

Three Realms 561

Chapter 561: Ding Tong's Background

As the irritating feeling showed no signs of abating, Jiang Chen decided to find a desolate area to stop. He released a batch of Goldbiter Rats and instructed them to set up a perimeter guard in a fifty kilometer radius around him. He himself headed into a deep valley and sat down cross-legged.

His thoughts were in a bit of a mess at the moment, and he had to sit down and meditate to sort them out. He had to at least sort out where this annoying feeling was originating from. If he didn't get to the bottom of this, it would unceasingly dog his thoughts and leave him unable to concentrate on his matters. He didn't want something as wonderful as going on a harvesting rampage through Mt. Rippling Mirage to be marred by some unpleasantry.

"My intuition has yet to prove me wrong since training the Boulder's Heart and Psychic's Head. This kind of hunch is absolutely not a delusion. Since it doesn't seem to be springing from the the dangers of the mountain's interior, there must be an external source. Just who could it come from?"

Jiang Chen's thoughts were still relatively ordered, so he went over everyone who'd been in the batch to enter the mountain. "There should be three in the genius group who hate me with a passion, Wei Qing, Wang Han, and Ding Tong. Wang Han is ranked number eleven, and isn't in the first batch. Although Wei Qing is slightly superior in martial strength, he poses no threat to me. He's still too wet behind the ears to be able to use poison on me. So is it... Ding Tong?"

As Ding Tong's figure floated across Jiang Chen's mind, he began to feel more and more certain that this person was the culprit. Ever since his first appearance, Jiang Chen had felt that this Ding Tong was someone who stood head and shoulders above the peak Myriad Domain geniuses. He was the only one Jiang Chen couldn't see through. Jiang Chen felt like he was inches away from confirming that the other wasn't a simple Tristar Sect disciple.

It might have been that the strength that he was obviously concealing that made it apparent that his level was beyond that of the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen recalled the night that Ding Tong had asked him to step outside. He'd tried to convince Jiang Chen to withdraw from the Pill Battles and join the Tristar Sect. This bizarre occurrence had only made Jiang Chen suspect Ding Tong even more. When he had resolutely rejected Ding Tong's offer, the latter had stated that Mt. Rippling Mirage would be his resting place if Jiang Chen insisted on venturing into the mountain.

Jiang Chen would've thrown those words to the back of his head had they come from anyone else. But he didn't think that Ding Tong was just blowing hot air. It was actually possible that he possessed enough martial strength to be lethal to Jiang Chen.

However, that was only one suspicious occurrence. The geniuses weren't the only ones who'd entered Mt. Rippling Mirage. Any of the others could equally be a threat to Jiang Chen, particularly the old monsters in the elder group.

Any of the ten elders possessed an absolute strength that could suppress Jiang Chen. With his identity as the champion of the Pill Battles, his Longevity Pill, and the wealth that he'd received during the

Longevity Pill auction, all that was more than enough motivation for someone to make a move against him.

A man's heart was incomprehensible, which was why one had to always be on their guard.

Yet, none of this was what Jiang Chen was most worried about. What irritated him the most was the feeling that someone was following him. It was as if the sense of danger couldn't be evaded no matter where he went. It meant that the danger's source was never far from him. It pointed to a single conjecture; he was being tracked, somehow. But... how?

This question refused to fade away, thoroughly irritating Jiang Chen. Therefore, he decided to remain where he was. Instead of walking to and fro, he might as well remain here in wait for the danger to come to him.

After roughly four hours, the Goldbiter Rats standing guard on the perimeter used a variety of methods to send a continuous warning signal to Jiang Chen. Finally, it seems that this mysterious danger had found him. He was actually curious as to who was so determined that they'd follow him into Mr. Rippling Mirage, ignore the slopes and slopes of precious spirit herbs, and focus all efforts on tracking him!

As his thoughts spun, a domineering figure appeared at the entrance of the valley and marched in with great strides.

Ding Tong!

A beam of shrewd light shot out from Jiang Chen's God's Eye when he saw this figure. Ding Tong's consciousness was evidently equally strong, capturing Jiang Chen's position with one glance.

Their gazes locked.

Pfft!

Electricity actually sparked through the air as their respective eye arts exchanged blows in midair. However, it seemed that Jiang Chen wouldn't be losing to Ding Tong quite that easily in this regard.

"Hmm?" A trace of surprise flickered in Ding Tong's eyes before he laughed leisurely. "To think that a little piece of flotsam like you would actually have a bit of ability to your name!"

When he saw that Jiang Chen's response was only an indifferent smile, and the apparent lack of fear on his face, Ding Tong started in surprise. But it didn't last long as he seemed to remember something and laughed even more heartily. "Kid, should I admire your courage or pity your idiocy? I don't seem to see any fear on your face. Can it be that you've forgotten my warning to you?"

Notwithstanding his ostensibly leisurely demeanor, Ding Tong was rather ticked off. He'd tracked Jiang Chen down all this way, just like a proper little prey. But his prey didn't seem to be what he expected, not nervous, wary, or cowering with fear in front of a hunter. The nonchalant smile on Jiang Chen's face just seemed to rub Ding Tong the wrong way.

"Fear? And who the hell are you to make me feel fear?" Jiang Chen looked at Ding Tong like he was looking at a complete fool.

Ding Tong didn't rouse to anger as he laughed coldly. "A glib tongue won't save you, nor will pretending to be calm. Jiang Chen, whether you're pretending to be calm or are truly idiotic, I can tell you with the utmost certainty that the only way you're leaving the mountain today is in an everlasting dream!"

Jiang Chen's expression changed. "Ding Tong, what do you want to do?!"

Ding Tong felt a sweet thrill run through him when he saw Jiang Chen's expression finally change. "What, now you know to be afraid? Aren't you something, even the champion of the Pill Battles? What a pity, it was both the most glorious day of your life... and the last!"

Jiang Chen turned both aghast and livid. "Just because I took your championship?"

Ding Tong sniffed contemptuously. "A mere Myriad Domain championship? What do I care about that?"

"Hmph! If it isn't for the championship, we have no grudges between us. What reason do you have to do anything to me?" Jiang Chen growled.

"Hahaha, no grudges!" Ding Tong clapped loudly. "Well said, we do indeed have no grudges between us. However, the sight of you just pisses me off and I want to kill you. What are you going to do about it?"

"The sight of me pisses you off? What kind of reason is that? Senior brother Ding Tong, is it that you want my spirit stones? I can give all of them to you!"

Ding Tong laughed proudly when he saw Jiang Chen start to beg for mercy. "Aren't you naive? That's right, I'll take your spirit stones and all the goodies in your ring. However, that's after I kill you!"

Jiang Chen was ashen-faced by now, his voice turning into a pleading rasp. "Senior brother Ding Tong, we can talk about anything! I declined your demand to withdraw from the Pill Battles, but you also said that you don't care about the championship. I can give you all the stones if you just tell me the reason. Right, I have a Longevity Pill here that I can also give you. I can even give you the pill recipe if you want it..."

"The Longevity Pill recipe!" Ding Tong's tone sharpened. This was indeed a treasure. He was only interested in the spirit stones because there were ten million of them. He couldn't be bothered with anything else. However, the Longevity Pill recipe was a far different case.

Ding Tong knew that if he obtained this heaven defying recipe, it would absolutely be an enormous stroke of fortune for him. Even someone ten times stronger than him wouldn't be able to decline the recipe, much less him. "You have the recipe!"

Jiang Chen hastily responded, "How would I be able to refine the pill if I didn't have the recipe? Senior brother Ding Tong, I'll willing to offer up the Longevity Pill if you let me off. I can also teach you if you don't know how to refine it! You want me to join the Tristar Sect? I'll announce that as soon as I leave! I don't owe the Regal Pill Palace anything anyways!"

Ding Tong's lip curled up in a disdainful smirk. "The Tristar Sect! Jiang Chen, I can give you a quick death on behalf of the recipe, and I'll even spare your people when I leave. However, if you don't hand it over nicely and force me to use soul searching methods, you'll be in for it then!"

"Soul searching methods!" Jiang Chen's expression changed drastically. "How does the Tristar Sect have such vicious methods?!"

“The Tristar Sect!” Ding Tong laughed heartily and suddenly unleashed his aura. A baffling strong aura uprooted the earth and shattered the air.. It was... the aura of an earth sage realm cultivator!

“You...!” Jiang Chen’s face was the color of dirt as he stumbled a few steps backwards. “You’re an earth sage realm cultivator!”

Ding Tong’s cultivation level was actually on par with Palace Head Dan Chi! Although Jiang Chen had been putting on an act earlier, he was still a bit surprised to see Ding Tong’s true strength. This show of his was meant to purposefully leave himself open so that Ding Tong would reveal his background. Now that Ding Tong had revealed his true strength, he was absolutely certain that Ding Tong was no mere Tristar Sect disciple.

“You... you’re not a Tristar Sect disciple.” Jiang Chen stammered.

“So you’re not a complete idiot. What the hell is the Tristar Sect? What a bunch of trash! The Sky Sect has set up this pawn for so long, but in the end, it can’t even cause the slightest ripple in this garbage region.”

“The Sky Sect! You’re from the Ninesuns Sky Sect?” Jiang Chen suddenly discovered a kernel of truth amidst the blather.

Ding Tong smiled dismissively. He naturally didn’t care that someone he’d mentally consigned to death had recognized him. “Hand over the pill recipe and I’ll leave you a complete corpse for your last rites!”

Jiang Chen spoke as if he had a bitter taste in his mouth. “So you’re from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Then this means that the Tristar Sect has long since flocked to the Sky Sect’s banner?”

He recalled that when the Regal Pill Palace had allied with the Precious Tree Sect, the Tristar Sect Head Zhu had been the one who’d proposed having the Regal Pill Palace compete with the Sky Sect envoy. If Jiang Chen still didn’t understand that the Tristar Sect was a spy for the Sky Sect, then he’d truly be an utter fool.

“Since you’ve come to understand the true nature of events, then you should know that your actions towards the Sky Sect are unforgivable!”

“Because I killed old monster Sunchaser!”

“What the hell is Sunchaser? You killed Long Juxue! That innate azure phoenix constitution was earmarked as a cultivation cauldron for the third senior brother of the Ten in my Sky Sect! Third Senior Brother Yong Xingyun trains in the Dragon Phoenix Sword and was a mere step away from a breakthrough. You killing Long Juxue meant you broke his path of martial dao! You tell me, who in this world can save you now? Who can save you?” Ding Tong looked at Jiang Chen as if he were looking at a dead man, a cold smile twisting his face.

