words weren’t solemn enough as she then added on, “Only a senior brother Jiang Chen who’s cured my papa can do so.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t a saint. He’d had some normal reactions after Ling Hui’er had said so much, but reason still won out in the end. He paused, focused his attentions, and spoke seriously, “Since I’ve promised you, junior sister Hui’er, then I will surely try my best. Hurry and go back; don’t let senior sister Bi’er worry.” He was worried that Ling Hui’er would do more crazy things and hurriedly turned to walk away after saying thing.

Ling Hui’er hurried to catch up and spoke a bit urgently, “Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you not like Hui’er? Even if you don’t, my sister made a vow that if you can cure papa, she’ll serve you for the rest of her life as well!”

What in absolute tarnation! Jiang Chen couldn’t hold up beneath this onslaught anymore and formed a wall of air with a sweep of his hand, blocking Ling Hui’er from advancing. “Go back first, junior sister Hui’er. Let’s talk about this in the future.” Jiang Chen was now truly afraid of this thickheaded girl. She was really willing to say just about anything!

Ling Hui’er immediately halted and cocked her head to the side, bursting out in a giggle, “What are you being shy for, senior brother? Let me tell you something, although sis isn’t as big as me there, she’s not small either. Hehe, she never let me bathe with her, but I’ve taken a peek before. Sis’ body...”

Her expression suddenly changed as her words tumbled out of her mouth, and she clapped a hand over her mouth. Her smile froze as she smiled in a way that was uglier than crying, “When did you come back, sis?”

If it’d been any ordinary time, Ling Bi’er would’ve grounded her for three months of seclusion for spouting all this crazy nonsense. But already weary from everything that’d happened, she only sighed. “Hui’er, junior brother Jiang Chen is going into closed door cultivation. Stop bothering him and come back to the residence with me.” She didn’t care if her sister had agreed or not after she spoke and grabbed Ling Hui’er’s belt, drifting away like she was picking up a chick.

It was odd. Had it been in normal times, Ling Bi’er would’ve been the personification of rage and embarrassment had she heard her younger sister speak to other young men of her chest and sneaking peeks at her bathing. But now, she was uncharacteristically calm.

She’d actually seen all of her sister’s actions, and had clearly seen Jiang Chen’s reactions. She’d borne clear witness to how he hadn’t taken advantage of the situation. In her heart of hearts, Ling Bi’er had to admit that Jiang Chen was a true gentleman. He wasn’t expecting something for his help, and wasn’t making use of the situation to scheme and lay claim to their bodies like those lecherous old men.

However—

A woman's personality was just so odd sometimes.

The more Jiang Chen acted thus, the more Ling Bi'er pitied herself. She only felt that despite others venerating herself and her sister, the two of them were nothing more than ordinary fellow disciples in his eyes. His promise and words had only been because they were of the same sect. It was not because of any other reason or any thoughts about them that he'd agreed to take a look at their papa.

Chapter 530: Fifth Level Origin Realm

Thanks to this pair of sisters, one as cold as frost and the other as innocent as a newborn, Jiang Chen was now a bit worse for the wear. He cleared his mind before raising his head with a rueful smile, lifting a foot and preparing to enter closed door cultivation. His ears suddenly twitched as he shot a look towards the dense forest. "Who is it?"

Scattered yet leisurely footsteps sounded from the trees as a slender, pale arm lightly lifted aside a tree branch and revealed a charming figure.

"Miss Huang'er?"

The slender girl was wearing a pale green robe, and her other arm was hooked into a bamboo woven basket. It was obvious that she'd been picking something in the woods.

The current Huang'er was wearing a mask that neatly hid her face. The faint mist of the woods wreathed around her lithe body as if unfurling from her very being, subtly hinting at an ethereal, celestial bearing.

Jiang Chen was stunned. He'd seen everything beneath the heavens in his past life and had made the acquaintance of many wondrous girls in this life as well. The sexy and direct Gouyu, the demure and noble Dan Fei, the gentle and shy Wen Ziqi, the icily removed Ling Bi'er from earlier and the innocent and naive Ling Hui'er were all examples of stunning, rare beauties of this world. Yet, it was this exceedingly ugly, young girl hiding behind her mask who was now causing Jiang Chen to lose his composure.

He lost himself to thought. The people of the world liked to compare girls with unusual bearing to deities, but Jiang Chen had to admit that if it came to one who seemed like a god, the current Huang'er was the most perfect representative he could think of.

