

### Three Realms 531

#### Chapter 531: The Thorny Problem of the Divine Befuddlement Miasma

There was an incontrovertible sense of confidence in Jiang Chen's tone. Although Ling Bi'er acted as frosty as ice, she wasn't a cold-hearted person. Even though Jiang Chen had set her at ease, anxiety was still written over her face.

Although she wanted to cure her father's illness, she didn't want to implicate innocents in the process. Particularly a good man such as Jiang Chen who had said nothing of payment gone straight to work diagnosing the patient. After all, even Elder Yun Nie hadn't dared use his consciousness to probe the Miasma.

Ling Bi'er remained where she was when she saw Jiang Chen already extending his consciousness. She wanted to stop him, but was afraid that she'd ruin everything if she made a disturbance. Anxiety and worry filled her charming face as she froze in place. But when she saw him standing there, looking completely at ease, her fretting heart began to slowly calm down. She ended up standing off to the side, warily focusing her attentions on the proceedings. She'd never stood so close to a man before in her life, or observed a young man with such gravity. In that moment, she suddenly realized that although this young man was only one year older than her, there was a steadiness within his movements that was rare for their age. He had the bearing of a great master, something that she'd only ever felt from sect heavyweights such as Elder Yun Nie.

She was incredibly astonished, and even the frozen mountain that was her emotions showed signs of melting, as an almost undetectable wavelet rippled over it. If it'd been any other young pill master who decided to so rashly probe with his consciousness, Ling Bi'er might've thought that he was trying to curry favor with her and her sister, and would've immediately stopped him. But as time passed, she felt that Jiang Chen was truly confident in what he was doing.

Jiang Chen opened his eyes fifteen minutes later and retracted his consciousness.

"Junior brother Jiang Chen..." Ling Bi'er called out and suddenly remembered, this Jiang Chen was one year older than her. Wasn't it placing herself on a pedestal if she still called him junior brother?

Jiang Chen nodded with a slightly furrowed brow. "Senior sister Bi'er, your father's Miasma is indeed complex. There are many kinds of Miasma, and it would be easy to handle if there was only one. However, there are four different kinds of Miasma in your father's body, and they have interacted and assimilated with each other over the years. They seem to have developed thousands if not tens of thousands of links between them, and it will be exceedingly difficult to peel them back, layer by layer."

He wasn't trying to scare Ling Bi'er or be an alarmist. If this diagnosis had been made right when the patient had been struck by the four Miasmas, before they'd started to meld with each other, than a cure would've been easier to divine based off the symptoms. But now that things had developed to this point, while it couldn't be said that there was no hope for a cure, the process would be exceedingly complex.

The poison of the Miasma was like a silkworm's cocoon, each strand intertwining with one another. The same held true for how the Miasmas interacted with each other. The difficulty level for curing this poison had just skyrocketed, and just like unraveling silk from cocoons, it brooked no mistake. If even

the slightest detail was overlooked, the Miasma would react and possibly push the patient to the point of no return.

Ling Bi'er's face dimmed when she heard Jiang Chen's words. "Does that mean there is no hope to cure the Miasma?"

Jiang Chen shook his head. "There is hope, but it's incredibly difficult and the process is highly complex. Dangerous conditions could develop at any second."

He didn't draw out the suspense as he solemnly explained the situation in great detail. Ling Bi'er was extremely intelligent and quickly regained her calm after his explanation. Firstly, her father's Miasma was difficult to cure, but there was still hope. The process would be difficult and could fail at any time, resulting in a worse situation. In addition, a tremendous amount of time and effort, as well as extreme precision was needed for the cure. Not even the slightest mistake would be tolerated.

"Jiang Chen, if I were to try to cure my papa, what do you think my chances of success are?" Ling Bi'er felt that it was too much to ask of Jiang Chen to spend so much time and effort to cure her father, so she wanted to do it herself. Although she felt that there was a gap in ability between her and Jiang Chen, she was still a pill dao genius of the younger generation after all!

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. "If I were to speak truthfully, your chances are almost zero."

Ling Bi'er started. "Why is that?"

"Because you cannot use your consciousness to enter your father's mind and observe the Miasma. You won't be able to peel back the layers of poison this way."

This wasn't a scare tactic, but the honest truth. If it wasn't for Jiang Chen's double layer of insurance in the form of the Golden Cicada bloodline and unique method of avoiding poison, he would've never dared to rashly extend his consciousness. As for actually curing the poison, the time and effort needed would be at least a hundred times, or even a thousand times what he'd spent in diagnosis.

Jiang Chen hadn't anticipated that Ling Su's poison would be this complex either. Most Miasmas would be able to cured via targeting the symptoms after a proper diagnosis was made. But Ling Su's Miasma was the product of four different poisons. He could've still targeted the symptoms had they not melded together, but now that they had, the difficulty involved had just risen to a different league.

It's just like looking at several strands of rope. They were easy to organize if gathered in singular strands. But once their fibers and threads were messily tangled into a ball, it would become no easier to untangle than the Gordian Knot. Unraveling poison also had the added challenge that any mistake could put the patient's life in danger.

With Ling Bi'er's cultivation, she might have twenty to thirty percent chance if she knew how to avoid being poisoned herself, but the Miasma was not something she could get away from. The only outcome if she tried to treat her father would be her getting infected too.

Ling Bi'er knew that this wasn't Jiang Chen trying to scare her. Even Elder Yun Nie hadn't dared probe this poison. If she tried, she'd likely be infected as soon as she extended her consciousness. Only someone with a unique method to keep themselves safe like Jiang Chen could even attempt it.

She bit her red lip lightly and didn't bother maintaining a demure bearing at the moment. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, I know my request is intrusive, but might you be able to teach me your unique methods of evading poison?"

She seemed greatly afraid that she was overstepping the bounds and immediately emphasized. "Don't worry, I won't ask you to do it for free. You can raise whatever conditions you'd like. Although I can't offer you much in terms of spirit stones and pills, I can pay them back slowly in the future."

Jiang Chen sighed inwardly to see Ling Bi'er act thus. This resolute girl has borne much too heavy a burden on her frail shoulders for her father. This made him inwardly snap to respectful attention as well. "It's not a problem to teach you how to evade poison, but the method I teach you will only give you a 50% chance in evading infection from the Miasma."

Again, this wasn't to scare Ling Bi'er, but that Jiang Chen's poison evasion methods was partially a result of the Cicada's bloodline of being impervious to poison. This was his most critical insurance and obviously something he was unable to take out to share with Ling Bi'er, since it had to do with the Golden Cicadas from ancient times. "In addition, even if you avoid infection, your chances of success are only thirty percent."

Ling Bi'er's tone was resolute. "I'm willing to try even if there's only a hint of success. Papa has been suffering with this condition for so many years that if he knew I was facing this decision, he would support my actions as well. Even if I fail, it's better than dragging out this suffering."

Jiang Chen deeply respected this firm attitude. No man would be likely to be as determined or decisive than Ling Bi'er when facing this kind of dilemma. "Senior sister Bi'er, I can teach you the method of evading poison, but I must emphasize that this will only halve the chances of you being attacked by the Miasma. If you make the slightest mistake, the Miasma will consume you and you will succumb to the same condition as your father."

Ling Bi'er's body trembled slightly, but resolve still filled her charming face. It was then that the door banged open and Ling Hui'er came running in. "No, sis! Hui'er won't allow this! It should be Hui'er taking this risk! Sis can take care of Hui'er if something happens to me, but if something happens to sis, what will Hui'er do with no support and shelter?!"

"Hui'er, don't make a fuss!" Ling Bi'er was both saddened and resigned to see that her younger sister, supposedly in closed door cultivation, had snuck out and was fighting with her to save their father.

Ling Hui'er turned around and stared at Jiang Chen with a pair of pure, wide eyes. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, don't leave tonight. Hui'er will keep you company if you teach me how to avoid the poison. I'll trade for it with my body! Hui'er doesn't want sis to have to repay you stones and pills every year if something happens to me..."

Jiang Chen couldn't help but recall what happened the last time he saw Ling Hui'er and smiled ruefully. "When did I ever say I want you two to repay me? I can pass on this method to you free of charge, but Hui'er, with your personality, the chances of success are less than ten percent."

Although Jiang Chen knew that it was quite cruel to speak in this manner, he still had to give them a kindly reminder for the sake of their safety.

Ling Hui'er started, seemingly disbelieving that Jiang Chen would be so generous, but also a bit unaccepting of his words. "Why is it only ten percent for me and up to thirty for sis? How high are the chances if you do it yourself?"

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. Ling Hui'er's questions were always shrewd, such that he was unable to respond. He'd actually made some internal calculations before speaking. Even if he took the field himself, he'd need at least ten days to half a month to cure this poison, and he only had roughly an eighty percent chance of success as well. The most critical caveat was that he had to find the items that acted as antidotes to these four different kinds of Miasmas, create the perfect liquid medicine as the cure, and then induce it into the patient through consciousness.

The entire process was exceedingly complex. If Jiang Chen had been able to recover back to the peak condition of his past life, he'd naturally have the fullest of guarantees. But now, he only had seventy to eighty percent assurance to work with.

The two sisters seemed to be in great accord with each other. Ling Hui'er was staring at him piteously, and Ling Bi'er's sprightly eyes were shifting around, looking at him helplessly. They were like two little girls lost on the road, making Jiang Chen sigh continuously with their plaintive gazes. He reflected that Ling Su possessed quite great fortune to have such a pair of wonderful daughters.

"If I do it, I should have more than a fifty percent chance of success." He didn't quite paint himself into a corner and left a bit of wiggle room.

#### Chapter 532: Converging on Mt. Rippling Mirage

A fifty percent guarantee was already incredibly stunning for the Ling sisters.

"Fifty percent?" Ling Hui'er latched onto Jiang Chen's arm and swung it fiercely. "Then you have to save my papa, senior brother Jiang Chen! Hui'er promises that as long as senior brother tries his best, Hui'er will not forget about the thing that she promised the senior brother that day, whether you succeed or not!"

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry when he thought back to the events of that day. Hui'er often voiced incredibly astonishing words despite her young age. Now that she was swinging his arm, the astonishing weapon that was her chest would rub against his arm every time it crossed her body. The incredible springiness of her mounds of flesh kept squeezing Jiang Chen into increasingly dire straits. He flung a plea of help with his eyes towards Ling Bi'er, controlling his mind with effort and preventing himself from reacting physically. If he had that kind of reaction at this kind of time, it would truly be an enormous embarrassment in front of the sisters.

Ling Bi'er pulled Ling Hui'er aside when she saw Jiang Chen thus. "Hui'er, don't be discourteous. This matter is of grave importance and junior brother Jiang Chen must have his own considerations."

Ling Hui'er pouted with her small mouth. "Sis, you can't fight with me about this!"

Ling Bi'er was speechless and she walked forward to perform a ceremonious bow. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, I have never requested anything of anyone in my life. Bi'er is asking you for this favor on behalf of our papa. In return, no matter the result, us sisters will be your servants, as if cows or horses, in gratitude."

Jiang Chen was now utterly lost for words. This pair of sisters was quite, quite shrewd. This situation was developing as if he was an enormous villain forcing the two to sign contracts selling themselves to him. He waved his hand a few times. "Senior sister Bi'er, what talk is there of payment between those of the same sect? We first have to collect all of the items corresponding to an antidote. Light will only be somewhat shed on this matter after the trip to Mt. Rippling Mirage. Everything is just talk if we cannot find the appropriate spirit herbs."

Ling Bi'er froze slightly, with delight overflowing from her eyes afterwards. "Does this mean you've agreed to help, junior brother?"

"You sisters have done so much for your father already, I am not so cold hearted to be untouched by the sight of your efforts. How can I stand idly by and do nothing?"

The sisters were overjoyed to see Jiang Chen agree. Ling Bi'er wiped lightly at the corners of her eyes, whereas Ling Hui'er cheered exuberantly. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, Hui'er will keep her word. I will not forget about that day. We can pinky swear if you don't believe me!"

Ling Hui'er stuck out her pinky to swear with Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen smiled. "Junior sister Hui'er, some things need not be mentioned again. If I do this out of expectation of payback, I'm sure the two of you wouldn't be at ease allowing me to treat your father either."

Ling Hui'er's face went blank, seeming not to understand. In the sect and the Rosy Valley, all of the young geniuses looked at her with covetous eyes, as if wanting to devour her. She felt that senior brother Jiang Chen should be the same, but what did he mean by his words? Her thoughts were simplistic, so she immediately came to the conclusion that Jiang Chen didn't like her. After staring blankly for a while, she put her head back and asked, "Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you not like Hui'er? Ah yes, you must like my sister, right?"