“Then, you were just making empty promises when you said I’d have a future that would be ten times that of the one in the Regal Pill Palace!”

Ding Tong laughed loudly. “It seems your idiocy is ultimately curable after all. I tempted you with all that just because I didn’t want to spill blood then. I was going to take you back to the sect so Third Senior

Brother could personally take care of you. Jiang Chen, it's you who gave up an opportunity to live longer!"

Chapter 562: Who's the Prey Now?

"Jiang Chen, on behalf of the pill recipe, I can make an exception and answer any of your final questions. You can die a knowledgeable ghost." Ding Tong had no other impression of Jiang Chen other than prey already in his grasp.

"Did you purposefully come down from the Ninesuns Sky Sect to the Myriad Domain to kill me?" Jiang Chen suddenly asked.

"You think far too highly of yourself. Coming here just to kill you? Do you think you command that much face? You hop up and down in the Myriad Domain, but you're just a small cockroach in the eyes of the geniuses of my sect. I, Ding Tong, was originally here to help the Tristar Sect put their plans into motions. You're just something I'm taking care of on the side."

The geniuses of the Sky Sect were all quite confident and sure of themselves. With Ding Tong's background of the Sky Sect, he didn't even think much of Tristar Sect Head Zhu, much less than Jiang Chen. Although the sect head's cultivation level was just a bit superior to Ding Tong's, Ding Tong was less than one tenth the sect head's age. With the latter's potential and cultivation, he naturally wouldn't think much of a sect head from a mere Lower Realm region.

As for Jiang Chen, although his pill dao potential was stunning, Ding Tong was using the mighty gaze of a superior in assessing the Myriad Domain. So, he naturally didn't place much importance on Jiang Chen. In the Upper Eight Realms, pill kings were as common as chickens, and great pill masters as numerous as dogs. How would a fourth rank sect like the Regal Pill Palace, someplace without a pill king to their name, ever enter his eyes?

Their own Ninesuns Sky Sect had nine manors and more than three thousand divisions. Even if the Sky Sect wasn't founded for pill dao, they had at least a dozen pill kings on a stipend, to speak nothing of anything else. So what did he care about a mere pill dao genius from the Regal Pill Palace? If it wasn't for the Longevity Pill being radically above the Myriad Domain's level, and Ding Tong having verified its effects with his own eyes, he wouldn't have thought much about it either.

"That means your Ninesuns Sky Sect has long since had the desire to swallow up the Myriad Domain?" Jiang Chen flung out another question. "The Tristar Sect has likely existed in the Myriad Domain for many years already."

"Hmph. Doesn't a small character like you feel embarrassed asking these kinds of questions? You're hard pressed to save even yourself, and here you are worrying about the Myriad Domain. How laughable!" Ding Tong looked at Jiang Chen as if he was looking at an idiot. "If the Tristar Sect hadn't been supported by my Sky Sect, how would a mere fifth rank sect have risen to fourth rank so easily?"

He waved his hand impatiently. "Enough of the idle chatter. Don't think that delaying tactics are going to save you. There's no one else in a radius of a hundred kilometers, and no one will be able to save you even if they come flying to your rescue! Jiang Chen, are you going to hand over the recipe like a good boy and wait to die, or do you want me to do it myself and search your soul!" Ding Tong's face darkened, his patience reaching its end as his killing intent flared.

Jiang Chen suddenly grinned. "Is your appetite that small, hmm? A mere Longevity Pill recipe is enough to buy you off? I also have the recipe for the Pine Crane Pill that can extend the lives of emperor realm cultivators for five hundred years. Wouldn't you rather have that too? I also have a magnetic golden mountain with an unending source of metal power, don't you want it? Not to mention the exotic variant of a divine level Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Don't you want that? Oh right, I haven't even brought up the blood and two crystals from a true dragon. Aren't you interested in any of that?"

Jiang Chen flipped over his hand to display a few dragon crystals. He tossed them lightly in the air, a bizarre curve to the edges of his lips.

Ding Tong's pupils abruptly contracted rapidly as his eyes lit up with enthusiasm. It was obvious that he had also recognized what Jiang Chen was casually playing with. Those were true dragon crystals! It was a first for even Ding Tong to recognize a dragonic aura that was so pure.

"Do you... do you really have the blood of a true dragon?" He whispered.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely and took out another small flask. "You don't believe me?"

When the stopper to the flask was flicked open, the massive presence of dragon blood filled the air, making Ding Tong's body twitch involuntarily. A look of unparalleled greed instantly appeared on his face. He murmured, "It really is the blood of a true dragon! Kid! It looks like I've completely underestimated your wealth! I was originally just going to kill you to fulfill Third Senior Brother's orders. To think that there was such an unexpected surprise in this little errand! Hahaha, it looks like I made the right move in coming to the Myriad Domain this time!"

Ding Tong laughed proudly. It'd been the sect who'd sent him here, and he hadn't been too pleased about it to begin with. He was just fine training in the Sky Sect's abundantly rich spirit energy. In his eyes, being sent to the Myriad Domain was no different than being exiled to the border or a wasteland. Therefore, it was only because he had to follow orders that he was here.

But now that he saw Jiang Chen take out the dragon crystals, Ding Tong was utterly delighted. He'd never dreamed that items as extraordinary as dragon blood and crystals was hidden in such a forsaken place. One had to realize, a drop of such pure dragon blood was hellishly difficult to obtain even in the Upper Eight Realms! As for dragon crystals, although they weren't as precious as dragon blood, they were still exceedingly rare treasures. If he could obtain the pieces in Jiang Chen's hand, his personal wealth would soar to stunning levels, not to mention the incalculable benefits that the dragon blood would bring him.

Ding Tong stopped laughing and gazed deeply at Jiang Chen, his lips drawing back into a teasing smile. "Jiang Chen, it looks like I owe you some sincere thanks for making this trip worth it. In return, I've decided to make your death a less painful one than normal. So I'll ask you one more time, are you going to hand over the recipe nicely or do I have to do it myself?"

Ding Tong's aura, the aura of an earth sage realm cultivator, was a terrifying thing. He was also in the mood to purposefully terrorize Jiang Chen, so he exerted his aura to its maximum, floating into the air. After all, one could fly when one had an earth sage realm cultivation.

Ding Tong looked down from a lofty height, as if a solemn god descending to the earth. His very presence covered a span of several thousand meters. Although Ding Tong had the ability to search one's

soul, he didn't particularly want to use it. It was particularly draining on the consciousness, and there wasn't even the guarantee of complete information. Besides, it was much more pleasant to force Jiang Chen down with his aura and capture him without a single drop of blood spilt. Completely suppressed, the prey would then hand over the Longevity Pill recipe of his own initiative. In Ding Tong's eyes, if Jiang Chen didn't want to suffer through torture before his death, his best choice was voluntary participation. Ding Tong looked down at Jiang Chen from a position of superiority, judgement in his gaze as he examined his prey.

"I'll give you ten breaths of time." There was a finality in Ding Tong's tone as if all he saw in front of him was Jiang Chen's cooling corpse. His aura surged and roiled, crashing onto Jiang Chen as if thousands of mountains in rapid succession. Ding Tong felt that Jiang Chen would collapse before ten breaths had elapsed.

However—

To his great surprise, Ding Tong actually discovered a smile playing about the corners of Jiang Chen's lips. This smile was actually quite bizarre, and almost seemed to have a trace of mockery hiding within it.

"You can actually still smile?!" Ding Tong's gaze was like the tundra before he suddenly wondered whether Jiang Chen had been scared completely out of his wits. Shouldn't he be looking on in horror and shivering out of fear by now?

"And why can't I? Ding Tong, it seems I need to sincerely thank you too."

"What are you thanking me for?" Ding Tong's gaze was akin to absolute zero at this point. For some reason, Jiang Chen's smile was going the extra mile in pissing him off. This idiotic excuse for prey simply didn't have the self awareness of knowing when it was being hunted. Ding Tong decided to change his mind. Regardless of whether Jiang Chen handed over the pill recipe or not, he would certainly not have an easy death no matter what. That smile was irksome enough to deserve a slow torturous death. Jiang Chen would only die after he'd suffered as much as he could.

"First of all, thank you ever so much for telling me that there's no one around for a hundred kilometers. I owe you a second thanks for telling me that there's an idiot called Yong Xingyun hiding and waiting for me up ahead. It would've been a great bother if I'd reached the Upper Eight Realms without knowing that someone had already put me in their sights, wouldn't it?"

Ding Tong started in surprise, and immediately began laughing loudly. "Do you still think you have a future?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "I certainly have a future, but you definitely don't."

Ding Tong's pupils contracted violently as he laughed; a cold, cutting thing, "A mere fifth level origin realm? Are you sure you're not talking crazy?"

Jiang Chen didn't respond as he smiled faintly, "Tell me what cultivation level your third senior brother Yong Xingyun is. I'll see if he has the privilege of having me remember him."

One had to say, Ding Tong was completely flabbergasted at this flippant attitude Jiang Chen was displaying. At this point, he was wondering whether Jiang Chen's brain had just fried itself. Had he so utterly lost his mind when faced with a struggle of life and death that he'd started spouting this idiocy?

“Do you think I’ll let you off just because you pretend that you’ve gone insane? An origin realm ant like you, are you even worthy of asking about my Third Senior Brother’s cultivation level? But since you’ve asked, I won’t mind opening up your eyes. Third Senior Brother sits right now at the peak of the sage realm, at half step emperor realm. Even that Dan Chi of your Regal Pill Palace can never dream of reaching this stage, never mind a mere insect like you!”

Ding Tong suddenly felt that explaining so much to an ant was a bit beneath himself. His expression darkened. “Jiang Chen, looks like you’re refusing a toast to drink a forfeit instead.”

Jiang Chen nodded. “Half step emperor, hmm? This makes things a bit more interesting. I suppose if Long Juxue hadn’t died, she actually would’ve pushed him into the emperor realm if she’d properly functioned as his cauldron.”

Ding Tong laughed coldly. “As long as you know.”

Jiang Chen had completely cleared up all of his doubts at this point. He smiled faintly at Ding Tong. “Ding Tong, the biggest mistake of your life wasn’t joining the Ninesuns Sky Sect. But rather, even as a Sky Sect disciple, you’d made your way to the Myriad Domain. From there, of the series of bad decisions you’ve made, the worst of your crimes was to come and irritate me like this.”

“Brother Long, it’s up to you!” Jiang Chen chuckled softly as he swiftly backed away.