If one set aside the matter of her features, Huang'er's refreshing and otherworldly demeanor made her seem like she'd walked out of a painting. Her refined and tasteful behavior, along with her charming manner and grace, truly make her seem like a fairy. A portion of her pure, white arm was currently revealed as she floated over on dainty footsteps that seemed to be unsullied by dust. It was incredibly difficult to describe her, as if one really had set foot into a painting. "Sir Jiang, there are some flora within the woods that Huang'er likes very much. I'd like to take some back to plant, but seemed to have alarmed you instead."

Huang'er's voice was gracious and suffused with a sense of compassion, lifting the mood of those who heard up to a happy lightheartedness.

Jiang Chen was feeling a bit guilty at the moment as he chuckled, "Then I won't disturb Miss Huang'er." He waved his hand as he finished speaking and strode back in.

Huang'er dimpled, focusing her gaze on the somewhat bedraggled Jiang Chen. Hints of a kind smile appeared in her eyes, as if thinking this version of Jiang Chen was more interesting. "Sir Jiang is a rather honest gentleman. The Ling sisters each have their own strengths, and to see them is to love them. It's quite rare that Sir Jiang can treat them with such courtesy."

She'd actually seen all of Ling Hui'er's actions from far away, and for some reason, a trace of emotion had rippled through her serene heart in that moment. But when she saw Jiang Chen jerk his hand away and not act with abandon like an ordinary, frivolous man, a hint of happiness actually flashed through her heart. She didn't think this was her bearing any feelings for Jiang Chen, but more a sense of admiration for his actions. However, these were all just thoughts in her mind. With how empathetic she was and her bearing as a girl from a cultured family, she would never tease Jiang Chen with this.

If it'd been Dan Fei, she would've absolutely grown jealous and spoken a few noncommittal words in teasing jest.

If it'd been Gouyu, she would've formed some biases against Ling Hui'er even if she hadn't said anything.

Only Huang'er had ever so kindly changed the topic, saying that she was here picking spirit herbs. It was plain to see that she was afraid that Jiang Chen would worry that she'd seen something and would be embarrassed because of the misunderstanding. One had to say, her sympathetic gesture had given Jiang Chen an opportunity to resolve the situation without having to leave awkwardly.

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After returning to his training grounds, Jiang Chen sat down cross legged and meditated for a while before clearing out all of the random thoughts in his heart. After all of his beautiful emotions had been dispelled, what left the deepest impression on Jiang Chen's heart wasn't Ling Hui'er's full, buoyant chest, but Huang'er's stunningly elegant image.

He'd actually felt his heart pound with emotion then.

It was as if that feeling had always been there, a stirring of the heart that had seemed destined to happen in that moment and circumstance. However, Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to lose himself in a daydream. The experiences of two lifetimes had long since left him in control of his emotions.

"My task at hand is to assail the fifth level origin realm. I can't be distracted any longer. The Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage will be a meeting of masters, and it is certain that strong experts will arrive en masse. Each additional increase in strength is one additional bit of ability to my name." As Jiang Chen's thoughts reached its natural end, he fished out some Origin Fostering Pills and origin spirit stones to begin his training.

Assimilating the Firelizard core had filled him with abundant spirit energy. Add to that the pills and stones, he had no need to make use of the dragon crystals at all. To be honest, when it came to origin qi, the dragon crystals were by far superior to the stones and pills. However, he didn't want to use them for now. It would be a waste of such supreme material if one were to refine it for the fifth level origin realm.

It wouldn't be too late to use the crystals when he was at sixth level origin realm and attempting to reach the sky origin realm. To Jiang Chen, breaking through to the fifth level after biding his time and efforts for so long was only a matter of time.

He successfully broke through to fifth level origin realm after roughly twenty days and could feel the noticeable increase of origin spirit power in his body. He believed that if he faced off against the eighth level Rong Zifeng in his current state, he would have at least a fifty to sixty percent chance of winning.

Jiang Chen spent another three days consolidating his new level and enhancing all of his techniques and methods. As one's cultivation level increased, all of one's techniques would absolutely improve as well. What Jiang Chen hadn't thought would happen was that he seemed to sense the pulses of the Golden Cicada bloodline. It seemed as if the Cicada Wing was about to appear.

"Haha, it looks like I perfectly assimilated the Cicada bloodline! If all goes to plan, I'll be able to utilize the Cicada Wing when I break through to sixth level origin realm. If I can make it into the sky origin realm, the Cicada Wing would add to my abilities as if giving wings to a tiger, allowing me to fly. What fear would I have of mortal sage realm cultivators then?"