Ling Bi'er immediately blushed flaming crimson after hearing these words, but she didn't reprimand Ling Hui'er this time, instead pretending she hadn't heard a thing as she walked over to her father's bed. Nevertheless, her attention was laser focused on Jiang Chen's reaction. One thought was dominating her mind at the moment, I do want to know how junior brother Jiang Chen views us two sisters!

"Junior sister Hui'er, you and your sister are both beautiful women with your own unique strengths. Who in the sect wouldn't like you? However, if I take advantage of you during this precarious time, then I would be less than human."

Ling Hui'er seemed to understand his words, but not quite all at once. But when Ling Bi'er heard these words, her spirits drooped slightly in response. She could tell that Jiang Chen was treating them differently from the other geniuses in the sect. He was helping them not because of who they were, but because he truly wanted to help them.

Ling Bi'er was actually a bit sad upon realizing that. She felt that all of the young men in the sect who held her and her sister up as fairies from the heavens were less preferable than Jiang Chen looking at them differently. It was a pity that she didn't feel that from his words.

Although a bit disappointed, she still made up her mind. “Even though I am but a girl, I am someone who keeps my words. If junior brother Jiang Chen can really cure papa, then I will never regret being a maid or slaving away like a beast of burden for him.”

There was a reason why Ling Bi’er appeared so icy and distant on the surface. This kind of standoffish bearing was eminently useful in protecting the two sisters in this kind of environment. Moreover, her father’s ailment had truly imparted a few degrees of sternness and melancholy to her personality. A frosty exterior would also keep ne’er-do-wells away, serving as a kind of self protection. However, even the firmest iceberg would melt when coming in contact with a heated force. It might even cause the melting ice to form surging rivers.

In the end, the human heart was made of flesh and blood. Although she came off coldly, the heart beating in her chest was still passionate. It’d just been that no one had ever been able to capture her heart and make it beat in tandem with their own. But now, she seemed to vaguely detect the rhythm of another. However, being someone who was naturally slow to warm up to another, Ling Bi’er grew a bit nervous at this moment and even began to overly care about gains and losses, becoming afraid. She knew full well that she was inferior to her younger sister when it came to matters of the heart.

Her younger sister was still a child at heart, loving and hating directly and fiercely. Ling Bi’er felt hard pressed to suppress her embarrassment when she thought of her younger sister’s actions. She felt her ears burn at even the thought of doing something similar. Grabbing a man’s hand and placing it on her chest was something that Ling Bi’er would never be able to do!

Jiang Chen didn’t say anything as he picked up the brush off on the side, starting to write and draw on a paper he pulled towards him. He quickly finished writing out a diagnosis. There were four kinds of Miasmas within Ling Su’s body, and four different kinds of cures were necessary.

“Senior sister Bi’er, you should pay extra attention to these four kinds of spirit herbs during this time’s trip to Mr. Rippling Mirage. If you can’t find them, I’ve written down their respective substitutes as well. Try to collect as much as you can. I’ll also keep an eye out when I enter the mountain as well.”

Ling Bi’er hastily shunted away all the random thoughts in her mind when she saw Jiang Chen handing over the list, carefully receiving it. “Bi’er will deeply remember junior brother’s immense favor.”

Jiang Chen didn’t linger any longer. “Let’s speak of the rest after the Pill Battles. I’ll take my leave now.”

He made his final preparations after returning to his residence, and put all of his attention and time into preparing for the Pill Battles in the final two days. He received a few retellings of the Pill Battles and their origin from Elder Yun Nie, of how the Pill Battles had proceeded lately, and the various pill dao geniuses from the various Myriad Domain sects in the past couple of years. It made for quite a thorough dossier.

The groups converged on Mt. Rippling Mirage after two days. Although it was a pill competition, all the sects were placing significant emphasis on the proceedings.

From the Regal Pill Palace side, Palace Head Dan Chi was personally heading up the entourage with great fanfare as a show of support to Elder Yun Nie. Jiang Chen had given all the appropriate orders with regards to his residence before setting out and convening with the group as they headed over to Mt. Rippling Mirage together.

Mt. Rippling Mirage was thousands of kilometers away from the Regal Pill Palace, located in the southwest of what had been the Myriad Empire. It was where spirit herbs grew most abundantly in the entire Myriad Domain. Before the Empire had fallen, its strength had been so great that it exercised control over all the major sects in the Myriad Domain. Therefore, the Empire had always enjoyed all the best resources.

When it'd fallen, the six great sects had divvied up the remaining treasures to fuel a quick pace of growth, forming the situation seen today.

The six great sects had once fought ferociously over the resources of Mt. Rippling Mirage, resulting in a great number of injuries and casualties. No one sect was willing to submit to anyone else, which was how the agreement that gave rise to the Pill Battles had been formed.

The entourage arrived successfully after a few days of travel. When they arrived, they found that Mt. Rippling Mirage wasn't just a single mountain. More accurately speaking, it encompassed several mountain ranges; a vast territory that covered several thousands of kilometers. When one looked out over the area, the outskirts were covered by a fog that was tinged with faint blue, seeming to billow like waves that left much to the imagination.

This was how Mt. Rippling Mirage had received its name.

The Myriad Empire had raised a Rippling Mirage Hall outside this collection of mountain ranges. Located on the outskirts of Mt. Rippling Mirage, it was an enormous villa where the royal family used to gather the various powers of the Myriad Domain. Even then, it was large enough to host everyone summoned, so the few hundred people that the 6 fourth rank sects and 20 fifth rank sects was hardly enough to fill the premises.

When he saw the grand and magnificent Rippling Mirage Hall, Jiang Chen could imagine how prosperous and strong the Empire had been before. The level of architecture that this hall displayed was far above and beyond even the best building in the Regal Pill Palace.

"Hahaha, young brother Dan Chi, it's been a few years since we've last met. You are even more elegant than before." A hearty laugh rang through the air without warning. The newcomer was dressed in a black robe and walked over with great strides, moving directly towards them as if an enormous wave from the great seas.

"Ole brother Tian Ming, you came personally as well?" Dan Chi beamed merrily at the sight of him and walked up in welcome. The two embraced, laughing heartily.

Elder Yun Nie explained lowly off on the side, "That's Honored Master Tian Ming, the sect head of the Dark North Sect. His position is high and noble, and he has the closest relationship with Palace Head Dan Chi. The Dark North Sect is also the closest with our Regal Pill Palace, and we interact most with them."

These words were naturally for Jiang Chen and the other younger folk. The younger generation would be taking over the sect sooner or later, and it'd be beneficial for them to gain an understanding of the political layout of the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi looked at each other, both obviously recalling that the Dark North disciples had been the first to have been ambushed and killed by the Walkabout Sect's concealed weapons on

that trip to the spirit spring. They'd thought that this sect was weak because of that, but this notion was swiftly dismissed after seeing Honored Master Tian Ming. His cultivation level was at seventh level sage realm! Even higher than Dan Chi's as a sky sage cultivator!

#### Chapter 533: Provocation of Heavyweights

Elder Yun Nie had apparently seen Jiang Chen's confusion as he sent a silent message over. "Jiang Chen, Palace Head Dan Chi took the reins of power when he was less than fifty years old. Now, he is still less than a hundred, and there is no other heavyweight in the Myriad Domain who is at the peak of fifth level sage realm, about to break through to the sixth like he is."

Jiang Chen understood without Elder Yun Nie's explanation. His current confusion wasn't the difference in strength between Palace Head Dan Chi and Honored Mastered Tian Ming, but that he wanted to know what level the other sect heads were at.

In the world of martial dao, different territories, different levels, and different resources would give birth to different levels of geniuses. When Jiang Chen had been in the Eastern Kingdom, becoming a true qi master at the age of twenty was quite a feat. In the Skylareland Kingdom, it was quite something to be half step spirit realm at twenty years old. In the four great sects, only one who set foot into the earth spirit realm at age twenty was counted as a genius. And in the Regal Pill Palace, one had to break into the origin realm around twenty years old to have the right to enter the Rosy Valley and be hailed a genius. Whereas in the Myriad Domain, the top geniuses between the ages of twenty and thirty were measured on the basis of whether or not they could assail the sage realm. However, the Myriad Domain was just a lowly Lower Realm in the end.

In actuality, there weren't more than fifty amongst the younger generation who truly possessed the ability to assail the sage realm. Such were the limits of the Myriad Domain. Once a top genius entered the sage realm, their cultivation speed would fall drastically. After entering the sage realm, it would be incredibly difficult to take another step forward.

Take Shen Qinghong, for instance. If he made it into the sage realm before thirty, then his next step would be to advance to the earth sage realm. If he could do so before sixty years of age, then he would be classified as a genius on par with Dan Chi. If he did so after sixty, then he was at most on Elder Yun Nie's level. If he still couldn't break into the earth sage realm after he turned a hundred years old, then he was destined to be disqualified from the running for the sect head's position.

Of course, this wasn't an absolute either.

The difficulty would increase once again after entering the earth sage realm. Each step forward would be fraught with hardship. Dan Chi had enjoyed smooth sailing back in the day and had entered the earth sage realm before sixty years of age. But once he had consolidated himself within it, he had been caught in a bottleneck due to his prior smooth progress. It wasn't until he met Elder Shun that he had broken through this bottleneck and made it into the peak of the fifth level sage realm, ready to break through to the sixth level at any moment.

Meeting Elder Shun had been his fortuitous occurrence. If it hadn't been for this, even if he had broken through the fifth level sage realm, he never would've had the ability to break through multiple times as he had done now.



After all, the best resources were limited in the Myriad Domain, and enormous fortune was needed to take another step forward. Without a doubt, meeting Elder Shun had been the making of the current Dan Chi.

Tian Ming patted Dan Chi's shoulder and smiled, "Ole brother, I'd long since heard that you'd broken through to the fifth level sage realm. It looks like you'll break through to the sixth level sage realm at any time. You are certainly the sect head that is richest in youth and richest in strength! In my view, you'll catch up to me in another three to five years!"

Honored Master Tian Ming was more than three hundred years old, three times greater than Palace Head Dan Chi, but they were obviously old friends and had personalities that meshed together well.

"Old brother Tian Ming, your lifespan will become inexhaustible once you break through to the sky sage realm. You'll even have the hope to become a Titled Emperor then." Dan Chi laughed.

Tian Ming laughed heartily. "Titled Emperor? I have no such ambition. If I can make it to the peak of the sage realm whilst I live, that alone will allow me to die without regret."

So he said, but everyone knew that these surely weren't Honored Master Tian Ming's thoughts. At the very least, he wouldn't be accepting of this kind of thinking.

"Oh right, ole brother, I should've gone to congratulate you on forming an alliance with the Precious Tree Sect last time, but one of my personal disciples was at a critical moment in his training and that set a few things back. I hope you don't think badly of me."

Heavyweights from all the sects had indeed participated in the alliance ceremony, but Honored Master Tian Ming had indeed been absent, with his vice head Spiritual Master Chi Ming attending in his stead.

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled carelessly. "Ole brother is needlessly distancing himself with these words." He then waved his hand at his entourage of young folk. "You all, come and greet the sect head of the Dark North Sect."

The Dark North Sect head chuckled merrily, his smile growing wider after sweeping his eyes over Jiang Chen and the others. "Mm, I remember this wise nephew<sup>[1]</sup> is Shen Qinghong, correct? If I recall, you're the disciple of Elder Lian Cheng, about to set foot into the sage realm. You truly deserve the title of genius alright."

His gaze then halted briefly on Ling Bi'er and nodded approvingly. "Ninth level origin realm, a top genius. Good, very good!"

When he saw that Jiang Chen was only fifth level origin realm, Honored Master Tian Ming was slightly taken aback. "This wise nephew looks a bit unfamiliar."

"Haha, ole brother, this is Jiang Chen, and the young genius that my Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect are raising together."

"Oh? This is sage nephew Jiang Chen, the one you allied with the Precious Tree Sect for? It seems it is rather I who didn't recognize greatness." Tian Ming chuckled and nodded repeatedly. "Good, good. With your cultivation level of fifth level origin realm, and Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie's great favor, you are certainly an extraordinary young genius. You will surely amount to much in the future."

This Honored Master Tian Ming looked to be the extremely nice sort, offending none, complimenting even youngsters and not impacting their confidence. This was rather rare, so Jiang Chen didn't forget his manners and thanked him, "Many thanks for Sect Head Tian Ming's auspicious words."

Honored Master Tian Ming's gaze rested on Mu Gaoqi last. He found this sight even rarer and couldn't help but laugh. "The Regal Pill Palace is a great sect founded on pill dao alright. This sage nephew is the youngest, with a cultivation at the peak of the second level origin realm. He must be a superb pill dao genius to be able to participate in this gathering. Am I possibly wrong?"