Before Ding Tong could react, a black light exploded in front of him. In the very next moment, he felt like the very air around him had been sealed, encircled by numerous invisible nets. An aura that was no inferior to his, like that of a god’s descent, filled the void.

“What the hell?” Ding Tong growled. Although he was inwardly surprised, he was still a genius of the sixth level sage realm after all. An unexpected situation was hardly enough to rock his composure.

He lifted his hands, and brought them down in a motion that resembled two great blades cleaving through the waves. He hurtled forwards, propelled by the wind, as if he wanted to slash through the cage of air that had trapped him. Two hand blades cut through the space like white tipped waves and crashed into the invisible nets with an explosive bang.

Clang!

Rays of black light shimmered in the air. Something that looked like black scales was crisscrossing through the entire area, completely locking down the space. Ding Tong’s attack had created an ear piercing shriek, but had otherwise proved to be completely useless, like a rock sinking into the ocean.

“How is this possible?” Ding Tong was breaking out in a cold sweat. A faint foreboding feeling was crawling up his spine as he faintly felt that things weren’t looking so hot. He’d thought that Jiang Chen’s calm earlier had been a ploy, but now, here, something in his analysis had gone terribly, awfully amiss.

Chapter 563: Destroying Ding Tong

As an earth sage realm genius, Ding Tong was a true disciple even in the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Although his strength was too lacking to rank him among the ten great true disciples, he was still strong enough to rank within the young sect geniuses’ top three hundred. He had participated and survived many of the Upper Eight Realms’ trials by fire, walking the line between life and death multiple times. However, all of

those experiences paled before the sense of fear that flooded his body at this moment. The Regal Pill Palace genius who had seemed to be prey, had in fact been looking at him as prey all along.

He'd acted so nervous and frightened earlier plainly because he wanted to toy with Ding Tong and solicit intelligence.

Ding Tong suddenly realized that despite him treating Jiang Chen as a fool, the tragic truth was that he was the real fool.

Wham, wham, wham!

No matter how Ding Tong charged it, he was unable to break through the black cage that trapped him. He was on the verge of panic as he roared loudly, "Jiang Chen, just what trick are you using? What the hell is this? Don't tell me that this is a formation!"

A faint smile crossed Jiang Chen's face as he casually responded, "Ding Tong, aren't you a genius of the Ninesuns Sky Sect? Decisive and resolute, don't you view all life as common dirt? What seems to be the problem? Now that you're experiencing that feeling for yourself, how does it feel?"

Ding Tong bit out his words. "Jiang Chen, I confess that I underestimated you, but do you dare do anything to me? If I fall here, the entire Myriad Domain will accompany me as my grave offerings!"

"And who are you trying to scare, huh!" Jiang Chen sniffed dismissively and shouted, "Brother Long, stop playing. I have no more time to waste; make your move!"

A speck of light the size of a mustard seed suddenly flashed in the air, transforming into an enormously large figure which bared its fangs and brandished its claws.

"A... a true dragon!" Ding Tong's eyes went wide like he was scared witless. His face was ashen as a bitter taste filled his mouth.

"Jiang Chen... I surrender, I surrender!" Ding Tong's very soul was lost in the depths of fright as the aura of a true dragon descended on him. How could he not realize his death was practically staring him in the face? Even the proudest genius would feel a primeval fear rising within them when faced with impending death.

But now that things had developed to this point, how could Jiang Chen be so foolish as set the tiger free to return to its mountain? Long Xiaoxuan's body danced as he flexed his claws, whipping through the air to snag Ding Tong's body. The latter was as helpless as a newborn chick in front of the dragon.

"Mercy, mercy!!" Ding Tong screamed hoarsely. "Don't kill me Jiang Chen, I'll be your dog!"

"Brother Long, do you think I need this kind of dog?" Jiang Chen smiled.

Long Xiaoxuan chortled and opened his mouth, throwing Ding Tong in. Ding Tong didn't even have time to protest when the dragon's mouth closed with a sickening crunch.

Crunch, crunch.

Ding Tong's cry of agony hadn't even echoed before Long Xiaoxuan swallowed, very like he was eating a plate of stir fried beans. Ding Tong's soul core didn't even have time to flee. With Long Xiaoxuan's

cultivation level at peak sage realm, and his body of a true dragon, he was capable of battling first or even second level emperor realm experts as long as he had a bit more time to mature. A mere sixth level sage realm Ding Tong was incapable of summoning even the slightest defense in front of Long Xiaoxuan's Dragon Domain.

The Dragon Domain was one of the dragon race techniques that Jiang Chen had bequeathed to the dragon back them. A technique that used draconic aura and scales to form a cage in mid air, bluntly put, it was a true qi forcefield that sealed the opponent. It was notoriously difficult to escape since the draconic aura alone could cause the collapse of a weaker opponent's consciousness.

For all his faults, Ding Tong had still been the disciple of a great sect in the end, so his performance had been up to par. Long Xiaoxuan had obviously reached an initial level of success in the Dragon Domain technique. A normal sixth level sage realm cultivator would've had his consciousness shatter right where he stood, never mind trying to break free of the Dragon Domain.

Ripples of emotion still rocked Jiang Chen's heart as he watched Long Xiaoxuan swallow Ding Tong. Jiang Chen didn't regret Ding Tong's death, but his appearance had greatly shocked Jiang Chen. Although he had an ace fighter in the form on Long Xiaoxuan now, Jiang Chen still felt the information he'd learned to be highly alarming.

First and most importantly, the Tristar Sect was the Sky Sect's pawn in the Myriad Domain! That alone testified to the amount of time the Sky Sect had been laying the groundwork for their plan, as well as how assured they were of success in the Myriad Domain. With this, Palace Head Dan Chi's great ambitions of uniting the Myriad Domain was diametrically opposed to the desires of the Sky Sect.

Although this conflict was still in the shadows, once it was brought forward to the light, it would not take much for the Sky Sect to swiftly crush the Regal Pill Palace.

"I must find a way to let Palace Head Dan Chi know of this." Jiang Chen felt that his sense of honor impelled him to do so. However, how should he bring it up? Tell the palace head that he killed Ding Tong, a sixth level sage realm genius himself? What would the palace head think after that? Would he be able to keep Long Xiaoxuan's secret?

It was altogether obvious that he wouldn't be able to spill the truth. And even if he did reveal the Tristar Sect as the Sky Sect's pawn, his current identity wasn't enough to make anyone in the Myriad Domain believe him. It would only plunge the Regal Pill Palace into deep suffering and maybe even incite conflict beforehand.

When he thought about an enormous organization such as the Sky Sect setting up its plans throughout the Myriad Domain, Jiang Chen felt a heavy weight on his heart. No matter how much of a fuss the Regal Pill Palace kicked up, no matter how domineering the Great Cathedral was, they would still just be trampled by the Sky Sect's absolute power. The only reason the Sky Sect had yet to make their move was because they hadn't finished setting up the chessboard, or had some other reservation holding them at bay.

Once open conflict was triggered and there was no need for subterfuge, there was no force in the Myriad Domain capable of standing up to the army of the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Even all of the sects added together in the Myriad Domain wouldn't constitute a tenth of the Sky Sect. Two or three emperor realm

cultivators from the Sky Sect and a host of sky sage realm experts would be enough to sweep the entire Myriad Domain, to say nothing of anything else. This was the danger from the greater picture of things.

And on the individual level, Jiang Chen was already being targeted by a true disciple of the Sky Sect before he'd even left the Myriad Domain, and a true disciple ranked in the top three of the sect at that! If Ding Tong's words were to be believed, Yong Xingyun's strength as of right then sat at the peak of the sage realm, half step emperor realm. If this kind of cultivation really did descend on this area, then even Long Xiaoxuan would likely only be able fight him to a draw, much less Jiang Chen.

However, an ace fighter such as Long Xiaoxuan shouldn't be deployed in the first place. Accidental exposure might just create the situation of defending the front door from the wolf but letting the tiger in the back. If he didn't reveal Long Xiaoxuan's existence, he might only elicit Yong Xingyun's attention. But if he did reveal the former, then he'd elicit attention from the entire Divine Abyss Continent. Even the old Titled Great Emperor monsters would come to try and enslave the dragon. After all, having a dragon steed would be an unheralded glory in the Continent.

"Strength, it all comes down to not having enough strength in the end," Jiang Chen sighed. Although he had Long Xiaoxuan as a trump card, he still felt a deep sense of inadequacy when faced with such an enormous entity as the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Even if he could reveal Long Xiaoxuan at any time, the dragon's current strength wouldn't be able to easily contend against the Sky Sect. Despite his rate of cultivation shooting forward recently, Jiang Chen's physical foundations from the Eastern Kingdom were simply too poor. If it hadn't been for all his fortuitous occurrences, he likely would've still been dithering about in the spirit realm.

Compared to peers his age, Jiang Chen already counted as a top genius of the Myriad Domain. But those of the Upper Eight Realms were born with golden spoons in their mouths. Their innate potential and the resources available to them were all greatly superior compared to Jiang Chen. The only advantage he had were the memories from his past life, but even those were unable to replace the effects that cultivation resources brought.

Compared to the top geniuses who'd benefited from long term access to rich resources, Jiang Chen had only been able to draw upon proper resources after he'd entered the Regal Pill Palace. However, he'd only joined the sect for less than a year, a completely insignificant amount of time. Yet, Jiang Chen firmly believed that as his resources continued to grow richer, his training would certainly be able to catch up.

"Let's not think so much. The harvest in Mt. Rippling Mirage is the perfect opportunity to accumulate resources. This comes about once every thirty years, and who knows if I'll even be in the Myriad Domain in the next thirty years?" Jiang Chen flung aside all these random thoughts and decided to treasure what was at hand. n-)OvelbIn

So what of the Ninesuns Sky Sect! Even someone as strong as his father in his past life, the Celestial Emperor of all realms, had been destroyed in the face of the cataclysm! The Sky Sect was a first rank sect alright, but it was far from a good reason for Jiang Chen to halt in his path. He believed that the Sky Sect would absolutely investigate Ding Tong's death, but once Mt. Rippling Mirage was sealed, it would be very difficult for the Sky Sect to launch their investigation. Unless they blatantly destroyed the restrictions around Mt. Rippling Mirage and forcefully tried to blunder in, but even then time would still wash away clues. Who could tie it to Jiang Chen then?

Not to mention that even if Jiang Chen admitted that he killed Ding Tong, likely no one would believe him, not with Ding Tong's cultivation level. There were also no signs of battle at the scene. Long Xiaoxuan had instantly killed Ding Tong, so any clue left behind would be even harder to discern. He looked around and ascertained that there were no traces of anything before hastily leaving the area.