If human cultivators wanted to fly, the sage realm was the starting point. Those at the mortal sage realm could fly for a short time, and even longer in the earth sage realm. At that point, even aerial fighting was possible. True freedom in the skies would come upon reaching the sky sage realm. However, no matter what stage one was at, flying was an activity that posed an excessive drain on origin power.

The Cicada Wing would grant him a pair of invisible wings on his back, making flight one of his own abilities. Being his own ability, it would not consume any origin power at all. This would be an absolutely lethal trump card up Jiang Chen's sleeve.

"The sky origin realm!" When Jiang Chen thought of the benefits of entering the sky origin realm, he could only shiver in anticipation. Once he entered that realm, not only would he be able to train the Cicada Wing, he'd also be able to refine the magnetic golden mountain and truly turn it into a treasure for his own use. **noVe.l0.1n**

He thought about how suddenly summoning a mountain in the midst of battle would result in an unforgettably lethal effect when he challenged those greater than him, not to mention his peers, given the strong magnetic power of this treasure and the mountain's own weight. And if he could summon the Lord of the Golden Seal in its strongest form, his battle strength would be even more astonishing!

Even Jiang Chen himself didn't know how much potential lay within the Lord of the Golden Seal, and how frightening his final form would be. But he could predict that the potential of the mountain would only be equal, if not greater, to the potential of the Lord of the Golden Seal.

Jiang Chen was inwardly brimming with expectation.

He took a look around after emerging from closed door cultivation and noticed that those around him had also drastically improved their cultivation during his closed door session. Gouyu and Xue Tong had consolidated their cultivation in the first level origin realm, whereas a new flower had bloomed on the old tree that was Ye Chonglou. After receiving so much attention and help from Jiang Chen, his cultivation had risen greatly as well, making him a fourth level origin realm cultivator.

The others such as Guo Jin and the Qiao brothers were also showing signs of breaking through to the origin realm. It was truly a scene of prosperity and growth.

There were only seven days left until the retinue set out for the Pill Battles. Jiang Chen didn't forget his promise to the Ling sisters, and sent a message glyph over to Ling Bi'er's residence.

She quickly appeared at the door to welcome him in, but Ling Hui'er was nowhere to be found this time. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, Hui'er is young and has committed many ludicrous acts. Please forgive her nonsensical words. I've shut her in for half a year's worth of closed door cultivation, and she's not allowed to set one foot out of the residence before I come back from Mt. Rippling Mirage." Ling Bi'er displayed the air of a stern sister.

Circumstances change with the passage of time, and Jiang Chen was an easy going person who'd long since forgotten the matters of that day. He smiled slightly. "Junior sister Hui'er still retains the heart of a child. It's not a major concern if she makes the occasional startling statement. Please go ahead, senior sister."

Ling Bi'er nodded slightly and took the lead, showing Jiang Chen the way into her residence. She was obviously one of those who cared a great deal about her reputation, as she kept a certain distance even when walking with Jiang Chen. It wasn't that she was predisposed against Jiang Chen; it was simply her natural personality.

Ling Bi'er's residence was different from Jiang Chen's grand style. It was much more exquisite, the mood as quiet and beautiful as a fairy realm.

The two sister's father was named Ling Su, and he looked to be around forty years old. However, his long coma had left him with a wan complexion, making him appear as haggard as the withered branches of a tree. If it wasn't for the faint hint of breath about him, one would almost wonder if this was a corpse.

Jiang Chen took out a set of silver needles from his storage ring and placed them into Ling Su's body, then sent his consciousness to probe the patient.

"Don't do that junior brother Jiang Chen! The Miasma is within my father's consciousness. It could infect you."

If it was any other pill master or alchemist, they never would've dared to rashly probe the patient with their consciousness, because the Miasma was highly infectious. It would spread as soon as another consciousness touched it.

However, Jiang Chen was prepared. The Cicada's bloodline would render him impervious to all poisons, and that didn't account for all the methods at his disposal for avoiding poison in the first place. The Miasma wouldn't find an opening from him.

The greatest barrier to curing Ling Su was the inability to probe his body with consciousness. No great pill master, including even Elder Yun Nie, was willing to risk their consciousness in a probe. This was why they hadn't been able to suggest a treatment of the symptoms.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly and spread out his hands. "Senior sister Bi'er has no need to worry about me, I have my own methods to avoid the poison. There can be no cure for your father if we cannot inspect him with our consciousness."