Mu Gaoqi was unavoidably nervous at facing a sky sage realm expert, so it was Palace Head Dan Chi who laughed good-naturedly, "This one's pill dao potential is indeed extraordinary. He has an innate wood constitution of high order, and a pill dao genius that my Regal Pill Palace will focus on cultivating in the future. I've brought him out to see the world this time." ~~noVe-llb.In~~

The Regal Pill Palace naturally had to package Mu Gaoqi's identity as one with an innate wood constitution. This kind of figure had a certain reputation that would attract more attention and spread the Regal Pill Palace's name throughout the world. The effect of such a representative character would be far reaching. If Mu Gaoqi had great accomplishments in pill dao one day, then there would be many who came to join the Regal Pill Palace based on his fame alone. A character such as him would be enough to affect the sect's fortunes for a thousand years, and even had the potential to raise the sect to new heights through his power alone.

After all, this kind of potential would be fiercely fought over even in the Upper Eight Realms. An innate constitution wasn't that rare in the Upper Eight Realms, but one of high order was a rare find of one in a million. However, an innate wood constitution of high order was one that would only be found once in ten billion. A figure possessing that constitution would be hotly fought over the instant they appeared.

As long as an innate wood constitution of high order wasn't accidentally lost and the sect took good care of the genius for a couple of decades, they would certainly grow to become strong support for the sect. For martial dao sects, what they lacked the least were martial dao geniuses, but what they wanted the most were extreme pill dao geniuses. It wasn't that they lacked the resources or recipes needed to refine pills, but that they lacked the best pill masters. Compared to the shortage of resources, there was a greater shortage of great pill masters.

Indeed, when Honored Master Tian Ming registered this introduction, the light of incredulity immediately shone from his eyes. His face became wreathed in smiles as he sighed with appreciation. "Incredible, incredible! An innate wood constitution of high order that's difficult to find in even one out of ten billion has appeared in the Regal Pill Palace. It looks like your sect has truly found favor with the heavens; you have no end of good fortune! A martial dao genius such as you appeared first, then a pill dao genius such as a sage nephew Mu Gaoqi second. In my eyes, the Regal Pill Palace will surely become the force that lifts up the Myriad Domain in a hundred years!"

Mocking laughter traveled in from nearby. "Ole Tian Ming, it looks like your old habit of complimenting just anyone up to the skies really needs to change."

The voice boomed out like a broken gong, extremely irritating to the ears. Its owner was a tall and stockily built man, giving one the feeling of a wild, unbridled style. He had an enormous sword strapped

to his back and walked with great vigor and poise, purposefully displaying his strength and giving off the feeling of a sword ripping through the air as he strode forward.

This person was indeed Sacred Sword Palace Head Wang Jianyu. However, Honored Master Tian Ming's shrewdness and excellent upbringing didn't falter. He wasn't incensed by these words, and instead chuckled. "You're always so sharp, Jianyu. How come you're here by yourself during the time's Pill Battles?"

Wang Jianyu smirked and didn't respond. He walked up to Palace Head Dan Chi instead. "Not bad huh, peak of fifth level sage realm. But..." When he cast his eye over Jiang Chen and the other young disciples, a hint of mockery curled into his smile. "What a pity that there isn't a single sage realm cultivator amongst your younger generation. What a pity, such great pity."

It was obvious to everyone that he was here to provoke the Regal Pill Palace.

Palace Head Dan Chi also smiled indifferently. "Palace Head Wang, the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage have to do with pill competitions. If you wish to glorify the martial prowess of the Sacred Sword Palace, it won't be too late to do so at the Myriad Grand Ceremony in three years' time."

The Pill Battles were where the pill masters could contend with each other, whereas the Grand Ceremony was where the younger generation met in martial dao. Wang Jianyu's jeering based off of martial dao at the Pill Battles was indeed a bit inappropriate.

Wang Jianyu laughed heartily. "The Myriad Grand Ceremony, haha! I hope that three years is enough time for someone from the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace to emerge in a way that makes everyone's eyes light up." He was about to leave after he finished speaking when he suddenly smiled mysteriously. "Oh right, let me add on that my Sacred Sword Palace has already had two young geniuses break through to the sage realm. They'll be sure to soar to the top with one move in the Grand Ceremony, hahaha!"

This doesn't mean an actual relationship, just a term of affection.

#### Chapter 534: Bi'er's Pursuer

Wang Jianyu departed with a flourish and left behind a slightly awkward atmosphere. Palace Head Dan Chi had a faraway expression on his face, a slight curve upturning his lips, obviously wholly unaffected by this kind of provocation. It was rather Shen Qinghong whose darkened face showed how he'd been impacted by this exchange. When he heard that the geniuses of the Sacred Sword Palace had already made it to the sage realm, and saw that he still remained that one step from this advancement, it made him feel quite dejected. Jiang Chen, on the other hand, had come to the silent conclusion that the Sacred Sword Palace and Regal Pill Palace were far from friends. They might even be rivals.

Indeed, Elder Yun Nie spoke lowly, "Relations between the Sacred Sword Palace and our Regal Pill Palace have chilled due to a dispute over a vein of spirit energy a few decades ago. The old palace head had yet to pass on then, and he used the strength of the eighth level sage realm to thoroughly suppress Wang Jianyu to seize the spirit vein."

So that was what had happened, no wonder Wang Jianyu was so hostile towards them. When the old palace head had passed on, the sect had hastily erected Dan Chi as his successor. Honestly, it'd been

slightly forcing Dan Chi beyond his abilities, akin to driving a donkey to dance. However, Dan Chi had prevailed mightily against adverse forces even at his young age, which resulted in him winning support from all over the sect. Even Elder Lian Cheng, the one who had been most heavily favored to be the next palace head, had to admire Dan Chi's charisma and methods.

Honored Master Tian Ming chuckled, "Ole brother Dan Chi, Wang Jianyu's vile mouth is renowned throughout the Myriad Domain. Come, let us walk over as well. My disciples are waiting to greet you. Did you know that you're the goal that the younger generation works towards? You are their idol at having gained control of the Regal Pill Palace at less than fifty years old!"

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed loudly. "I'm afraid I'll have to blush from old brother's words."

The group headed in as they chatted and laughed, with an immediate increase in people as they walked into Rippling Mirage Hall. Those of the 6 fourth rank sects were the center of attention no matter where they went.

As Palace Head Dan Chi walked in, many from the fifth rank sects walked up to greet him courteously. There were eight spots each in the Pill Battles for the 6 fourth rank sects, and four spots each for the 20 fifth rank sects. The strength of the fifth rank sects was obviously far inferior to that of the fourth rank sects. Each fourth rank sect was roughly the combined strength of three to five of their weaker brethren. A strong fourth rank sect like the Great Cathedral might even be ten times the strength of a fifth rank sect!

It could be seen that the various Myriad Domain sects were placing great emphasis on the Pill Battles, as all the sect heads had personally led the groups from their sects. Several heavyweights standing at the most prominent position focused their gazes over at Dan Chi and Tian Ming when the two walked in. When Jiang Chen looked back over, he saw that there were seven sitting at a long table.

"You can move about freely for a while, I will be speaking to the sect heads for a bit." Dan Chi spoke as he moved in that direction with Tian Ming. "The four sitting together in that direction are the family heads of the four great families in the Great Cathedral. They are the strongest four in the Cathedral and are at least sixth level sage realm. The strongest of them is the head of the Sacred Elephant family. At ninth level sage realm, he is widely held as the strongest expert in the Myriad Domain.

"You all have just met Wang Jianyu. You should've met Sect Head Zhu of the Tristar Sect previously, and no matter whoever else, you should never overlook the wizened elder in the corner. He looks simple and honest, like a farmer from the countryside, but he is one of the characters you should be the most careful of in the Myriad Domain. Some would rather offend the head of the Sacred Elephant than this elder from the Walkabout Sect. He's Sect Head Wei Wuying and he shares a similar cultivation level with Honored Master Tian Ming. However, his skills in poison make him devious and mysterious, and incredibly hard to defend against."

Judging from the set up, it was apparent that the Great Cathedral was the strongest amongst the six great sects in the Myriad Domain. All of the others had only the sect head sitting at the table, but the Great Cathedral had all four family heads present. They didn't seem out of place at all since no one doubted their right to sit there.

Wang Jianyu's obvious display of his power made Jiang Chen recall Feng Wanjian, the one who'd been present on that trip to the wood spirit spring. Their styles were very similar. Those who liked to show off their abilities may be strong, but they didn't inspire fear. The Walkabout Sect was unpredictable and eerie, just like Sect Head Wei Wuying, who was still insisting on sitting in the most remote corner even when everyone was together. He was one of those who instinctively concealed himself deeply. Compared to everyone else, this was the type that was frightening.

Tristar Sect Head Zhu seemed to be middle of the pack from all aspects. He never sought the limelight and was the sect head that kept the lowest profile in the Myriad Domain. Honored Master Tian Ming was the nice guy of the Myriad Domain. With a smooth and tactful personality, he only spoke good words, and never offended anyone. In contrast, the Great Cathedral was the most domineering. It was just as Xu Gang and Yue Pan had demonstrated during the trip to the spirit spring, they were both domineering and intelligent. The Great Cathedral was indeed the first sect in the Myriad Domain, and had always viewed themselves as such as well.

Elder Yun Nie was naturally quite popular in these kinds of situation. Many old friends came up to chat with him, and he spoke to the four youngsters, "You all should go and mingle. Young folks should interact with each other more." He left the four where they were and went off to catch up with several old friends.

It was Mu Gaoqi's first time at such a celebrated gathering, and so he felt more or less ill at ease. Jiang Chen however, was cool and collected, showing not the slightest hint of nervousness. This slightly surprised even Ling Bi'er, someone used to gatherings like these. Junior brother Jiang Chen was from a small place like the sixteen kingdoms, and logically shouldn't have seen much of scenes like these. She'd been worried that he wouldn't be used to things.

But now it seemed that she'd been overly worried. Ever since the two had struck up a friendship, Ling Bi'er had felt closer to Jiang Chen and would sometimes think on his behalf in things.

Shen Qinghong had always fancied himself the boss of the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. He took the opportunity to laugh heartily, "Junior sister Bi'er, you and I are more familiar with the various disciples of the great sects. Why don't you show junior brother Jiang and Mu around?"

Ling Bi'er's delicate brows knitted together slightly. "Senior brother Shen, please call me junior sister Ling instead."

For some reason, she had an instinctive rejection of Shen Qinghong being so forward as to call her so intimately. She was even faintly repulsed by it. She had somehow relegated "Bi'er" as her private property and refused to allow just anyone to call her that.

Shen Qinghong felt slightly awkward, but still smiled dashingly. "Junior sister Ling, it's our two junior brothers' first time at such a gathering in the Myriad Domain. We should show off our attitudes as their senior brother and sister." n(/O-)v//e).l-)&.-1(-n

Ling Bi'er nodded slightly but didn't say anything, unconsciously flicking a glance at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen shrugged. "Everyone can do as they wish. What do you think, Gaoqi?"

Mu Gaoqi was quite honest, "I'll follow Brother Chen."

When Shen Qinghong saw Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi thus, he only thought it was because they were feeling self-conscious about their low cultivation level and inwardly sniggered. He struck up an elegant air and said to Ling Bi'er, "It looks like junior brother Jiang and Mu aren't quite interested. Junior sister Ling, why don't you take a spin with me? I took a look and saw that each sect has basically sent out their strongest line-up. This is indeed a grand gathering."

When Ling Bi'er saw that Jiang Chen had no intention of taking a walk around, she was naturally disinterested as well. She responded faintly, "I'm a bit tired after the long journey. You go, senior brother Shen, I'll stay here and take care of the junior brothers."

Shen Qinghong was shamed and angered by Ling Bi'er's repeated rejection. He had long since viewed Ling Bi'er as a chunk of meat for his own consumption, and had even often fantasized about the beautiful scene of taking both sisters at the same time. When he saw how indifference was written all over Ling Bi'er's icy cool face, it was obvious that she wasn't that interested in him. This poured a bucket of cold water all over Shen Qinghong's pride and self-respect. However, he possessed some shrewdness and understood the theory of haste not necessarily being a path to success. He comforted himself with the thought that Ling Bi'er was uninterested in anything right now because of her father's illness. One day, I'll get both sisters!

He flashed a gallant smile as his thoughts traveled down this path. "Since this is the case, this foolish brother will not continue to force junior sister. I will go catch up with a few old friends."

Shen Qinghong obviously wanted to flaunt to his network as he started continuously greeting others after taking a few steps forward. He was the top disciple in the Regal Pill Palace in name, so others naturally had to give him a bit of face. In this regard, it rather appeared that he knew a lot of people and was quite popular.