Jiang Chen finally stopped at a place a few hundred kilometers away after traveling for half a day. He looked around and discovered that he was close to a lake. The lake was a glossy blue mirror, as if a natural gem embedded into the ground. It reflected the green mountains in the surroundings, further enhancing the view. When Jiang Chen saw how stunning the scene was, he immediately recognized it as a place endowed with the energy of the universe. A place such as this would absolutely be nurturing treasures.

He looked around and noted no signs of any human tracks. Apparently this was a place yet to be discovered by anyone. He extended his consciousness and surveyed the area with the God's Eye, actually noting more than a few true saint rank spirit herbs dotting the landscape.

"This is a good place alright! Truenet Flower, Moonheart Grass, Snakeform Ganoderma, Azure Vine..." Jiang Chen's eyes roved over the spirit herbs brightly, quickly identifying all of the true saint spirit herbs. Spirit herbs at this level were no ordinary items. Any of them were exceedingly precious. With Jiang Chen's current position in the Regal Pill Palace, he'd likely have to go to quite a degree of effort to obtain true saint rank herbs. But it was precisely this level of herbs needed to refine true saint rank level pills.

In particular, the Saintnet Pill! If cultivators at the peak of the origin realm obtained this pill, then their chances of successfully assailing the sage realm would rise by thirty to fifty percent. This meant to say that even if one hadn't properly set up the foundations for the sage realm, this pill would still give them a great boost to succeed when they were trying to ascend to the sage realm!

Chapter 564: The Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine

Jiang Chen no longer stood on ceremony and summoned a group of Goldbiter Rats, marking the beginning of his voracious looting. However, he personally harvested the true saint spirit herbs. Harvesting spirit herbs of this level required a bit of technique. The Goldbiter Rats could be used for transportation, but Jiang Chen decided to do things himself when it came to higher level spirit herbs. He'd feel quite heartbroken if even a single one was damaged.

He finished collecting the roughly dozen true saint herbs around the lake very quickly, then glanced at the waters again. "What a pity I have the wood spirit spring already. Otherwise, taking this lake away with me would be a good idea as well."

Although this lake wasn't a spirit spring, it was clearly awash with spirit power since it nurtured so many spirit herbs. If he could take it with him, it would be a good tool to use to cultivate spirit herbs. However, the wood spring was superior to this lake, so it didn't hold any allure for him.

After the Goldbiter Rats cleared a rough circle around the area, there weren't many good pickings left by the lake. Jiang Chen raised his foot, about to leave, when his gaze suddenly halted on the lake. He almost doubted his eyes as he looked rather incredulously into the waters.

Reflected onto the waters was a pale yellow pine tree, but no such tree stood on the opposite shore of the lake.

“This...” Jiang Chen froze in his tracks and looked disbelievingly at the scene. “Is this a delusion?”

He suspected that he had seen incorrectly, but once again noted the reflection when he peered at the water’s surface. However, this time, the pine tree seemed to be green in color instead. A look of delight blossomed on his face as he smacked his head. The sight had stirred a certain memory in his head. He circled the lake and made for the other shore.

When he’d meandered in a few circles on that shore, Jiang Chen suddenly made a hand gesture. Metal energy flowed from his body, pervading the immediate surroundings in an instant. The very next moment, a stunning event occurred.

A ramrod straight pine tree, roughly three meters tall, materialized in front of Jiang Chen.

“Haha, it really is the Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine! I’ve made it, I’ve really made it!” Jiang Chen was overjoyed. If it hadn’t been for the reflection on the water surface, he would’ve overlooked the existence of the Cloudpine.

He smacked his forehead again. “And here I thought I’d picked up some treasures with a dozen true saint rank spirit herbs! I almost overlooked the really good stuff.”

It was obvious that this Cloudpine had just started growing. It was only three meters tall, thus marking it as no more than twenty years old. This meant that it had just matured past a sapling. Although this Cloudpine really wasn’t anything from a celestial perspective, it was of the sky rank in the mortal plane. What true saint rank, earth rank—all of them could shove over in front of the Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine!

This was an entity that was of solid sky rank, and of a higher level of existence amongst all sky rank flora. What was even more frightening was that the Cloudpine would ascend into higher and higher ranks as it grew. The Cloudpine that Jiang Chen had seen in his past life had been far greater than sky rank. But this one had just been born, and so could only be ranked in the sky rank for now. This particular species of pine had a constantly shifting, ever-changing appearance as its color and shape often morphed.

Its greatest characteristic was that it could use this transformation ability to conceal itself. Ordinary eyes, even ones trained in various eye arts, would be hard pressed to discover its existence. This “hidden” characteristic even extended beyond hiding its appearance to concealing its very presence.

Jiang Chen would’ve missed this tree had it not been for sheer coincidence. “The Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine is reflected in water and revealed by metal. This is a real Cloudpine alright! What a stroke of fortune, great fortune!” Jiang Chen circled the Cloudpine a couple of times, excitement filling his heart. Even if he left Mt. Rippling Mirage right now, he could still count it as a profitable trip after gaining the Cloudpine. He’d originally planned on just coming in to loot the area of its true saint rank spirit herbs and raid another round of saint rank herbs. He’d left to the hands of fortune as to whether he’d be able to find any earth rank herbs.

But who would’ve thought that his luck would be so good as to run into a sky rank spirit tree? This Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine was no ordinary spirit tree. Its entirety was a treasure. Its pine needles

would shed once a year, with its potential increasing one level each time it did. The pine leaves and needles it shed were all exceedingly precious pill refining materials. It would also bear fruit once a year. Although it wouldn't bear that many fruits, but the pine cone of the Cloudpine was one of the two major ingredients in refining the Pinecrane Pill!

If the Longevity Pill was claimed as a pseudo-earth rank pill used to extend the lives of sage realm cultivators, then the Pinecrane Pill was a solid sky rank pill that extended the lives of emperor realm cultivators. Of the two major ingredients required to concoct it, one of them was the pinecone of this Cloudpine.

One Longevity Pill had been enough to make those old monsters at the peak of the sage realm stir themselves into a frenzy. Following that logic, one Pinecrane Pill was likely capable of disturbing even the emperor realm old monsters of the entire Divine Abyss Continent. Possibly even great emperor level cultivators would take heed.

This was because each Pinecrane Pill had a fifty percent chance of success even if consumed by those in the great emperor level. If the Pinecrane Pill extended an ordinary emperor realm cultivator's life by eight hundred years, then a great emperor would receive three to five hundred years. This made this pill's value several hundred times greater than the Longevity Pill's.

However, refining the Pinecrane Pill required some exacting conditions, and utilized ingredients several hundred levels higher than the Longevity Pill. Take the Cloudpine pinecone for instance. It was normally an ingredient difficult to locate in the entirety of the Divine Abyss Continent, and there was no substitute for it in the Pinecrane Pill recipe. The other main ingredient, the Goldencrown Cloudcrane heart, was actually easier to find. Yet both were equally important to concoct the pill.

Even if one had a thousand Cloudcrane hearts, they would still be useless without the Cloudpine pinecone. It would still be impossible to refine the Pinecrane Pill. It was said that the pine crane extended life, which was how the pill had come by its name. Both ingredients were crucial for the pill to be successfully refined!

Even so, refining the Pinecrane Pill wasn't the most precious use of the Cloudpine. Its most cherished use lay in the area of refining weapons. Its branches may not be sharp enough to refine into weapons, but they were uncommonly useful in dispelling spirits and averting evil. The Cloudpine's ability naturally countered monsters and demons.

In the world of cultivation, there were those that specialized in monsters, demons, and ghosts. They were the epitome of evil to cultivators who specialized in proper martial dao legacies. The former were always exceedingly hard to deal with if anyone ran afoul of them, as this kind of cultivator was hard to track and possessed eccentric techniques, making them difficult to defend against. They had all sorts of evil items and vicious methods to ensnare an opponent before they could muster a defense. However, if one had a weapon refined from Cloudpine with them in those moments, not only would the weapon sound a warning, but it would also play a key role in eradicating those evil beings. A weapon made of Cloudpine could easily kill evil entities that precious weapons forged of metal were unable to take out.

Therefore, a Cloudpine weapon still occupied a high position in the greater picture of things. With this weapon in hand, all evil spirits and entities would be left unable to approach. It was a form of unseen insurance, and was a classic example of the theory that all things had a natural counteragent.

The five elements nurtured each other in turn, so this Cloudpine would grow faster when growing in waters with a dense spirit qi concentration. No wonder it had found a home on the shores of this lake.

Transplanting this pine tree wasn't an easy task. Jiang Chen spent several hours before finally moving it into his space ring. To ensure that the Cloudpine wouldn't weaken or begin to decline, he even purposefully doused it with water from the wood spirit spring. It was a good thing that the Cloudpine had just matured past a sapling and wasn't too big, just a tad over three meters. Jiang Chen on the other hand, was naturally transporting much of the wood spirit spring with him.

Once the Cloudpine was moved, the spirit energy that had accumulated was immediately released. Jiang Chen instantly knew that this was a bad development when he saw the spirit energy spreading. He'd thought of all contingencies but had forgotten this point. The energy that had been produced by the Cloudpine had been stored into the soil beneath it. But now that the tree had been removed, the accumulated energy that had yet to be digested was instantly released and transformed into a beam of spirit light that shot up into the sky.

"This is bad!" When Jiang Chen saw the spirit light shoot up, he knew that his doings here would be exposed soon if he didn't leave. It would be a tricky matter if those with ulterior motives came and realized the existence of such a treasure. Although he wasn't afraid of trouble, he didn't want to be entangled with the newcomers if they happened to be an elder or two. It was all the same to him, but if he ran into those from the Walkabout Sect or Sacred Sword Palace, they would certainly harbor thoughts of killing on their minds.

Jiang Chen wasn't afraid of anyone making trouble for him since he had Long Xiaoxuan. But this lake extended in all directions and was obviously not a secluded area. If he summoned Long Xiaoxuan here and alarmed others, that would create only greater trouble for himself. Therefore, he would choose the best strategy out of the thirty six stratagems. Jiang Chen decided to flee.

A short while after he'd left, two figures quickly arrived at the lake, plainly drawn by the phenomenon of spirit power rising to the air. The two visitors were from the Walkabout Sect, and were a duo of an elder and young genius. The elder was the champion of the elder group in the Pill Battles, Elder Wu Hen, and the younger was Wei Qing.