He was quite proud of himself and looked at Ling Bi'er every now and then. However, his actions were merely playing to the gallery in Ling Bi'er's eyes, not to mention that her thoughts weren't on him at all. Shen Qinghong was flirting with someone who was completely blind to his efforts.

"Long time no see, junior sister Ling."

A green shadow suddenly flashed out from a pillar to the left. A young cultivator in the outfit of a Walkabout Sect disciple walked over, smiling merrily at Ling Bi'er.

When she saw this person, a hint of distaste flashed through her previously distant eyes.

"Junior sister Ling, do you not remember your foolish brother after just two years? Do you know how painfully I've yearned for you in these two years?" The young man had an exaggerated expression on his face that was tempered with a few hints of sinister ruthlessness, giving others an eerie and forbidding feeling. It seemed that the entire Walkabout Sect subscribed to this style.

Ling Bi'er spoke indifferently. "My memory isn't too good. Who are you?"

The man laughed leisurely and smacked his forehead in an overdramatic fashion. "Ai, it looks like junior sister Ling still holds a grudge against me. I've been thinking of your father's matter every day the past two years, and as long as the junior sister is willing to marry me, I, Wei Qing, guarantee that I will cure your father's Miasma."

When Ling Bi'er had been unable to find help in the Regal Pill Palace, she'd once visited the Walkabout Sect by herself and called upon many poison experts. Wei Qing was the one most adept with poison in the younger generation and furthermore was the sect head's nephew. That made him one of the most popular people in the younger generation of the Walkabout Sect.

When he'd set eyes on Ling Bi'er, it was as if he'd seen a fairy. Compared to the scheming and caustic women of the Walkabout Sect, he'd fallen in love with Ling Bi'er's heavenly demeanor. However, she was quickly on her guard when she saw how exaggerated and uncircumspect he was. This kid was just like the lecherous farts in the Walkabout Sect, only thinking of how to conquer Ling Bi'er and not bothering with the Miasma at all.

When Ling Bi'er thought of matters of the past, she naturally wasn't kindly disposed towards those from the Walkabout Sect. She responded frostily, "No need, my Regal Pill Palace was founded on the basis of pill dao and so will have the antidote sooner or later."

Wei Qing chuckled, "If the Regal Pill Palace could find a way, you wouldn't have gone to my Walkabout Sect either. Why must you keep me at arm's lengths after two years? How do you know I'm unable to cure the Miasma if you don't even give me a chance?"

While this person looked urbane and genteel, he actually had a gift for shameless, tireless pursuit.

Chapter 535: Femme Fatale?

That fellow hadn't received the slightest bit of favor from Ling Bi'er when he'd coaxed and pestered her incessantly with his pursuit before. His desire to conquer Ling Bi'er had only grown increasingly fierce over the years, almost developing into one of his internal demons.

Such was humanity sometimes. The more one couldn't obtain something, the more they would desire it.

As a genius of the younger generation in the Walkabout Sect, Wei Qing thought very highly of himself with his impressive background. He felt that he was more than a good match for Ling Bi'er. Although she was a genius of the Regal Pill Palace, she didn't have much of a foundation or a decent backer. But he... he was different. He had extraordinary potential, a powerful background, and was one of the candidates to inherit the Walkabout Sect in the future.

In his eyes, there shouldn't be any difficulty in him pursuing Ling Bi'er. However, he was different from Shen Qinghong. Although the latter also liked Ling Bi'er, he still had that bit of backbone that made him retain his manners.

Wei Qing was born in the Walkabout Sect, a sect that didn't care about bearing or demeanor. They were proponents of practicality and only cared about results, never minding the methods used to reach them. Therefore, Wei Qing only knew how to badger and hound, backed by an unending drive to never stop until he reached his goal.

Shen Qinghong had yet to walk far when he suddenly heard someone harass Ling Bi'er. In his eyes, this was someone blatantly making moves on his woman! His face frosted over as he walked back and stopped in front of Wei Qing. "Wei Qing, what do you mean by this?"

Wei Qing didn't think much of this new face in front of him and responded in exaggerated tones. "Yo! Isn't this that first genius of the Regal Pill Palace?"

Shen Qinghong bit his words off coldly, "My house's junior sister Ling doesn't welcome you. Stay away from her."

Wei Qing had a very thick face and didn't feel ashamed about his actions at all. "What? Are you jealous? Haha, I say, you should give up! They say that those at the waterfront pavilion are the first to catch the rising moon. You've been in such an advantageous position for years but still failed! It's obvious that junior sister Ling isn't the slightest bit interested in you. Brother Shen, why not give the chance to me? I'm sure we'll be able to come to an agreement."

Shen Qinghong was incensed. "Piss off!"

Wei Qing's face darkened. "Shen Qinghong, I'm trying to give you face here!"

"Are you going to leave or not?" Shen Qinghong projected a domineering aura. In terms of cultivation, this Wei Qing was only at the peak of eighth level origin realm, and would be a pushover if it came to a fight.

A hint of a violent light started twinkling in Wei Qing's eyes as he nodded lightly. "Good, very good. Shen Qinghong, you better not bump into me in Mt. Rippling Mirage. If that happens, my face is the last thing you'll ever see!"

If it'd been anyone else at eighth level origin realm speaking these words to Shen Qinghong, a half step sage realm, they'd be made fun of as a laughingstock. However, those of the Walkabout Sect were known for being insidious and cunning, and very adept at using poison. It would be impossible to stay on guard once they employed poison at a gathering like this.

A trace of wariness flashed through Shen Qinghong's heart, but now that things had developed to this point, he could only continue in the same vein. He snorted coldly in response, "Just you wait!"

He'd already made up his mind that if he saw Wei Qing in Mt. Rippling Mirage, he would make the first move and use his strength to completely suppress Wei Qing.

As the two conducted this verbal duel, they suddenly discovered that Ling Bi'er had already taken Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi away to another corner.

Wei Qing snorted coldly. "Shen Qinghong, you're hallucinating if you think the other party is willing. Did you think you were the hero saving the beauty? She thinks nothing of your act at all!"

A shadow passed over Shen Qinghong's face. As he watched Ling Bi'er's departing back, he was assaulted by a mix of negative emotions. He rather envied Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Would junior sister Ling rather be with them than me?

One had to say, Ling Bi'er was the center of the younger generation's attention no matter where she went. She was the dream lover of all the disciples in the Rosy Valley of the Regal Pill Palace, and was also the focus of everyone's attentions in the entire Myriad Domain.

"It's been a few years, junior sister Ling. Your beauty has surpassed itself again!"

"Junior sister Ling, this foolish brother is Zhu Feiyang from the Tristar Sect. Do I have the honor of having the junior sister enjoy a drink with me?"



“Junior sister Ling...”

People seemed to arrive in an unending stream of intrusions, rapidly pushing at the upper limits of her tolerance. Any other time, she would've graced them with a cool expression, but this time, Jiang Chen was with her. Her irritation only grew with these never-ending pick up lines. She could hardly wait for the pill competitions to begin.

Jiang Chen also seemed to detect Ling Bi'er's frustration as he raised an idea, “Senior sister Bi'er, it's quite boring here; why don't we walk around elsewhere?”

Mu Gaoqi hastened to agree. “Yes yes, let's walk around elsewhere. Brother Chen, you go walk with senior sister Ling. I'll go find my honored master.”

Jiang Chen laughed lightly. “And what do you need from your honored master? Walk with us.”

Ling Bi'er nodded. Although she had some good feelings towards Jiang Chen, she would be at a bit of a loss if she was left alone with him. She grew even more panicked when she saw how ambiguous Mu Gaoqi's tone was, as if trying to create an opportunity for the two of them. Unbeknownst to her, her nervousness was also spiced with a bit of anticipation.

The three were just about to step outside when Wei Qing swaggered over in pursuit. A cheeky grin split his face as he spoke boisterously, “Junior sister Ling, it is rare that the six sects find the time to meet. Why is junior sister not taking advantage of this opportunity that comes but once in a blue moon? Why waste this great chance to interact and spar with the top geniuses of the Myriad Domain on two junior brothers who don't amount to much? Don't you think that this is a grievous pity?”

Jiang Chen's originally good mood evaporated when he heard those words. When these fellows had continuously come to chat up Ling Bi'er, he hadn't been in a position to say much. But this Walkabout Sect fellow was mocking both him and Mu Gaoqi in his attempt to pick her up! What junior brothers who don't amount to much? Jiang Chen's footsteps halted and he snorted derisively. “Top genius? Do you mean yourself?”

Wei Qing had always occupied a lofty position in his sect, and had voiced such arrogant words that blatantly disrespected those around him who knew how many times in his thirty years of life. Those who he looked down upon had never dared talk back, and he'd truly only viewed Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi as minor characters just now. His thoughts had been completely occupied by Ling Bi'er. So when Jiang Chen retorted, his first reaction was a shocked blink before his temper flared. His face grew dark as he aggressively responded, “What? You got something to say?”

Jiang Chen had an unconcerned expression. “So what if I do?”

Wei Qing chuckled coldly. “When Shen Qinghong tried to play the hero saving the beauty just now, I could still view him as an opponent. But you... what the hell are you?”

It was obvious that Jiang Chen's cultivation level at earth origin realm was utter trash in Wei Qing's eyes. He might possibly be a pill dao genius in the Regal Pill Palace, but when had Wei Qing given a pill dao genius any respect?

“Junior brother, pay no heed to such pointless people. Let's just go.” Ling Bi'er obviously didn't want her own matters to draw in Jiang Chen as well. However, one's control slips when one's mind is preoccupied

with worry. In fact, things had been manageable when she had stayed quiet. Now that she'd spoken, she'd unconsciously revealed the fact that she cared about Jiang Chen.

Wei Qing's shifty gaze immediately detected this subtle undercurrent. His gaze turned frigid and his heart lurched. He immediately started assessing Jiang Chen coldly. Is Ling Bi'er's taste so different from most that she likes the junior brothers of her own sect? Sizing up Jiang Chen, Wei couldn't find anything special about the kid in front of him. At most, he could admit that Jiang Chen had slightly better visuals.

Jiang Chen had no desire to spar verbally as he nodded in acquiescence to Ling Bi'er's words. He ignored Wei Qing's territorial gaze and walked off beside Ling Bi'er.

Aren't you pursuing Ling Bi'er, hmm? Jiang Chen purposefully shifted closer to her, maintaining a distance that didn't hint at anything, but also indicated that their relationship was closer than normal.

Indeed, Wei Qing glowered with jealousy when he saw. How could he not tell that this minor character from the Regal Pill Palace was doing this on purpose, and Ling Bi'er was playing along with him!? He felt like a clown, as if he'd completely been made a fool.

"Brat, you'd better pray for your own well-being that you don't make it into Mt. Rippling Mirage!" Wei Qing's teeth made an audible sound as he ground them in anger.

Shen Qinghong suddenly drifted across to him, not losing an opportunity to mock, "How about it, hmm? The vaunted Sir Wei turned down by the beauty. Do you feel like you're sweeping the floors with your self respect?"

Wei Qing's original hostility was actually swept away when he saw Shen Qinghong. He laughed coldly, "Shen Qinghong, what are you strutting about for? Is Ling Bi'er any better to you?"

Shen Qinghong was speechless, and the two actually shared a moment in common misery.

"What's that kid's background?" Although Wei Qing didn't think much of anything about Jiang Chen, and frankly couldn't even be bothered to ask about this minor character's name, the fires of envy within were like a poisonous viper gnawing at his heart, filling him with unspeakable discomfort.

"Heh, have you not heard of my sect allying with the Precious Tree Sect?"

Wei Qing blinked and then seemed to recall something. "He's the Precious Tree Sect disciple? What's his name again?"

"Haha, Sir Wei should go obtain his own intelligence. When all is said and done, we're of the same sect. How could I ever betray one of my own?" Shen Qinghong was secretly delighted to see Wei Qing aiming his ire at Jiang Chen, but maintained a pure and lofty look as he walked away with a dashing flair.

A corner of Wei Qing's mouth twitched as he snorted coldly. "Posturing buffoon. Is everyone from the Regal Pill Palace this fake?"

The trio from earlier walked out of the side door of the Hall and soon arrived in a backyard.

"Junior brother, that Wei Qing is sinister and scheming, and eschews all morals and principles in the pursuit of his goals. You must be on your guard after offending him with those words. As narrow-minded as he is, he is certain to take revenge. I'm worried..."

Jiang Chen nodded slightly. "Don't worry senior sister. I'll be fine as long as he doesn't irritate me. If he does, that day just happened to be his unluckiest day."

This wasn't Jiang Chen tooting his own horn, but that he really wasn't looking twice at these so-called poison experts. He was completely immune to poisons, so what would he fear Wei Qing for? Not to mention that apart from the Goldwing Swordbirds, he'd brought all his other strong spirit creatures this time as well. Long Xiaoxuan, the Goldbiter Rats and the ancient Golden Cicada were all trump cards he was keeping in reserve.

He'd come to strip Mt. Rippling Mirage of all its treasures, and the Goldbiter Rats were here precisely to make off with all of the spirit herbs on the mountain. Long Xiaoxuan was shaping up to be a great assistant. He'd been becoming irritated with boredom in the wood spirit spring anyhow, and it was a perfect time to take him out on a trip and learn more of the world. Long Xiaoxuan himself was eager for nothing less.

When she saw how confident Jiang Chen was, Ling Bi'er was left without anything to say. She could only secretly make up her mind that if she entered Mt. Rippling Mirage, she would think of ways to protect Jiang Chen from Wei Qing's revenge. Even if it impacted the amount of time she had to harvest spirit herbs.

#### Chapter 536: Baffling Killing Intent

Roughly an hour later, a bell rang through Rippling Mirage hall, summoning the scattered disciples back. The 6 fourth rank sects sat in the first row, a clear marker of their position. The 20 fifth rank sects were relegated to the second row. Whether it be their sect head or disciples, every one of them kept a lower and more docile profile. The sect heads of the six great sects were all sitting on a dais, their stature and grandeur evident at first glance.

Due to the brevity of his tenure and his cultivation being the weakest at present, Palace Head Dan Chi was sitting at the very end. However, no one would think less of him because of his position. Everyone present knew that this sect head at the end could very possibly overtake the others in another hundred years and sit at the head of the six great sects. After all, of those present, the youngest excluding Dan Chi was well over two hundred years old. On the other hand, Dan Chi was less than a hundred years old, almost adolescent in the lifespan of martial dao. One was still a teenager after two hundred years of martial practice.

Contrasting Palace Head Dan Chi's position, the Regal Pill Palace was still number one of the Pill Battles, and retained a corresponding position, even if they'd only won by the skin of their teeth. Thus, they stood first amongst the six great sects. This immensely shocked Mu Gaoqi and made him feel quite proud, whereas Shen Qinghong, used to throwing his weight around, put on the indifferent facade he so loved.

Ling Bi'er's mind was filled with thoughts of her father's ailment, so she naturally wasn't thinking about the honor of being first. Perhaps to her, it was the natural course of order that the Regal Pill Palace was ranked first since it'd been founded for pill dao. It'd be odd indeed if her sect wasn't first. Only Jiang Chen's thoughts had long since flown to Mt. Rippling Mirage. He was giving free rein to his imagination of what he could find there.

Although these were the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage, the judges were also the sect heads of the six sects. Of course, since they were all renowned personages and heavyweights, they wouldn't actually resort to cheating when judging. As the representative of the champion of the last Pill Battles, Palace Head Dan Chi was in charge of making the opening remarks.

"Everyone, we stand here today not just in front of a sacred mountain that harbors spirit herbs. Mt. Rippling Mirage represents the legacy of the Myriad Domain, an everlasting testament to our history. It has witnessed the glories of the Myriad Domain's yesteryear and has sadly watched its decline due to certain disastrous occurrences. When we cultivators enter the mountain, remember that we are not merely participating in the Pill Battles of today. When we enter the mountain to harvest herbs, we should remember our rich history and find bravery after experiencing shame."

The other heavyweights were slightly taken aback by Palace Head Dan Chi's words. They'd thought that Dan Chi would merely announce the rules to the Pill Battles, not that he would go and mention the history behind the Pill Battles, and much less that he'd reference the history of the Myriad Empire's decline and use it to encourage the cultivators of the Myriad Domain. His words weren't inappropriate, but they still felt a bit odd in the ears of those assembled.

It was a good thing then that Dan Chi didn't continue in this vein and switched to the rules. "For the Pill Battles this year, there will be a senior group and a junior group. The top thirty of each group will earn the right to enter Mt. Rippling Mirage. After prolonged discussion with everyone, the entrance method this time will be different from the usual. The top ten can enter for twenty days, the next ten for ten, and the final set of ten can enter in the last five days."

This meant that the top ten would benefit from the longest period of time, a full twenty days, to harvest spirit herbs. The next ten would have to wait until ten days had elapsed before they could enter, and the final group of ten would only be able to take advantage of the last five days.

This was a clear delineation between the various parties.

Dan Chi continued. "This arrangement has been made to increase the amount of competition and enable pill masters of different skills to receive different levels of benefits. It will also heighten the differences between various skill levels."

This arrangement was actually much fairer. Otherwise, if everyone surged in at the same time, disregarding their scores, it would actually be unfair to the pill masters.

Dan Chi paused purposefully at this point to give everyone time to digest the new rules.

To be honest, there was quite a bit of competition to reach the top 30, but even then there were a couple of spots for the fifth rank sects to fight over. The thirty spots each for the senior and junior groups meant for a total of sixty spots. The combined representatives from the six great sects numbered only forty eight. This meant that at least twelve spots would remain for the fifth rank sects even if everyone from the six great sects made it into the top 30.

Of course, as a fourth rank sect, the odds were astronomically low for them to avoid taking a sport in the top 30. For the 20 fifth rank sects, fighting over the last twelve spots was where their true efforts would come to bear. Although, there would be that small hope that one of them would be able to seize the food from the tiger's mouth and take one of the fourth rank sect's spots.

With four entrants each from the fifth rank sects, their participants numbered eighty. When eighty people fought over twelve spots, that meant roughly one out of eight would be successful. This was indeed tough competition.

However, the fifth rank sects didn't dare complain. When the Myriad Empire had still existed, the gap between the fourth and fifth rank sects hadn't been that great, and spot allocation for Mt. Rippling Mirage hadn't seen that much of a difference. But now, the six great sects almost completely controlled events of the Myriad Domain. The fifth rank sects could participate in some affairs of the region in name, but they'd largely been marginalized.

As a case in point, there was no longer a path for a fifth rank sect to be promoted to fourth rank. Nor were there any resources or opportunities available to them to change their lot.

After Elder Yun Nie heard the rules, he spoke to the other seven representing the Regal Pill Palace. "The rules are different this time, so I hope no one keeps anything back and gives it their all. It's said that the Walkabout Sect has sent a well rounded team this time and is rather formidable. The Tristar Sect has also shown the signs of an unexpected momentum, so we must stay on our guard. These two are our biggest rivals, and have even released word that they want to take the position of Pill Battle champion from us."

No matter what internal conflict the Regal Pill Palace may have, everyone was a fellow comrade-in-arms when they walked out on the stage that was the Myriad Domain. They all fought for the Regal Pill Palace and their own benefits at the same time.

Everyone nodded with grave expressions. Vice head Wang Yue was a firecracker and snorted. "The feck is the Tristar Sect? How much ability do they have to their name that they can go head to head with us in pill dao? I would believe it if you said Walkabout Sect. But the Tristar Sect has always been mediocre to lower tier in the Pill Battles. What right do they have to speak tough words like these?"

Ouyang De was similarly dismissive, feeling that the Tristar Sect was just inviting humiliation down on themselves since they dared publicly lay down a challenge. The Regal Pill Palace's true opponent was the Walkabout Sect. They were also a sect strong in pill dao, but favored sinister ways and the usage of poison. However, they all equally valued pill dao and had always been the Regal Pill Palace's strong rival. As for the other sects, the Regal Pill Palace didn't feel like they were of any threat. n--0veLb1n

Elder Yun Nie specifically sent a message to Jiang Chen, "Jiang Chen, I have one request. I hope that not only do you guarantee a spot in the top ten, but that you show off all your abilities. Personal scores will be added to the final score that determines our overall ranking. The champion of the personal competition will also benefit from additional points, and this will play a critical role in the rankings."

If it hadn't been for Elder Yun Nie's reminder, Jiang Chen really had just planned on scraping by in the top ten. He hadn't wanted to seek out the limelight in this kind of occasion. To put things bluntly, he was only here for the spirit herbs.

"Jiang Chen, although Palace Head Dan Chi haven't given you explicit orders, he must also wish for you to use your full strength and defend our position as reigning champion. I wasn't being an alarmist just now when I spoke of the Tristar and Walkabout Sects. There is indeed a strange atmosphere of energy

about the Tristar Sect. No one else might think much of it, but I have indeed received some news this time that the Tristar Sect has been up to a lot.”

The Tristar Sect?

Jiang Chen’s gaze happened to glance in their direction, but immediately discovered a similarly sharp glance shooting towards him at almost the same time. When their eyes met, a hint of killing intent flashed through the other’s eyes and vanished. This person was as if a stone sculpture. He had sharply chiseled features and projected immense calm, giving others a feeling of deep profoundness.

A thought struck Jiang Chen; this person actually gave him the feeling of being quite uncommon. He’d been observing the representatives from all the sects after entering the Rippling Mirage Hall, paying attention to each of the young geniuses of the six great sects. Although this was the Pill Battles, at least half of each sect’s martial dao geniuses had arrived as well. Some of the top geniuses were also showing themselves.

There weren’t many who could leave an impression on Jiang Chen, but the look that this person leveled at him made him take note. When he took another look at this person, Jiang Chen saw someone as calm as the unruffled, serene seas, still giving one the feeling of an unfathomable depth.

“The Tristar Sect actually has such a character? This person’s demeanor gives off an otherworldly feeling that exceeds the Myriad Domain. Where did that kind of feeling come from?”

Even if there were differences between the various top geniuses in the Myriad Domain, it would be as minor as the difference between ninety steps and a hundred. Yet this person made Jiang Chen feel that the gap between the top geniuses of the Myriad Domain and this person was as if ninety steps and hundred fifty steps. If this had been the only case, Jiang Chen would’ve merely paid some more attention to this person. But when their gazes had met just now, Jiang Chen had vaguely detected a hint of killing intent from the other.

This greatly surprised Jiang Chen. He hadn’t had any prior interactions with the Tristar Sect and had never seen this person before. What kind of grudge would he have with this person? What would make someone meeting him for the first time have such a mindset?

He inwardly snapped to solemn attention, feeling that something was afoot. However, he couldn’t immediately come up with a reason. “I need to be on my guard against this one since he wishes to kill me.” Jiang Chen increased his awareness and started observing this person through Psychic’s Head instead of God’s Eye.

However, this person concealed himself well and was as tranquil as a lake’s waters after concealing the light of his edge. But, that brief instant just now had allowed Jiang Chen to understand the surging undercurrents hidden beneath this exterior. This person was an uncommon person that he had to guard against.

“Senior sister, do you know the people from the Tristar Sect?” Jiang Chen suddenly turned to ask Ling Bi’er in a low voice.

Ling Bi'er looked over the Tristar Sect. "I know two of them. Zhu Feiyang, the direct grandson of the sect head, and Mei Ruoxi, a female genius disciple. The other two are unfamiliar to me, and they likely haven't shown themselves before. I would've remembered them had I seen them even once."

Ling Bi'er had a photographic memory. Otherwise, with her lack of an impressive background, how would she have become a top three genius in the Rosy Valley at the tender age of twenty?

#### Chapter 537: A Grand Bet

Jiang Chen only needed to take another glance around to know that that person wasn't Zhu Feiyang. That was because Zhu Feiyang was just like his name, full of good spirits, and similar in bearing to Tristar Sect Head Zhu by his side.[1] Since it wasn't the Tristar Sect's top genius, but one with an even more frightening potential than him, this made Jiang Chen even more suspicious.

"His killing intent might be understandable if he admired senior sister Bi'er and was someone she knew, just like Wei Qing. But if this person is someone the senior sister doesn't know, he's someone she's never interacted with before. There's naturally no talk of love for the senior sister then, so this hostility and killing intent has a different source than Wei Qing's."

But apart from matters between men and women, what reason would this person have to hate Jiang Chen?

Jiang Chen mulled over his past again and again. He'd only interacted with the Tristar Sect disciples during the wood spirit spring trip, but no one in the outside world knew of that expedition. Otherwise, Jiang Chen's murder of Elder Wei Wudao from the Walkabout Sect would've absolutely raised a great uproar.

As the opening ceremony continued, Palace Head Dan Chi announced the topics of the pill competitions on behalf of the six great sects. The first of fire control, second of cauldron pre-heating, third of cultivating spirit herbs, and fourth of refining pills.

In reality, although the level of competition would change from year to year, the content of pill competitions would always remain the same. The only difference was that the Pill Battles emphasized practical application and noticeably tested less of theory. This was a limitation that the other sects had imposed on the Regal Pill Palace. After all, the Regal Pill Palace had deep foundations and the richest knowledge banks. Forcing the competition to have very little to do with theory was undoubtedly a kind of limitation on the Regal Pill Palace.

Of course, Palace Head Dan Chi completely understood this, but also was fully aware that it was pointless to object when the other sects had reached an accord on this. Therefore, he decided to pretend that he knew nothing.