The two rushed to the banks of the lake and saw the remaining spirit power still geysering out without stop. It seemed that the energy stored by the Cloudpine wouldn't dissipate that quickly. n-)ø/)v--e.(l)-b--1./n

Elder Wu Hen's triumph over Elder Yun Nie to seize the championship of the elder group was an unspoken testament to his potential in pill dao. Although it had been partially due to the skyfire, his talent in pill dao was still above reproach. Elder Wu Hen frowned after circling once around the lake. "There must have been a very high level spirit herb here, and one that's just been taken by someone else."

Wei Qing asked curiously when he saw Elder Wu Hen so cautious. "How high level?"

"If my guess is correct, it should be a sky rank spirit herb!" Elder Wu Hen spoke gravely.

"What?! Sky rank?" Wei Qing was greatly taken aback. There hadn't ever been a sky rank spirit herb cultivated in the entire history of the Walkabout Sect! One had to understand that normally only

emperor realm cultivators had the ability to use earth rank spirit herbs. Those who could use sky rank herbs were few and far in between. Only Titled Great Emperors had the right to occasionally use them, but it was still difficult for them to be able to use it on a normal basis. This meant that even Titled Great Emperors would fight over sky rank spirit herbs!

Chapter 565: Intent After Glimpsing Wealth

Killing intent instantly appeared on Wei Qing's face as he looked into the distance. "Elder Wu Hen, the person who snatched the sky rank spirit herb should've gone in this direction. Why don't we catch up to him..."

He didn't finish his words, but both of them knew what he wanted to say. Elder Wu Hen had a steady personality and knew that it was an extreme taboo to kill within Mt. Rippling Mirage. If news leaked, it would create friction between the great sects and even spark all out battles. But the lure of a sky rank herb was greatly tempting.

"Elder, if we pass this one up, there won't be any more chances. If he manages to get a fair distance away, it's likely he won't even admit to it if we find him." Wei Qing encouraged, "With one sky rank herb, our Walkabout Sect might be able to cultivate emperor realm cultivators. By then, our sect will be able to summon the wind and rain in the entire Myriad Domain, and reign over everything!"

The various great sects had vied with each other ever since the Myriad Empire had fallen. There wasn't a single one who didn't harbor the desire to dominate the Myriad Domain, lord over the rest, and become the dictator of the Myriad Domain. The Walkabout Sect was no exception to that burning ambition.

Elder Wu Hen took a moment to think, and nodded. "Let's do it, but we need to act with utmost confidence. In my eyes, the person who's taken the sky rank spirit herb likely isn't of the elder group. Those old farts are all cunning and wily. None of them would care about this spirit power geysering to the sky. It's most likely a young genius."

Wei Qing leered. "A young genius is best. He'll be easier to handle."

Elder Wu Hen nodded. "No matter what, it has to be clean. If the target is a young genius, you can go lull him into carelessness first. I'll ready some methods to trap him. Otherwise, if he wished to escape, he'd be able to leave whenever he came in range of the transportation matrixes."

The transportation matrixes covered a large area within the mountain. If one ran with all their might, they would be able to reach a matrix's range within four to six hours. If they were lucky, they would even be able to run into one within fifteen minutes and be able to escape after crushing the jade token. Even emperor realm cultivators would be unable to stop the person from absconding then.

Wei Qing chuckled and gave his elder a thumbs up. "Elder's thoughts are the most thorough after all. It's definitely the oldest gingers that are the spiciest!"

The duo picked up speed and sped towards the traces they'd picked up. One had to say, Elder Wu Hen was quite something; his perception was even more sensitive than a dog's. Jiang Chen had shielded his presence as much as he could along the way by suppressing his aura, but the residual spirit power from the Cloudpine still left a detectable trace on his body. If he had the time to sit down for an hour, he could absolutely refine the spirit traces on his body and become truly invisible. But he was well aware

that if he did, he might face an even greater danger. Mt. Rippling Mirage was big, but if he was unlucky, it'd be highly likely that someone would set their sights on him. That bit of spirit power surging into the air was far too large to avoid alarming anyone nearby. They would come barreling in his direction before too long.

Jiang Chen's speed was already quite fast, but Elder Wu Hen was a fourth level sage realm cultivator. His speed naturally surpassed Jiang Chen's. It didn't take long before Elder Wu Hen's consciousness swept in front of him to find Jiang Chen speeding along on the ground. In addition, that wisp of spirit power around Jiang Chen was the same as the one from the lake.

"It's him!" Elder Wu Hen was greatly taken aback. Wei Qing was only barely managing to keep up because he had activated his flight rune and was following along in the elder's wake. When he discovered that the person below was Jiang Chen, Wei Qing was delighted beyond measure. This really was stumbling across something by chance after traveling far and wide in search of it! If he had to pick someone he wanted to kill the most in this time's Pill Battles, Jiang Chen would absolutely rank first.

It wasn't just because of the bet that'd been brought to shambles, and not just because for he'd lost the championship of the genius group in the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles. The most basic reason was Ling Bi'er and that utterly dismissive attitude Jiang Chen had shown in front of him. That kind of attitude was what Wei Qing found hardest to accept from anyone. He would've managed to handle it had Jiang Chen been as arrogant as Shen Qinghong.

However, a mere fifth level origin realm like Jiang Chen, a mere ant, dared put on airs in front him, Wei Qing! And he dared show off his love with Ling Bi'er as well—utterly inexcusable. Even though he felt that Ling Bi'er had been using Jiang Chen as a shield, this shield was simply too cocky and too irritating. How would killing intent not bubble from the depths of Wei Qing's heart? He suddenly started chuckling coldly. "Elder Wu Hen, is this killing three birds with one stone?"

"What three birds?"

"The sky rank spirit herb, the Longevity Pill recipe, and my grudge with this kid. This is three birds at least." Wei Qing's tone dripped with viciousness. As he looked at Jiang Chen below, his gaze was that of looking at a dead person.

"Circle past him!" Elder Wu Hen activated a rune that would conceal one's presence but didn't descend. He swooped past Jiang Chen and put Wei Qing down a few kilometers ahead. "Wei Qing, he has to pass through here. You keep him here while I go make some preparations. Don't let him get away."

Elder Wu Hen was being extremely cautious. Even when the situation was similar to a lion hunting down a rabbit, he felt that he still had to bring his full strength to bear. This opportunity was a once in a lifetime chance. He knew that he would regret it for the rest of his life if Jiang Chen escaped.

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Meanwhile, although Jiang Chen was covering ground with every iota of speed he could muster, he also hadn't let his guard down. He had deployed his consciousness to its fullest extent, and Psychic's Head immediately sensed enormous danger coming. This forewarning wasn't any less than the one from Ding Tong pursuing him. "It looks like someone's still set their sights on me in the end." Jiang Chen sighed

tragically and halted, looking behind him to see just who had come in pursuit. But no matter who it was, he wouldn't be treating the situation lightly.

Apart from Mu Gaoqi, every single one of the first batch who'd entered Mt. Rippling Mirage possessed cultivation levels that were in excess of his. If he didn't summon Long Xiaoxuan, he would be in for a tough fight no matter who he ran into. If it was one of those earth sage realm elders, he'd have no other choice than to flee if he didn't summon Long Xiaoxuan.

Jiang Chen didn't want to cause trouble, but that didn't mean he was afraid of trouble. If someone really was so blind as to keep forcing him down a narrow road, Jiang Chen didn't mind sending them down the same path as Ding Tong instead. I will not strike back if no one gives offense, but if someone offends me, I have no problem returning it tenfold.

Jiang Chen was still rushing forward while thinking when God's Eye focused on something in the distance. He suddenly screeched to a halt. "Wei Qing!"

Jiang Chen was a bit taken aback. It was obviously not a good thing that Wei Qing had appeared here, and judging that all-knowing expression and relaxed posture, he'd been lying in wait. But Jiang Chen had approached from the opposite direction, only to run into Wei Qing waiting in the front. Did he have the ability to see into the future? Multiple thoughts quickly ran through Jiang Chen's mind.

"Jiang Chen, if I recall correctly, I warned you long ago to not bump into me in Mt. Rippling Mirage. Why is it that you can't seem to remember that, hmm?" Wei Qing spoke with exaggerated tones as he sized up Jiang Chen with a mocking look.

Jiang Chen flicked his glance casually over Wei Qing, smiling derisively. "Is this mountain your home? Or did you build this road? I walk where I want; what can you do about it?"

Wei Qing was slightly surprised. When Jiang Chen had been cocky in Rippling Mirage Hall, Wei Qing had understood that to be a result of his sect's backing, and that Jiang Chen hadn't believed that Wei Qing would really do anything with Ling Bi'er off on the side. But now, Jiang Chen was caught out all alone. Shouldn't he have been shuddering with fright now that he'd bumped into Wei Qing? How was this kid's cockiness still unaffected?

"Idiot!" Wei Qing spat out with a cold smile. "You're probably still dreaming, thinking this is the Rippling Mirage Hall! Do you think that old fogey Yun Nie can still cover for you? Do you think Ling Bi'er can still protect you?"

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow impatiently. "So the so-called top genius in the Walkabout Sect is only good at running his mouth? What do you want to do? I don't have time to waste on you right now."

His thoughts were indeed not with Wei Qing. Jiang Chen was certain that Wei Qing had caught up from behind. Jiang Chen could also capture the traces of spirit power on Wei Qing's body, just like Wei Qing had done on him. Both had clearly originated from the Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine.

Therefore, Jiang Chen was certain that Wei Qing had managed to overtake him from behind and was here to stop him. However, there was no way he would be able to do that from the ground. Jiang Chen strongly suspected that Wei Qing had flown through the sky. But in order for that to be true, it was highly likely Wei Qing had a comrade, and one whose strength was at the sage realm. Therefore, Jiang

Chen was in no mood to spar with Wei Qing. He kept using Psychic's Head to continuously scan where the other was hidden.

"Kid, I admit that you really can put on an act. Let's speak frankly. Hand over the Longevity Pill recipe, the sky rank herb you've just obtained, and then kill yourself for your sins. Then I'll consider leaving you as a whole corpse." Wei Qing's tone was domineering, as if his words dictated the natural order of the world and that he, Wei Qing, ruled over the Myriad Domain. His tone was that of one qualified to pick from other people's lives and wealth at his whim.

"Are you dreaming?" Jiang Chen couldn't help but be taken aback by Wei Qing's naiveté.

Wei Qing leered. "Don't be a fool! Do you dare say that you didn't receive a sky rank spirit herb just now? Dare you say that you don't have the Longevity Pill recipe on you?"

Jiang Chen smacked his head and displayed a bizarre smile. "Well now, I happen to actually have both of those. Now how about that? You want them?"