After the rules were announced, each sect sent out representatives to swear that they wouldn't cheat in the Pill Battles and affirmed a declaration of fair play. When all of this was complete, all sides announced a brief break. The Pill Battles would officially commence after two hours.

Having received Elder Yun Nie's request, Jiang Chen knew that he couldn't slack off in the upcoming competition. He had to try his best to obtain the championship. He wasn't opposed to this, since

obtaining the champion's rank wasn't detrimental to his plans. Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie had both helped him immensely, so it would be a kind of repayment on them if he took home the championship.

Jiang Chen sat on a chair and closed his eyes, using Boulder's Heart to finish adjusting his mentality and clearing his mind of the matters of the outside world. Mu Gaoqi was learning from his lessons with Jiang Chen, and imitated whatever his brother did. He too took a seat to meditate, not wandering around.

It was rather Shen Qinghong who seemed to flourish at these gatherings. He kept hunting down others to chat and joke around with, as if trying to show that he had friends throughout the world. Elder Yun Nie sighed inwardly when he saw Shen Qinghong thus. Although Shen Qinghong's martial dao potential was good, his personality was already showing problematic signs.

At this point, Wei Qing suddenly jumped up from his seat with the Walkabout Sect, one next to the Regal Pill Palace. He smiled, "Everyone, everyone! It's rare that we have such a complete gathering of geniuses in the Myriad Domain. After all, the Pill Battles happen only once every thirty years. We're all young here, and so we should have the atmosphere of a group of youngsters gathering."

Wei Qing talked a good talk, but it was apparent that everyone knew this person was difficult to get along with. They allowed him to wax eloquent, but no one really responded to him. They all looked sideways at him, wondering what this fellow was cooking up again.

Wei Qing didn't mind this as he chuckled, "I propose setting up a bet."

Many eyes lit up when he mentioned the word 'bet'. Very few geniuses were willing to admit that anyone was better than them, so there was always great interest in a bet. But they were also aware of who exactly was proposing this bet. Someone immediately interjected with a cold laugh, "Wei Qing, what kind of plot do you have this time? Out with it directly!"

"Right, speak plainly and don't talk in circles. You Walkabout Sect people are never straight with your words; it's so irritating listening to you."

Wei Qing laughed. "It looks like everyone's the impatient sort. Fine, then I'll speak directly. I ask only this, how sure of victory are you all in the Pill Battles? To put it more bluntly, how many of us are here to seize the championship?"

Everyone reacted differently to the provocative question. There were more than ten disciples present who felt they had the right to attempt for the championship, and their eyes flicked towards Wei Qing as they waited to see just what he was up to.

Wei Qing laughed heartily. "I propose that we bet on the eventual champion. Since we're all confident we'll win, what's there to be afraid of? I'll start off in hopes of creating something wonderful. I bet twenty thousand spirit stones that I'll win. Who dares bet against me?"

"Hmph, a bet is a bet. Who's afraid of you? I, Lin Hai, will be the first to take a stand against you!" Lin Hai was a pill dao genius from the Dark North Sect and had come here with the intention of winning the championship.

Shen Qinghong's wealth was only surpassed by his love of flaunting it. Of course he would join in a bet when the forfeit was only twenty thousand spirit stones. He smiled, "How could I be absent from such a wondrous happening?"



“Count me in!” Zhu Feiyang, first disciple of the Tristar Sect, chuckled. He then looked at the person next to him with a faint smile. This person was the mysterious cultivator who had locked eyes with Jiang Chen previously and revealed a hint of killing intent.

Jiang Chen had been unobtrusively observing this mysterious cultivator, and saw his lip twist when he saw Zhu Feiyang look over, as if contemptuous of such a bet. In the end, though, he still nodded, “Since this is the case, I, Ding Tong, will participate as well.”

Ding Tong?

Jiang Chen took silent note of this name and committed it to memory.

Shen Qinghong suddenly chuckled as well. “Junior brother Jiang Chen, you love to gamble in the Regal Pill Palace. What, did you give up gambling after setting foot in the outside world?”

Jiang Chen smiled and delivered a devastating response, “Twenty thousand spirit stones are too little. Why not fifty thousand?” He grinned afterwards, turning to Ling Bi’er and Mu Gaoqi by his side. “Senior sister, Gaoqi, I didn’t bring that many spirit stones this time. I’ll have to borrow some from you guys first.”

Mu Gaoqi smiled, “No problem, Brother Chen always wins when he makes a move. I have roughly thirty thousand here, you can borrow it all!”

Ling Bi’er also seemed to be intrigued by Jiang Chen’s big move. She nodded, “I have thirty thousand here as well, take it all if you wish, junior brother.”

The words “take it all if you wish” bathed Shen Qinghong and Wei Qing’s hearts in flames of envy. The other geniuses who harbored affections for Ling Bi’er also quietly took their measure of Jiang Chen. They really didn’t understand why Ling Bi’er looked at this fellow differently.

“Hmph, a deadbeat who lives off women!” Wei Qing looked disdainfully at Jiang Chen. “Are you sure you’re in? This is a bet of who will become the champion. Do you really believe you have the right to participate?”

Jiang Chen smiled nonchalantly. “I just so happen to like gifting fancy, glittering spirit stones. What can you do about it? Don’t tell me you’re too chicken to follow my bet?”

Wei Qing laughed heartily. “Me? Afraid? What a joke! I’m just afraid that you won’t be able to explain yourself when you lose a woman’s money!”

Wei Qing spoke in a greatly exaggerated fashion and elicited a round of laughter from those present. Jiang Chen maintained his look of cool indifference on his face. How would such childish provocation rouse a reaction from him?

It was rather Ling Bi’er who fired back with a livid face, “Wei Qing, what are you going on about? Junior brother Jiang Chen is helping cure my father’s Miasma. I would take out even three hundred thousand stones without hesitation if I could, not to mention a mere thirty thousand. How is he like you, someone who only flaps his lips without action?”

Mu Gaoqi also piped in from the side. “Looking down on my Brother Chen? What a joke, Wei Qing! You’re not even fit to carry my Brother Chen’s shoes with that little bit of skill of yours!”

Wei Qing's face frosted over as he looked at Shen Qinghong. "Do all you people from the Regal Pill Palace like to run your mouths?"

Shen Qinghong chuckled. "Sir Wei, junior brother Jiang Chen really does have good pill dao potential. Instead of beating around the bush, why don't you come straight out and say if you've the guts to bet fifty thousand spirit stones?"

Wei Qing laughed coldly, "Whoever doesn't dare to can cry uncle!" He looked around the premises. "Fifty thousand spirit stones. Speak up, whoever dares follow."

They were all top geniuses; which one of them would back down in front of the others? Some of them immediately stood up to indicate that they would join. The bet soon collected nine participants.

Jiang Chen and Shen Qinghong represented the Regal Pill Palace; Wei Qing and Wei Xing'er from the Walkabout Sect; Lin Hai from the Dark North Sect; Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace; and finally, Yuan Yuan from the Sacred Ape family of the Great Cathedral.

Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace knew that he didn't have much hope in seizing the championship, but he couldn't have the Sacred Sword Palace alone have no representatives in the bet. The other five great sects all were participating, so it would only be a blemish on the Sacred Sword Palace if he didn't grit his teeth and sign up as the lone candidate.

First female genius Mei Ruoxi of the Tristar Sect had wanted to participate at first, but had given up in the last moment for unknown reasons.

The others, including Jiang Chen, all were supremely confident in their chances to win. As the banter escalated, the forfeit grew to four hundred and fifty thousand spirit stones.

Wei Qing smiled, "A bet is an elegant activity. I hope there's no one who can't take the loss graciously. Only the champion will walk off with all of the stones."

This amount of spirit stones was an enormous sum to anyone here. Apart from Jiang Chen, almost everyone here were the wealthiest of the second generation in their sects. But even so, this was still a stunning amount of money. This merely added more motivation to seek the championship.

The elder of the various sects naturally wouldn't be against this. After all, competition amongst the geniuses would only spark greater fighting strength and dig out the limit of their capabilities. Although, once Jiang Chen brought all his abilities to bear, his chances of winning it all would be greater than any genius present.

Jiang Chen was completely delighted at the thought of four hundred and fifty thousand stones. He'd randomly thrown out the figure of fifty thousand, and hadn't thought that so many would take him up on it.

"It looks like all these top geniuses in the Myriad Domain are lovely whales, with plenty of spirit stones. It would be a waste to not take it from them." Jiang Chen had made up his mind. No matter what, he would bring home the championship of the personal competition!

Feiyang means soaring, glorious spirits, and Zhu means well wishes.

Chapter 538: The Pill Battles Begin

“Go Brother Chen! Hahaha, you’ll be rich if you bring home the championship!” Mu Gaoqi was now Jiang Chen’s biggest and most ardent fan. He was completely certain that Jiang Chen would be the ultimate victor.

Ling Bi’er didn’t say anything, but the encouraging look in her eyes was also in obvious support of Jiang Chen seizing the championship.

Elder Yun Nie laughed heartily. “Good, good! Some motivation resulting from the clash and conflict of geniuses isn’t a bad thing either. I’m rather curious, who will eventually grab the seat of champion in this group?”

He was an elder of the Regal Pill Palace after all, so he wasn’t quite at liberty to step out and support Jiang Chen in front of Shen Qinghong.

The young geniuses were clashing fiercely, but the elders were quite calm and stately. It was apparent that most of the elders thought there to be very little doubt over the champion this year. In the end, the battle would come down to a scarce few.

The bet of four hundred fifty thousand spirit stones caused all the geniuses who weren’t participating to be quite envious. Those from the fifth rank sects were even more jealous. Born in a fifth rank sect, there was still a difference in pill dao between them and the top geniuses of the fourth rank sects. They could only stand off to the side as bystanders in such a grand gathering as this.

Taking a step back, even if their pill dao cultivation was at the level where they could realistically fight for the championship, the sad reality was that they would then be low on funds. They wouldn’t be able to suddenly take out fifty thousand upper rank spirit stones for a bet. Even the elders of a fifth rank sect would be hard pressed to do such a thing. Only the rich scions of the fourth rank sects would be able to be so free with their money.

The atmosphere had become quite charged after this grand bet was set up. The visual and psychological impact of four hundred and fifty thousand spirit stones stacked up in a corner was quite stimulating. All of the participating geniuses stayed silent in the remaining preparation time, each using the time to ready themselves and await the beginning of the competition.

“The time has arrived, will all participants enter the lobby for the contest of fire control. Elders to the left, geniuses to the right.”

The lobby for the contest of fire control had once been a monumental undertaking by the Myriad Empire. There were a full three hundred and sixty fire control formations in this lobby. Each of them were independent of each other and served as the formations used in a competition of fire control.

There were thirty six sources of fire in each formation, each one a particular kind of flame found beneath the heavens. The battle of fire control would be determined by the number of flames a candidate could awaken within a set amount of time as well as the amount of resonance they could form with the fires.

The more they could awaken and resonate with, the more successful they were.

Each source of flame was ten points, making for a total for three hundred and sixty points. But if a candidate could awaken all thirty six flames within a set time, they would be awarded another forty

points. That was to say, the highest number of points one could gain in this section was four hundred points.

“Everyone, enter your respective formations.”

There were observation platforms overlooking the lobby that allowed spectators to grasp the entire situation, forming a complete picture of what was going on. This was naturally where the judges were located, where the six great sect heads would be holding down the fort.

All of the contestants entered the formations according to their assigned number at that command.

Jiang Chen entered third; his number coming from the fact that the Regal Pill Palace had been champion of the last Pill Battles. As such, the numbering started from them. As the most senior disciple, Shen Qinghong was number one. Ling Bi'er was number two, Jiang Chen three and Mu Gaoqi four.

It wasn't Jiang Chen's first time participating in a fire control competition. He'd already done so once before when he'd first arrived at the Regal Pill Palace and competed with Yan Hongtu. He had a number of things he wanted to test out in fire control, so he wasn't in a hurry to start when he entered the formation, instead spending time observing the formation.

Jiang Chen's accomplishments in the area of pill formations were nothing short of first-class. A glance here and a short look there was enough for him to understand the rough theory behind the formation and plumb the intricacies of its operations.

“This fire control formation isn't that complex. It merely uses a simple formation to induce all sorts of fires to make it convenient for pill refinement. This kind of formation is only an entry level formation in the greater picture of things, and likely isn't as profound as the entry formations of a divine level.”

This formation naturally posed no difficulty to Jiang Chen, and he quickly gathered his thoughts. He formed a quick hand seal and ignited a flame in the palm of his hand.

There were three critical factors to activating the flames within the formation. Firstly, the cultivator needed to be equipped with the ability to summon flames, as in, they had to be able to call flames themselves. Secondly, they needed to recognize the distinctive characteristics of each flame. Finally, they had to use various hand seals and their own fire element within them to trigger the flames within the formation and form a resonance with them.

Jiang Chen enjoyed an exceptional advantage in the form of clear insight into formations and a strong grasp of many types of fires. Not all fires could be triggered only after understanding them, but comprehending the particular characteristics of the flame itself would make it easier to activate it using one's unique techniques.

The most adept pill masters would use the simplest and most effective ways of activating the flames. However, the most efficient path was something built upon rich knowledge and exemplary techniques. To his credit, Jiang Chen not only had deep knowledge, but had superb techniques to back him up. These were all advantages that none of the youngsters of this level of existence could measure up to. Therefore, although Jiang Chen's internal power of fire wasn't the most extraordinary, his uncommon wisdom and ways were enough to bridge this gap and send him bounding far ahead of the others.

“Although I have the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, I’ve yet to absorb any high level fires of the heavens or earth. As such, my internal fires aren’t particularly heaven defying. If I’m to refine high level pills, I’ll have to do so through the aid of pill formations. However, there are some pills with harsh requirements that go beyond pill formations. It looks like I still need to find a strong fire of the world to bolster my foundations.” Jiang Chen had already gone through several hand seals as his thoughts ran rapidly through his mind.

*Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh...*

Jiang Chen lit multiple flames in the formation like he was turning a magic trick. His extraordinary techniques dazzled the eyes of the beholder. His techniques were as extravagant as flowers raining from the sky. Each fire in the formation flared like a firework, brilliantly radiant.

However, he controlled the fires such that he kept a low profile in his small formation. The sect heavyweights observing the competition hadn’t even had a chance to look over in his direction yet. Only Dan Chi’s gaze never left Jiang Chen’s formation. Although he also kept an eye on Shen Qinghong, Ling Bi’er, and Mu Gaoqi, his primary focus always remained with Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen’s position now in the younger generation was now beyond anyone’s, including Shen Qinghong’s. Although Shen Qinghong had extraordinary martial dao potential, that was only the level of the Myriad Domain. To put it bluntly, it was pleasing to have a genius like this, but they wouldn’t have much of an effect on the fortunes of the sect.

Jiang Chen however, was different. He had a particular bearing and potential to him that could affect the fortunes of the entire Regal Pill Palace, and possibly even the sect’s destiny as well. This wasn’t something that Dan Chi was making up, but a conclusion he’d reached after careful observation and repeated validation. With Jiang Chen and Elder Shun’s relationship, how would Dan Chi not understand Jiang Chen’s value to the Regal Pill Palace?

He even suspected now that the stunning natural phenomena he’d seen when allying with the Precious Tree Sect had been a result of Jiang Chen breaking through to the origin realm. He had no proof of it for now, but if his guess was valid, then Jiang Chen’s potential would be truly monstrous. To elicit such phenomena when breaking through to the origin realm, this was absolutely someone with at least the potential of a Great Emperor!

Dan Chi’s gaze remained glued to Jiang Chen. When he saw Jiang Chen’s wondrous performance, he wondered, *how is this a young genius controlling fire? This is absolutely the strongest pill dao legend of the Divine Abyss Continent controlling fire!*

His superb control and amazing techniques left even an expert like Dan Chi guessing at their underlying theory. He only knew that while Jiang Chen’s ways looked simple, they encompassed deep and complex meanings.

While Dan Chi watched Jiang Chen, the latter’s movements didn’t slow as they fluidly moved from seal to seal. Inexorable as the tides, those who didn’t understand the theory behind this were watching a good show, but only experts could fully understand what was going on.

Finally, Dan Chi had identified the key to the matter. Although the other pill dao geniuses also activated each flame quickly, their movements were disjointed, with no continuity between lighting one fire and

the next. It was as if they were hitting a wooden dummy, pausing, then moving onto the next one after they'd defeated the current one.

On the other hand, Jiang Chen was different. His movements seemed like one continuous motion. There was a connected theme behind the awakening of each flame, just like one playing the zither and brushing one's hands over the strings. The vibration of each string produced a flowing melody that gave listeners a strong, rhythmic feeling. Apart from Jiang Chen, no other genius possessed this coherence.

How would he be able to do this without possessing a full understanding of the formation and the flames? How else would he be able to do all this so easily and effortlessly, in a way that allowed all his movements to flow so smoothly together?

"Jiang Chen..." Dan Chi was completely delighted. "Just how many more surprises will you bring me?"

Having watched him for half the competition at this point, Dan Chi was certain that Jiang Chen would absolutely come out ahead in this topic. He took a look at the other three and saw that their progress was similar. Ling Bi'er was actually slightly ahead, and Mu Gaoqi was neck to neck with Shen Qinghong. Both of them were making steady headway.

Although Mu Gaoqi had an innate wood constitution of high order, his foundation was fundamentally weaker after all, and he'd lacked the sufficient time to grow. Bringing him to the Pill Battles this time was just to expose him to more of the world. Dan Chi hadn't actually expected Mu Gaoqi to try for the championship. After all, even the best potential needed time to grow. Mu Gaoqi was a long term reservoir of battle strength, and he represented the future of the Regal Pill Palace.

"Haha, Dan Chi, my Walkabout Sect will absolutely prevent your Regal Pill Palace from taking the championship again this time! My sect's Wei Xin'er is an innate fire constitution, and the thirty six flames..."

Walkabout Sect head Wei Wuying was about to boast to Dan Chi when he suddenly screeched to a halt halfway through, as if his throat was constricted. His pupils contracted violently as his attention was caught by something in Jiang Chen's direction. It was his first time noticing this nameless young man from the Regal Pill Palace, but he was absolutely unable to move his eyes away!

#### Chapter 539: Champion of Fire Control

As someone who sat as the head of the Walkabout Sect, how could Wei Wuying not see the intricacies of Jiang Chen's movements? A single look was all it took for him to be enthralled by Jiang Chen's techniques. Stunning technique, and a flawless rhythm, even Wei Wuying himself might not be able to replicate this process perfectly, let alone all the young geniuses present. The most frightening thing was, not only was this Jiang Chen completing everything fluidly, he was far ahead of the others.

As a direct comparison, Wei Xing'er, his hopeful champion with the innate fire constitution was actually quite a ways behind Jiang Chen!

Dan Chi laughed leisurely, "I don't know about anything else, but the champion of fire control absolutely won't be coming from your Walkabout Sect today!"

Wei Wuying was speechless, and his gloomy, darkened face became incredibly sinister.

Another commotion started in a different area. “Everyone, look! That Tristar Sect disciple is actually stronger than even Zhu Feiyang?!”

Everyone looked over after this exclamation. It seemed that the fellow named Ding Tong had a mastery of fire control that allowed him to exceed Zhu Feiyang’s speed by a hair. One could even say the former had a clear advantage.

Dan Chi had originally only been paying attention to Zhu Feiyang, and had seen that his speed was comparable to Shen Qinghong. But Ding Tong was even faster than Zhu Feiyang, and even more mind bogglingly faster than Wei Xing’er. Although he was a little behind Jiang Chen, there wasn’t much of a gap between the two!

“Tsk tsk, this is a huge dark horse! It looks like Ding Tong is going to lock down the champion of the fire controlling competition without a sound!”

“I hadn’t believed the rumors beforehand about the rise of the Tristar Sect, but who would’ve thought that Ding Tong would be this extraordinary? Where did he come from? Everyone, have you heard of his name before?”

Tristar Sect Head Zhu smiled demurely. “You don’t need to guess randomly, everyone. Ding Tong is a genius that my sect happened to chance upon. His emergence as a dark horse this time was something we anticipated as well.”

It was obvious that no one had paid attention to Jiang Chen’s performance.

However, at this point, Honored Master Tian Ming from the Dark North Sect suddenly grinned. “While Ding Tong may be good, he’s not the best today. The true dark horse is in the Regal Pill Palace.”

“The Regal Pill Palace?” Everyone turned their attention to that area and were instantly dumbstruck. Much like Wei Wuying, their expressions showed varying stages of petrification and amazement.

Two thirds of the time allotted had passed by now, and Jiang Chen was wrapping up. He’d already ignited thirty of the thirty six flames! And judging from his momentum, the remaining flames weren’t going to slow him down at all. He even seemed like he would light them up all in one go.

This pace was absolutely monstrous. Every single person present was an expert; how could they not understand the significance of what they beheld?”

“What.. What is that youngster’s name?” It was obvious that not everyone knew Jiang Chen, and many sect heavyweights looked curiously at Palace Head Dan Chi.

He smiled, “You all should be familiar with this child. He hails from the Precious Tree Sect and is now one of the most exemplary pill dao geniuses of my Regal Pill Palace.”

Dan Chi purposefully emphasized “one of” as he was also thinking of Mu Gaoqi.

“He’s that Precious Tree Sect disciple? Jiang Chen?”

“No way? The Precious Tree Sect can raise such a genius? Have you gotten something wrong?”

“Are you trying to pull the wool over our eyes, Dan Chi?”

Honored Master Tian Ming spoke up, "This is indeed the Precious Tree Sect disciple. I can bear witness."

Tristar Sect Head Zhu had attended the alliance ceremony and could recognize Jiang Chen after careful scrutiny of his features. He spoke with a darkened face, "It is indeed that Precious Tree Sect disciple Jiang Chen."

A hubbub broke out after Sect Head Zhu confirmed his identity. They obviously hadn't thought at all that this young man would be from the Precious Tree Sect.

"The Precious Tree Sect has such heaven defying pill dao level? I don't believe that!"

"Perhaps this one had stunning pill dao potential and only improved tremendously after entering the Regal Pill Palace?" Several sect heads looked skeptically at Palace Head Dan Chi, anticipating his response.

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled, "He does indeed have superb potential, and we have been focusing our attention on cultivating him since he has joined our Regal Pill Palace."

He naturally wouldn't say much more, glossing over the situation with a few words. As their conversation continued, Jiang Chen had already started tackling the last three flames.

"This boy's fire control techniques are verging on the ridiculous. Ole brother Dan Chi, are these the unique techniques of your Regal Pill Palace?"

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed heartily. "I'm truly not at liberty to say."

As everyone watched in astonishment, Jiang Chen lit the last three flames with a finishing touch of his seal sequence. The instant all thirty six flames were lit, they began to resonate with each other, streams of fire whirling around the formation. The entire formation was activated as a majestic pillar of flame roared into being, a grand finish to his display of prowess..

Each flame was unique in their attributes and abilities, yet all thirty six flames danced in unison.

"All thirty six have been awakened?"

"Formation resonance?"

"This child's potential in fire control is beyond the level of the Myriad Domain! He'd be competitive even if he was placed in the Upper Eight Realms!"

"Incredible, absolutely incredible! Ole brother Dan Chi, you've really happened upon a treasure from the sixteen kingdoms this time!"

"Congratulations ole brother, this is absolutely a supreme treasure! Even I'm a little green-eyed with envy!"

When those assembled looked back over at Ding Tong, he'd only ignited thirty flames, and his speed was dropping with each additional flame he lit. Wei Xing'er was just a step behind Ding Tong, with only one flame separating the two.



Tristar Sect Head Zhu stared fixedly at Ding Tong, mightily encouraging him inwardly. As time counted down, he naturally hoped that Ding Tong could complete summoning all thirty six flames before time ran out. If this was the case, the first competition would end in a draw.

The Pill Battles rankings were determined solely through points. If the points were the same, then the rankings would be determined by the rankings of the previous Pill Battles. Whichever sect ranked higher in the previous Pill Battles would then rank higher this time. If they were in the same sect, then rankings would be based off one's number. The higher one's number was, the higher their ranking.

However, Sect Head Zhu's wishful thinking fell flat. When time was up, Ding Tong was still one flame away from completion, and his frustration was obvious to the crowd. He smacked his right fist viciously into his left palm, angry and dejected. He was plainly quite depressed about not activating the final flame.

Wei Xing'er was in third place, as she'd activated thirty four flames and was second only to Jiang Chen and Ding Tong. The next couple of rankings, which included those participating in the bet, had all only ignited thirty three flames. Ling Bi'er had also produced thirty three flames, with Mu Gaoqi just a single flame behind.

In this way, Jiang Chen's name was guaranteed to be far out in front after the first competition ends. He was also the only one to complete summoning all thirty six flames and according to the rules, he'd be able to receive another forty points. In this way, he'd just received 400 points for the first competition, placing him solidly in the lead. Ding Tong was in second just behind him, ranking at number two with three hundred and fifty points. Wei Xing'er was third with three hundred and forty points.