Wei Qing was delighted to see Jiang Chen admit to it. He immediately flashed a vicious smile. "I want it all, and also your cheap, base life!"

Jiang Chen's consciousness suddenly sensed a sliver of another presence. He had been humoring Wei Qing thus far to try and discover where the other person was. When he sensed a trace of another consciousness, Jiang Chen felt a jolt. It was the presence of that Elder Wu Hen!

Jiang Chen snorted softly. "Wei Qing, you really are shit. Do you travel with a house servant? Pardon me, but I won't be hanging around to play any longer."

With that, he turned and dashed into the thick forest off to the right.

Chapter 566: Killing and Counter Killing

If it'd just been Wei Qing, Jiang Chen wouldn't have hesitated in immediately summoning Long Xiaoxuan to make quick and decisive work of him. But the elder in the shadows made the duo difficult to deal with. He knew there was a decent chance of destroying the two with Long Xiaoxuan, but it wasn't an absolute guarantee. The Walkabout Sect was well known for being adept at using poison, and Long Xiaoxuan had come off worse in the exchange when he'd battled Wei Wudao back at the spirit spring. Elder Wu Hen was stronger than Wei Wudao, and if he managed to make any preparations to catch Long Xiaoxuan off guard, the situation would rapidly turn dangerous.

Jiang Chen wasn't brainless; The fact that Elder Wu Hen was still hiding his presence was a dead giveaway that he was setting up a devious trap. If Jiang Chen couldn't get away immediately, they would spring the trap and he would really be in trouble.

"Trying to leave, huh?" Wei Qing flashed a hint of a sinister smile when he saw Jiang Chen want to leave. He immediately charged at Jiang Chen without hesitation. "Kid, how far do you think you'll get, huh!?"

Jiang Chen didn't even turn his head. "Come after me if you dare!" He didn't fear a mere Wei Qing. The focus of his concentration was Elder Wu Hen. Although Wei Qing was the top genius of the Walkabout Sect, his martial dao strength wasn't on par with Wang Han and Zhu Feiyang, the other geniuses at first

level sage realm. His cultivation level was more than a small step away from Shen Qinghong at peak origin realm, half step sage realm.

His skill with poison was the reason he was listed among the top geniuses. His martial cultivation was only at peak eighth level origin realm. As for poison skills, it amounted to nothing but child's play in front of Jiang Chen. What Jiang Chen feared the least was poison.

When Wei Qing saw how Jiang Chen's tone was still as arrogant as ever as he fled, his rage only increased. If it'd been Shen Qinghong doing this, Wei Qing would've raised his guard some. But a mere fifth level origin realm? Not to mention the edge that his poison arts gave him? Wei Qing felt that he would've been able to trample Jiang Chen even without these. Killing intent surged in his heart as he saw Jiang Chen flee further and further. He'd really be made a laughingstock if word got out that he'd let Jiang Chen slip through his fingers. An elder and genius of the Walkabout Sect unable to hold and capture a mere fifth level origin realm young man? This would absolutely be a great humiliation.

"Stay, kid!" Wei Qing suddenly flung his arm out as he sent a few poison thorns shooting forward.

As Jiang Chen hastily leaped forward, he learned of a poison formation set up in front of him that covered a few kilometers. He naturally wasn't afraid of it, but knew that if he passed easily through it, it would set off alarms in the other's mind. Therefore, as he bounded forward, he formed a couple of plans in his mind. When he heard Wei Qing's footsteps thudding behind him, he knew that Wei Qing was in close pursuit.

Jiang Chen suddenly stumbled, falling into a shrub. As he vanished beneath the branches, he activated the Lotus and had one of the vines transform into his double to lie in wait in the bushes. Jiang Chen himself was brought into the earth by a lotus and quickly tunneled through the earth, controlling a hundred lotuses to seal off the area. He'd be able to use the vines to truss Wei Qing up as soon as he came close. Jiang Chen wasn't planning on using the Lotus to immobilize Wei Qing forever, he just needed a moment to guarantee a killing blow.

Wei Qing was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen stumble into the shrubbery, but he was delighted as he sped to catch up. But he was naturally cautious, stopping when he was a hundred steps away from Jiang Chen. "After all that, that's all you got, kid?"

Wei Qing was thrilled to see that Jiang Chen sprawled between the bushes as he spasmed in apparent pain. "Aren't you supposed to be quite something? Don't you have a senior sister protecting you? Aren't you supposed to be the Pill Battles champion?" Wei Qing was working himself into a lather as he spoke, noticing that they were within the vicinity of Elder Wu Hen's poison formation. At that moment, he knew that Jiang Chen was done for, and strode over to him. He stuck out his foot and stepped on Jiang Chen a few times. "Why don't you keep strutting around, huh? A fifth level origin realm trash dares to throw his weight around me, huh?"

Wei Qing laughed heartily. "Elder Wu Hen, this kid is done; we don't need to set up an ambush for him." He'd just finished speaking when the foot he'd rested on Jiang Chen's body was suddenly constricted. He looked down to find a vine entangled around his entire leg. It'd actually wrapped itself ten times around his ankle, all the way up his thigh. What the hell is this? Wei Qing was scared out of his wits. He'd never seen such a bizarre scene. How could someone who was about to die suddenly turn into a vine?

Countless vines suddenly appeared from around him as he pondered, shooting towards him like numerous vipers.

No!

Wei Qing wasn't an idiot, he knew that he had fallen into Jiang Chen's trap. But by the time he'd understood, it was too late. The vines had wrapped themselves around his limbs, and there were multiple ones entwined around his chest and waist. He was more wrapped up than a triangular dumpling. This development made Wei Qing's expression change drastically. "Elder Wu Hen, save me!"

Elder Wu Hen had been lying in wait behind Wei Qing as he set up the formation. He revealed himself when he heard this cry and was equally surprised to see Wei Qing's bedraggled state. Those vines were simply too baffling and too bizarre. He took to the air and flew towards Wei Qing. However, he'd only just jumped up into the air when his pupils suddenly contracted violently. He looked fixedly behind Wei Qing, a trace of fear appearing in his expression. "How dare you, Jiang Chen you little thief!"

When Wei Qing saw that Elder Wu Hen dash towards him but come to a halt screaming Jiang Chen's name, he'd be an idiot to not realize that Jiang Chen was behind him. Jiang Chen was standing fifty meters behind Wei Qing at that moment, Sunpiercer drawn back to its fullest extent and the notched arrow locked onto Wei Qing's life from afar. "Wu Hen, if you take another step forward, this bow will have no mercy when it fires."

Elder Wu Hen roared furiously, "Don't you dare, Jiang Chen!"

Jiang Chen flicked his eyebrow. "Try moving forward another thirty steps, I'll gladly let you collect Wei Qing's corpse!"

He relaxed his draw a little, and let Sunpiercer twang. Whoosh! An arrow drew an arch through the air like a meteor, instantly sinking into Wei Qing's thigh.

"Ah!!" A ghastly, agonized scream reverberated amongst the clouds as Wei Qing's thigh acquired a new hole.

Jiang Chen laughed, his expression not even flickering. "Elder Wu Hen, it looks like you don't care about Wei Qing's life or death anymore."

Elder Wu Hen yelled out in a severe tone, "Jiang Chen, if you dare kill Wei Qing, it will be the beginning of a war between the Walkabout Sect and Regal Pill Palace!"

"Bullshit!" Jiang Chen laughed coldly. "So you hunting me down is right and proper, but me killing you in return will start a war. What kind of shitty, idiotic logic is this?" He didn't keep wasting time with Elder Wu Hen. "Take another step forward if you dare!"

Elder Wu Hen lifted his foot, but didn't dare place it forward. Wei Qing had been heavily favored as a genius in the Walkabout Sect. Even Sect Head Wei Wuying valued him highly. He had already been earmarked as a future successor from the current young generation. Thus, he could only grit his teeth, not daring to make a move. He raised both hands. "Jiang Chen, I can refrain from moving forward, but you have to release Wei Qing first."

“Release him?” Jiang Chen burst out laughing. “What kind of nonsense are you coming up with at your age? What, I’ll let him go so you two villains can team up to come after me again?”

“Then what do you want?” Elder Wu Hen growled.

“Nothing much, we can just wile away the time here. Everyone will transport out automatically when time is up, or we’ll have whoever passes by here judge the situation.”

Elder Wu Hen responded coolly. “Let him go first. Wei Qing needs medical attention after taking that arrow. Leave if you want; I swear that I won’t do anything to stop you.”

“And how can I trust you?”

“What will it take for you to?” Elder Wu Hen was quite shrewd.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Swear to the heavens and earth.”

Elder Wu Hen hesitated for a moment, his simmering rage obvious on his face. “Alright, I’ll do as you say. Don’t go back on your words then.”

He then pointed to the sky and swore, “I, Wu Hen of the Walkabout Sect, swear to the heavens and earth that I will not make a move to stop Jiang Chen from leaving. If I do, then may the heavenly tribulation descend to annihilate me.”

This kind of oath was very powerful. No cultivator, even Great Titled Emperors, would dare swear to the heavens easily. Once you did, you couldn’t go back on it. When this kind of oath was broken, thunder and lightning would descend onto the earth to destroy the oath breaker.

Elder Wu Hen glared at Jiang Chen after swearing. “I’ve already sworn the oath, so you can let go of Wei Qing now!”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, mockery all over his face. “Elder Wu Hen, do you think that you’re the only smart person beneath the heavens?”

Elder Wu Hen’s expression shifted. “Jiang Chen, what do you mean by this?!”

“Stop pretending!” Jiang Chen suddenly grinned and shot another arrow.

Pfft!

This one drilled through Wei Qing’s other thigh.

“Ah!! Elder Wu Hen, save me!!” Wei Qing screamed continuously in pain.

Elder Wu Hen’s expression changed drastically as he roared with rage. “Jiang Chen, you’re going back on your word! Don’t think I really won’t dare kill you!”

“Kill me? You run your mouth as if you don’t want to kill me. If you weren’t afraid of involving Wei Qing, you would’ve likely killed me ten, or even a hundred times over by now!” Jiang Chen laughed coldly as he jeered at Elder Wu Hen.

“You old bastard, trying to play those kind of tricks at your age! You swore not to make a move yourself, but the poison formations around this area will be able to keep me here, right? Even if they can’t, your

summoned creatures will be able to ambush me from behind, right? You've kept a lot of plans up your sleeve, but do you think those parlor tricks are of any use?"

Jiang Chen couldn't help but admire this old fox. He'd put on that pained front just now and pretended to be enraged, as if reluctantly making that oath. All of this had actually just been an act. The old fox had long since made his preparations with the poison formations and summoned creatures lying in wait beneath the ground ready to deal Jiang Chen a fatal blow at any time.

With these backup plans in place, why would he possibly need to make a move himself? However, how would a perceptive person like Jiang Chen not realize what devious tricks this old fellow was playing at? Besides, the creature that this sly fox had sent out was laying in wait beneath the ground. How could it evade the Lotus' pursuit?

Chapter 567: Plotting and Scheming

Elder Wu Hen was a circumspect and farseeing person. He had indeed played a small trick when he'd sworn that oath, leaving himself many loopholes to take advantage of. However, he hadn't imagined that his carefully constructed plot would be exposed with a single word by Jiang Chen. This was a huge surprise to Wu Hen, and left him speechless.

He was finally realizing in this moment that he couldn't view Jiang Chen as an ordinary genius disciple. Although this Jiang Chen was only fifth level origin realm, he was absolutely a formidable foe. If it wasn't for Wu Hen being present, Wei Qing's chances of making it out alive would've been very low if he'd run into Jiang Chen by himself. There was nothing more convincing than the truth at hand.

"Jiang Chen, I admit that I underestimated you. Killing someone is just the simple act of making their head touch the ground. Tell me, what will it take for you to let go of Wei Qing?" Elder Wu Hen shifted moods very quickly. Not only did he not get enraged by Jiang Chen revealing his plan, but he immediately set aside considerations of face and negotiated directly with Jiang Chen, putting on the act that he was admitting defeat.

But the more he acted this way, the more on guard Jiang Chen was. Those of the Walkabout Sect were highly flexible. They could be domineering when needed, or endure when they had to. These types of people made for the scariest foes.

"Let go of Wei Qing!"

Jiang Chen grinned. "When you two plotted to ambush me, did you think of letting me go? But now that he's in my hand, you want me to let him go?"

Elder Wu Hen's tone was cold as he sized up Jiang Chen's surroundings with eyes like a viper. "What do you want to do, if you don't want to let him go? Kill him? If you kill him, I will most certainly kill you. You're just a fifth level origin realm. Are you so naive to think that you'll be able to escape my blow of thunder!"

Jiang Chen admitted that if it came down to a fight, he had no chance of winning against a sage realm cultivator. But that didn't mean that he was afraid of Elder Wu Hen. Jiang Chen had many trump cards in his sleeve even without his ace of Long Xiaoxuan. He had an eighty percent guarantee of making it out with his life even if he couldn't beat Elder Wu Hen.

“Old fox, don’t pride yourself on your seniority. If you really are as great as you say, Wei Qing wouldn’t be in my hands right now.” Jiang Chen rebutted rudely.

Elder Wu Hen was shrewd, since no matter how Jiang Chen insulted him, his expression never changed. His face was like a vast and deep sea, making it difficult for others to read his inner thoughts. He spoke convincingly with a look of solemn gravity. “It’s good for young people to have flair, but you also need to understand how to judge the hour and size up the situation. You’re wasting a great deal of time here. Why don’t we call a truce? There are countless spirit herbs in Mt. Rippling Mirage, do you want to pass up this chance to get rich with open hands? Although I suspect that you’ve gotten a sky rank herb, but have you thought that even if you kill Wei Qing, you’ll become public enemy number one within this mountain as soon as I leak this news? Even if you leave the mountain beforehand, do you think you can guarantee that this herb will remain in your hands?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “That seems to be something I should be worrying about, not you. You’ve spoken so much, but all you’ve been giving off is a feeling of false charity. According to your words, I rather need to beg you to keep my secret, hmm?”

“As long as you let go of Wei Qing, we promise to not tell a fourth person that you’ve obtained the sky rank spirit herb.” Elder Wu Hen promised solemnly.

Jiang Chen flashed a mocking smile. “Do you want to swear another oath to the heavens to gain my trust? How do you plan on creating a loophole this time? You won’t tell a fourth person, but you’ll tell a group of them. It won’t be only a fourth person then, there’ll be a fifth, sixth, and seventh. That still leaves an enormous loophole for you, doesn’t it?”

Elder Wu Hen was chock full of devious schemes, always leaving a backdoor for himself when he spoke. It was a good thing that Jiang Chen was on his guard against this kind of person. Therefore, he wouldn’t believe anything Elder Wu Hen said.

Elder Wu Hen was inwardly startled again. He had the oddest feeling that the person he was dealing with wasn’t a young man at all, but rather another old fox. He had so many fallbacks in place, but Jiang Chen hadn’t missed a single trick so far. So this time, he didn’t retort, but rather smiled faintly. “Jiang Chen, I won’t bother to defend myself since you don’t believe me. You word the vow that you want me to swear. Will this do now?”

He was only playing for more time because he’d secretly sent out a message glyph notifying the other elder of his sect of what had happened here. As soon as that elder arrived and the two of them joined forces, it would be easy enough to destroy Jiang Chen with one in the open and one in the shadows. Elder Wu Hen wouldn’t agree to anything that Jiang Chen asked for right now. His priority right then was to stabilize the situation. His comrade would be here in at least half a day, or at most a day.

Elder Wu Hen was absolutely certain that he would be able to obtain the sky rank spirit herb in the end. If Jiang Chen really left Mt. Rippling Mirage, he would have no chance to seize the herb out in the open. Therefore, he had to keep Jiang Chen here no matter what cost he needed to pay. He could even sacrifice Wei Qing if he had to. But things hadn’t reached that step quite yet, so he didn’t want to take a risk with Wei Qing’s life just yet. After all, he would be hard pressed to explain himself if he returned with a dead Wei Qing.

He would only take this step if there was no other choice. Wu Hen believed that even if he sacrificed Wei Qing for the sky rank spirit herb, he would still be pardoned if he returned with the spirit herb. Wei Qing was outstanding, but he was only a genius. There were still a few others just as exemplary as Wei Qing in the Walkabout Sect. In addition, although he was skilled in poison, his potential in martial dao wasn't the best. It was a fatal flaw in the otherwise impressive Wei Qing.

Compared to Wei Xing'er's innate fire constitution, Wei Qing lacked a great deal in potential as well. Thus, if it was Wei Xing'er, Elder Wu Hen might not have dared sacrifice her, since not only did she possess a fire constitution, she was also a direct descendant of the sect head.

Jiang Chen wasn't willing to continue wallowing in this mire either, he was furiously brainstorming how to escape. The most domineering way was to summon Long Xiaoxuan and swallow Elder Wu Hen. However, Jiang Chen was worried that the elder might have trump cards up his sleeve and use poison on Long Xiaoxuan. The dragon had fallen victim to the Spirit Restraint Powder already at the wood spirit spring. This Elder Wu Hen was noticeably more ruthless and vicious than that Wei Wudao. No one could guarantee that he didn't have anything else lying in wait. Then, if Long Xiaoxuan was enthralled, Jiang Chen would be left in a dire situation then. Therefore, Jiang Chen didn't want to go head to head with the elder in a territory in which he'd set up poison formations.

After thinking silently for a while, Jiang Chen formed a plan. "Old fox Wu Hen, I can release Wei Qing, but it's not likely that you'll give up on the sky rank spirit herb even if I want you to. How about this, I'll add two conditions. I'll release Wei Qing immediately if you can meet them."

"What are they?" Elder Wu Hen responded noncommittally.

"First, the matter of the sky rank spirit herb cannot be revealed in any shape or form whatsoever. Secondly, you cannot prevent my departure in the next four hours in any shape or form. I will let Wei Qing go if you can meet these two conditions. However, given that you like to play tricks, you must swear to the heavens to these two conditions using the name of the Walkabout Sect. The heavens themselves will annihilate your sect if you go back on your word."

A light flashed through Elder Wu Hen's eyes. This kid is certainly ruthless!

"Then what about four hours later?" He asked faintly.

"If you have the ability to track me after four hours, then that's up to you. I won't complain."

Elder Wu Hen thought momentarily and nodded. "Alright, then we'll settle on that. However, don't you play any tricks either. What if I swear but you still don't let go of Wei Qing, what then?"

"I will naturally also swear to not move against Wei Qing in any shape or form."

Elder Wu Hen closely pondered for a moment and felt nothing amiss with these arrangements. He had many ways to find Jiang Chen after four hours as long as the latter didn't leave the mountain. Judging from Jiang Chen's posture, he wasn't willing to leave Mt. Rippling Mirage either.

"I'm adding a condition that you can't leave the mountain before time is up." Elder Wu Hen said faintly.

"What business is it of yours if I leave or not?"

Elder Wu Hen smiled slightly. “Why act dumb? If you leave the mountain, how will I seize your spirit herb then?”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “Good, good! You should’ve been this straightforward from the beginning. Men die for wealth, and birds die for food. I promise you that I will not leave this mountain before the full twenty days are up. However, accordingly, you will need to add that once time is up, you cannot try to seize the spirit herb in any shape or form once we leave.” He wouldn’t be able to take it from me anyway once we leave, even if he has the ability to.

“That’s fine.” Elder Wu Hen snorted coldly inside. As if us two sage realm cultivators can’t track you down within twenty days!

“Then swear to this. Remember, don’t play any tricks. Wordplay won’t fool me so take advantage of this chance to stop playing tricks. If you try anything else, I’ll cancel our agreement at any time.” Jiang Chen reminded with a icy smile.

“I, Wu Hen, swear to the heavens and earth that I will not reveal the existence of the sky rank spirit herb in any shape or form...”

“Add another line of whether within Mt. Rippling Mirage or after you leave.” Jiang Chen reminded him.

“I, Wu Hen, swear to the heavens and earth that whether in Mt. Rippling Mirage or outside it, I will not reveal the existence of the sky rank spirit herb in any way, shape or form. I will also not seek to stop or track Jiang Chen in any way, shape or form in the four hours after he leaves. If I violate these two promises, then may the heavenly tribulation descend to annihilate my Walkabout Sect!” Elder Wu Hen didn’t bother playing any tricks and did as Jiang Chen said.

Just as Wu Hen was making this solemn vow, Wei Wuying suddenly sneezed randomly outside Mt. Rippling Mirage. After Wu Hen made this vow, he stared at Jiang Chen. “Now it’s your turn.”

“I, Jiang Chen, swear to the heavens and earth that I will not make a move against Wei Qing in any way, shape or form. I will not leave Mt. Rippling Mirage within the twenty day time limit, or may heavenly tribulations descend to annihilate me.”

The two analyzed each other’s vows and couldn’t find any flaws.