The scores for those placing fourth to tenth were all the same. They were Shen Qinghong and Ling Bi'er from the Regal Pill Palace, Wei Qing from the Walkabout Sect, Zhu Feiyang from the Tristar Sect, Lin Hai from the Dark North Sect, Yuan Yuan from the Sacred Ape Family of the Great Cathedral, and Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace in that order. They were all at three hundred and thirty points. Mu Gaoqi from the Regal Pill Palace came in eleventh. There were a few others with similar number of flames, but the Regal Pill Palace disciple's ranking still outstripped them.

Overall, the Regal Pill Palace had performed the best in the first competition. Jiang Chen's sudden rise had left a huge dent in the Tristar Sect and Walkabout Sects' plan to challenge the Regal Pill Palace's position.

When he'd first brought up the idea of a fifty thousand upper rank spirit stone bet, everyone had felt that this Regal Pill Palace rookie was merely fearless in his ignorance. It wasn't until the first competition ended that they'd come to understand that he was hiding his talent. Masquerading as a pig to eat a tiger! He had taken full marks in the first competition, and now he was far in the lead! This first competition topic alone had been enough to give him a boost of fifty points ahead of the first runner up.

"Old brother Dan Chi, your Regal Pill Palace really keeps its cards close to the chest, huh!" Tristar Sect Head Zhu's voice held a sour hint of jealousy as he spoke. The overall strength the Regal Pill Palace had displayed had robbed him of his confidence and left him a bit despondent. Even the weakest of the four disciples from the Regal Pill Palace, Mu Gaoqi, was ranked at number eleven after the first round. This display of prowess was quite frightening!

Wei Wuying of the Walkabout Sect was even more dejected. On the whole, his sect had acquitted themselves well. But, his two trump cards of Wei Xing'er and Wei Qing had been his greatest guarantee at seizing the championship, and to their credit, they'd performed well. However, this Jiang Chen's sudden emergence from the Regal Pill Palace had completely thrown their plans on its head! Then a bizarre freak occurrence like Ding Tong had surfaced from the Tristar Sect, pushing Wei Xing'er, someone who he thought was slated to win, down to third. His plans crumbling before his eyes, it was natural that he was depressed.

While others celebrated, there would be always be those wallowing in sorrow. The Tristar Sect took second place overall after the first round, and the Walkabout Sect third. When they left the fire control hall, Wei Qing's gaze was permafrost cold as he sized up Jiang Chen, not hiding his killing intent towards this mysterious disciple. He had to admit that he'd underestimated Jiang Chen. He'd treated this disciple as an unknown nobody before, thinking that Ling Bi'er was purposefully using Jiang Chen as a shield. But now, it seemed that things weren't that simple!

"Don't get cocky yet kid, you were just lucky in the first round." Wei Qing snorted coldly.

"Is that so? Then, I hope you get lucky in the next round and show me." Jiang Chen's smile was just a bit disinterested. His thoughts weren't on Wei Qing at all, because there was an even more frightening source of hostility that he had to stay guarded against. Ding Tong had been a hair's breadth away from him, on the verge of receiving full marks as well. This had greatly surprised Jiang Chen, and he was almost certain that this Ding Tong was definitely beyond the level of the Myriad Domain. Jiang Chen had received full points purely because of the knowledge from his past life and his heaven defying techniques. But Ding Tong had almost received full marks in an equal amount of time, and had only been the barest difference away from him! In Jiang Chen's eyes, this wasn't something that a Myriad Domain level genius could handle. This conclusion was clear just from looking at the the other geniuses. Even the best of the Myriad Domain, Wei Xing'er with an innate fire constitution, had only activated thirty four flames.

#### Chapter 540: Renewed Frenzy

In contrast to Jiang Chen's subtle wariness, in addition to being depressed, Ding Tong was even more shocked after learning of Jiang Chen's scores. He received full marks! This was completely unacceptable to him! As far as he knew, he'd made only the smallest of errors in the first round that had ultimately prevented him from receiving full marks. The difficulty of the fire control competition had been designed to reach the extreme. The smallest of errors would prevent one from successfully igniting all the flames and receiving full marks.

With the level of skill present in the Myriad Domain, no one would ever hope to receive full marks. Even the other top geniuses of the Myriad Domain had only ignited thirty four flames! There's something very off about this Jiang Chen! The amount of killing intent in Ding Tong's heart doubled even as his shock grew.

"No wonder that Palace Head Dan Chi would protect him and the Precious Tree Sect at all costs. His pill dao potential is this perverse! He would be a peak existence even in the Upper Eight Realms! I must kill this person before he has the chance to grow!" Ding Tong had a premonition that Jiang Chen would become the biggest obstacle to the Tristar Sect claiming the championship this year.

A variety of emotions assailed each of the various sect heavyweights. They were both envious and admiring. It seemed that Dan Chi had once again demonstrated his charisma and vision. When he'd allied with the Precious Tree Sect, all of the various great sects in the Myriad Domain had thought him mad, forming a grudge with the Ninesuns Sky Sect for a mere Precious Tree Sect. But now, it appeared that anything Dan Chi did was after careful calculation and consideration.

His potential in fire control alone was enough to astound the entire Myriad Domain. If this kind of person reached full maturity, he would become a heavyweight that would impact the fortunes of the Regal Pill Palace for hundreds of years.

"This Dan Chi really has some charisma to unearth a treasure like this!" They hid their envy, but they also couldn't help but feel admiration for Dan Chi's vision.

After everyone made brief adjustments to their mental state, they went into the second round of the competition.

This time, the topic was preheating the cauldron.

Jiang Chen had experienced this competition many times. When he'd been in the Regal Pill Palace and fought Shen Trifire, he'd used the almost magical method of the "True Fires of Ninety Nine" to render Shen Trifire speechless in his defeat and leave in utter humiliation. When this wondrous way was used, only one ninth of the usual time was needed to preheat the cauldron.

Everyone entered the preheating area in the relevant hall according to their numbers. There was a cauldron in front of everyone, and although it looked simple and primitive in its design, it was obviously no ordinary item. What was even rarer to see was that it looked like the same cauldron was set in front of everyone. No one could find a difference in level or exterior appearance.

"All of you have the exact same pill cauldron in front of you. This is the most common cauldron seen in pill dao, but these particular ones were forged from Frostheart Iron, so it will be more difficult to preheat. However, once it's primed for refining, no other cauldron can match the purity of the pills it refines.

"The rules of this round are that each of you have a basic count of forty breaths. If you complete the preheating in forty breaths, then you'll receive the full marks of four hundred points. Each additional breath of time you take after forty will result in subtracting ten points. If you spend more than seventy breaths, you will have no score for this round."

Completing the challenge within forty breaths would net the candidate full points. Each additional breath after that would result in a ten point deduction, meaning that all four hundred points would be run down after forty additional breaths. Of course, a full point deduction would never happen to these geniuses. No matter how bad they were, they would never use more than 55 breaths to complete the task.

"Alright, now that the rules have been explained, your time starts... now!"

All the cultivators snapped to attention, springing instantly into action. This was a race in which time was points, and each breath was precious. They had to bring every lesson they'd learned in their lives to bear in order to complete this task.

The “True Fires of Ninety Nine” that Jiang Chen had utilized last time naturally made its appearance again. He summoned a flicker of the flames within his body into his palm, and started piling up the flames on top of each other as his fingers flew through hand seal after hand seal. In short order, a raging bonfire was formed around the cauldron. Nine gouts of flame marked each corner, with a total of eighty one flames accumulating in short order.

The sight of the flames stacked atop each other was incredibly magnificent, bedazzling the eyes of anyone watching. Although these eighty one flames looked like they were simply stacked on top of each other, it required a sophisticated technique, deft use of spatial arts, as well as superior observation skills. These skills were all required in abundance, and none of them could be trained overnight.

After Jiang Chen had concluded his competition with Shen Trifire, Mu Gaoqi had badgered Jiang Chen to teach the same technique to him. Jiang Chen hadn’t kept it a secret and had generously taught Mu Gaoqi this method. Even though Mu Gaoqi had yet to advance to the level of grasping all eighty one flames, he could still build up thirty six gouts of flames. If he stacked any more, he would lose control of them and fail to execute the technique.

Jiang Chen needed quite a bit of time to build his True Fires of Ninety Nine, with thirty breaths elapsing in the blink of an eye. But once his setup was complete, he’d be able to shorten the amount of time he would’ve needed to finish preheating to a ninth of that timeframe.

The many heavyweights keeping an eye on Jiang Chen were a bit baffled by his actions. When Wei Wuying saw that Jiang Chen had used up thirty breaths of time already and was still playing with a flashy fire control technique, he couldn’t resist the temptation to mock him. “Ole brother Dan Chi, your Jiang Chen seems to favor showy techniques over substance, hmm? It’s already been thirty breaths, but he’s still accumulating flames. It’s pretty alright, but is a bit of fire here and there actually useful in preheating a cauldron?”

Wei Wuying couldn’t help but jeer openly when he saw Jiang Chen thus. It was obvious that he still hadn’t accepted Jiang Chen receiving first in fire control.

Tristar Sect Head Zhu also laughed. “There are forty breaths given as the basic amount of time and his moves are eye dazzling alright, but...”

His voice suddenly choked off as he stared straight at Jiang Chen, jaw agape. Dan Chi on the other hand, was still quite at ease. Although he didn’t understand why Jiang Chen was doing what he was doing either, with his understanding of his disciple, the latter wasn’t the sort to be flashy without substance. He would never do something that was just emptily pretty.

Indeed, just as Wei Wuying and Sect Head Zhu were halfway through their mocking words, Jiang Chen’s fire ensconced cauldron suddenly resonated with the ringing sound of a dragon’s croon or tiger’s howl. It’d taken him only seven breaths from the time he’d finished stacking his flames to a successful preheating! Add that to how long he’d taken to build up his flames, he’d only spent thirty seven breaths in total.

First again?!

The heavyweights looked at each other, feeling as if they'd suddenly experienced a break from reality. They didn't believe their eyes at all. Just what techniques had this Jiang Chen used to finish preheating a cauldron in eight breaths? This was completely outside the scope of their understanding!

No one else finished their preheating during the rest of the forty breaths.

What was astonishing was that the next person to complete his preheating after Jiang Chen was Mu Gaoqi! One breath after the allotted time, his cauldron rang out as well, deducting only ten points from his score and receiving a total of three hundred and ninety from this round.

When time had ticked to forty two breaths, Wei Xing'er and Ding Tong completed their preheating as well. But since they had gone two breaths past the allotted time, they had twenty points docked and took home only three hundred and eighty points each.

After those two, Wei Qing finished at forty three breaths, and Ling Bi'er at forty four breaths. All of the other top geniuses finished at around forty five breaths, and many more completed their preheating as time went on. The final person finished when sixty breaths had elapsed.

The second round was now over, and Jiang Chen had once again defended his title of champion with full marks. The most stunning thing was that after two rounds of full marks, he now had a score of 800. Although first runner up Ding Tong had also displayed a heaven defying performance, he only had 730 points, a full seventy points below Jiang Chen. Wei Xing'er was in third place with 720 points, leaving her eighty points lower than Jiang Chen.

As for fourth place, no one had anticipated Mu Gaoqi would spring so far from behind. Although he had yet to grasp Jiang Chen's "True Fires of Ninety Nine", his "Minor Fires of Sixty Six" had allowed him to go only a single breath over the time limit, catapulting his score up into fourth place with 710 points.

The overweening Wei Qing was stuck at fifth place with 700 points, and Ling Bi'er at sixth with 690 points. There was a large group with 680 points ranked just behind Ling Bi'er. When the results of this round came out, Jiang Chen once again became the center of attention. This who hadn't looked at him before all began to glance sideways at him.

They hadn't thought at all that this competition would turn out this way. Just what heaven defying techniques does Jiang Chen possess for him to gain full marks in two rounds in a row? Everyone present knew how difficult these competitions were, since this wasn't their first time participating. Even a mysterious genius like Ding Tong hadn't been able to obtain full marks when he'd brought his full efforts to bear, and Wei Xing'er with the innate fire constitution had failed to do so as well since she had yet to reach the level of a great master. But Jiang Chen had done it! And he'd come from a small place like the sixteen kingdom alliance. Although he'd benefited from dwelling in the Regal Pill Palace, he'd only been present for a year or so. Was a year enough to let a minor character from the sixteen kingdoms develop to the point of trampling over them? Who would believe that?

Although Dan Chi was inwardly surprised, he then recalled Jiang Chen's relationship with Elder Shun. He must've received Elder Shun's legacy, and so these scores make sense!

However, those from the Tristar and Walkabout Sect rejected these results with every fiber of their being. They'd hardened their hearts to take the championship from the Regal Pill Palace this time. A

mere Jiang Chen was seemingly enough to send all their plans into disarray; how could they possibly accept this?