Elder Wu Hen nodded as a vicious look surfaced in his eyes. “In this case, go. I’ve promised not to do anything in the next four hours, but I’ve made no promises for after that.”

Jiang Chen smiled bizarrely. “Bring it on four hours from now then.” He then made a hand seal and had the Lotus retract, vanishing in front of Elder Wu Hen’s eyes with a flicker of his body.

Chapter 568: A Dejected Elder Wu Hen

When he saw Jiang Chen vanish from his field of vision, a dense killing intent was birthed in Elder Wu Hen’s heart. It was the first time he’d gotten the feeling of going all out against someone and still finding it a difficult battle—and this was against a mere fifth level origin realm! If it’d been any other occasion, a fifth level origin realm was but an ant in Elder Wu Hen’s eyes. He could destroy the other with a mere flip of his hand. Why would he have to go to such lengths?

All his precautions and schemes today had failed, and he'd had to resort to swearing an oath which allowed Jiang Chen to leave in style. Although he was confident that he wouldn't have a problem tracking down Jiang Chen, allowing him to leave with such flair was no small humiliation.

As for Wei Qing, he still had two holes drilled through his thighs. He took advantage of his newfound freedom to swallow several pills and apply some external medicine to his wounds. Although the medicines weren't of the level of crafting new flesh over bone or reviving the dead, their effects were still praiseworthy. Wei Qing's wounds quickly recovered to the point where they didn't affect his movements. He walked over to Elder Wu Hen, nursing a bellyful of hate. "Elder, you let the kid just leave like that?"

Wu Hen rolled his eyes. "What would happen to you if I didn't?"

Elder Wu Hen was actually very dissatisfied with the current situation. If it hadn't been for Wei Qing underestimating their foe, how would they have ended up in these straits? Food that had been on the verge of entering their mouths had flown away. Although it was assured that they'd find it again, it would still consume much more time and effort to trap now. Wei Qing felt both humiliated and buoyed by Elder Wu Hen's counter question. "I'll go after him!"

"You shut up!" Elder Wu Hen roared furiously, glaring at Wei Qing. "Not good enough to accomplish anything, but more than enough to spoil things! Do you want our sect to be judged by the heavenly oath if you go chasing after him now?!"

Wei Qing was taken aback by Elder Wu Hen's vehemence before he remembered this matter and was greatly embarrassed, particularly when he heard the elder's first line. Hearing "Not good enough to accomplish anything, but more than enough to spoil things" was as if a whip had just snapped across his heart, bringing him enormous shame. However, no matter how arrogant he was, he wouldn't dare throw his weight around in front of Elder Wu Hen.

Even though Elder Wu Hen wasn't the strongest elder in the Walkabout Sect, he was the one with the highest pill dao potential in the Walkabout Sect. He was ranked as one of the top five people within the sect. No matter how much potential Wei Qing had, at the end of the day, he was still only a genius with potential. He was still a wet behind the ears rookie compared to one of the most influential elders. And, it was true that he had been the cause of the trap going awry. If he hadn't been captured because he'd underestimated Jiang Chen, it was highly unlikely Jiang Chen would've left so easily.

Wei Qing was a proudly aloof genius in the end, and he couldn't just sit there and be lectured harshly by Elder Wu Hen. He blurted out, "This Jiang Chen is really bizarre! Elder Wu Hen, your poison formations didn't have the slightest effect on him! Does this kid not fear our poison formations at all?"

He looked like he was confused about Jiang Chen, but he was actually subtly sending a jab; aren't you something, Elder Wu Hen? Why didn't you keep him here with your formations?

This question was also one that Elder Wu Hen was most hard pressed to answer. "Wei Qing, I can give you only one suggestion if you bump into Jiang Chen again."

"What?" Wei Qing started in surprise.

"Turn and run." Elder Wu Hen said indifferently. "Run as far as you can."

Wei Qing's face darkened; he couldn't contain his anger any longer as he exploded, "Elder Wu Hen, I know I made a mistake just now that led to my capture which ruined things. But you don't need to jeer at me, do you? Who hasn't made mistakes in their youth? Who hasn't underestimated the enemy when young? If I hadn't been so confident in your poison formations, I wouldn't have let him so easily walk in front of me either!"

Wei Qing was indeed making some sense. If he hadn't been so assured of the poison formations working, he really wouldn't have been captured so easily.

Elder Wu Hen smiled faintly. "I'm also rather surprised by the formations failing. However, my suggestion just now wasn't criticism towards you. Believe me if you wish, or not if you don't."

Wei Qing started. "Jiang Chen is just an overly slippery fellow; why is he worthy of so much admiration from you?"

"That kid is slippery alright, but the crux is that his methods are ever-changing and never seem to run dry. They're not something you can defend against. I don't know what kind of abilities he has, but he could even pick up on something as covert as me summoning a spirit creature to ambush him. Are you confident of facing off against an opponent of this caliber?"

Wei Qing stood there openmouthed with shock as he struggled to find words.

"Your specialty is poison, but even my poison formations couldn't hold him. What good do you think your skills would be?"

Wei Qing wasn't willing to accept this analysis. "Even if my poison skills don't hold up against him, his cultivation level is only fifth level origin realm. I can crush him with pure strength alone."

"You'd probably only die faster if you think this way." Elder Wu Hen quirked his lips and then waved him off. "Alright, you go think things over. Don't interrupt my thinking."

He couldn't be bothered to explain it further to Wei Qing. Wei Qing was a flighty and easily irritated character. Elder Wu Hen's view of this disciple had changed greatly after seeing how he'd handled this matter.

This matter rankled greatly in Wei Qing's heart. All he could see was Elder Wu Hen belittling him to enhance Jiang Chen's prestige. But as unfair as he found things, he would never outright yell at Elder Wu Hen in argument.

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Jiang Chen walked for roughly an hour before stopping. He located a source of water and changed his clothes, giving them a thorough wash. "That Elder Wu Hen is exceptionally devious alright. Although the poison formations didn't pose much of a challenge, they still left trackable traces on me. That crafty old fox left backup plans at every step."

Jiang Chen circulated his spirit power to renew the presence around his entire body, then summoned some agile Goldbiter Rats, giving them the clothes he'd just changed out of and sent them in different directions. In this way, not only had he cleanly wiped his trail, but he'd also laid many false ones for Wu Hen.

“Wu Hen, you think yourself clever, don’t you? Let’s see how you catch me.” Jiang Chen was quite confident in himself. If Elder Wu Hen could still catch up to him after all this, then Jiang Chen would really accept his defeat. As for Wei Qing, Jiang Chen was already thinking of him as a dead man. He knew how to use poison, just like those of the Walkabout Sect. Those arrows that’d been shot through Wei Qing had been smeared with a rather unique poison Jiang Chen had refined from the Divine Tree of Dreams.

Jiang Chen had used a similar poison refined from the Tree and a couple of other methods to take out Wei Wudao back at the wood spirit spring. This poison that he’d left in Wei Qing’s body had an incubation period, and would strike at him anytime between ten days to a month. Once it did, even gods and ghosts would find it hard to cure Wei Qing. It’d also be completely futile for the Walkabout Sect to dream of curing a poison that Jiang Chen had created.

Wei Qing would die a baffling death, and the Walkabout Sect would only be able to swallow this mouthful of blood. They wouldn’t be able to pin the blame on Jiang Chen, since the incubation period was so long. Moreover, Mt. Rippling Mirage was a strange and unpredictable place. Who knew if whether Wei Qing had run into some sort of bizarre poison in the mountain?

Jiang Chen was now more curious about the mountain after obtaining the sky rank Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine. Logically speaking, as abundant the spirit herbs were in Mt. Rippling Mirage, it was just a royal herb garden left behind by a Lower Realm empire. Sky rank spirit herbs wouldn’t raise an eyebrow in the Upper Eight Realms, but it was quite rare for one to appear in the Lower Eight Realms, particularly a destitute empire like this.

“This Mt. Rippling Mirage is an interesting conundrum.” Jiang Chen began to feel more and more certain that there was more than what met the eye after walking for a few more days within the mountain. There seemed to be many mechanisms hidden within the terrain.

Blue lakes with water as still as mirrors, for instance. Jiang Chen had run into three of them over the course of these few days. They all had abundant spirit power around them. However, there were no more sky rank spirit herbs in these ones, just a lot of true rank spirit herbs. They once again lined Jiang Chen’s pockets.

He ran into another lake on the ninth day, but it was obvious that someone had already passed by this lake. There were only a few low level spirit herbs left, with almost nothing else. Someone had already done a thorough sweep of the premises.

“It looks like everyone’s disinterested in spirit rank herbs.” Jiang Chen looked around and noted that there weren’t any signs of a sky rank spirit herb appearing in this lake either. He couldn’t help but laugh ruefully. “Not every lake will have a sky rank herb. If this was the case, then we’d be in the Upper Eight Realms instead of the Lower Eight Realms.”

Sky rank herbs weren’t that common even in the Upper Eight Realms. Jiang Chen’s curiosity about the mountain’s topography grew as the lakes appeared in increasing numbers. It was a pity that he couldn’t fly. Otherwise, he’d want to take a look from the heights to see just how many lakes were around. He took casual, leisurely strolls and immersed himself in the joy of harvesting spirit herbs.

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On the other hand, Elder Wu Hen and his comrade Elder Wu Qi were having a particularly depressing time. It'd been several days since they'd started tracking Jiang Chen, but they hadn't even managed to catch a hint of his shadow. Elder Wu Hen was holding a piece of Jiang Chen's old clothing that he'd changed out of, and flung it viciously down. "This little scum is truly wily! Not only does he know that I left marks on his body, he even knows how to refine them and use them to lure us here!"

Elder Wu Qi also found this to be an incredible situation. How could he not understand how complex Elder Wu Hen's methods were? But here he was, bested by a young disciple. This had never been seen before! "That Jiang Chen kid is this devious! Brother Wu Hen, are you sure that there's a sky rank herb on him?" Elder Wu Qi had come up empty-handed after accompanying Elder Wu Hen on a wild goose chase for a few days. He couldn't help but want to shift focus. After all, they were all here to harvest spirit herbs and accumulate wealth, not to engage in these completely meaningless games.

Elder Wu Hen's expression was livid as he looked coldly at Elder Wu Qi. "What, do you think I'm playing you for a fool? Why would I waste time tracking him if it wasn't for the sky rank spirit herb?"

Elder Wu Qi's position wasn't as high as Elder Wu Hen. He hastily offered a artful smile when he saw Elder Wu Hen was displeased. "Then let's continue our chase. Since he swore not to leave, and we still have another eleven days, why don't we notify all Walkabout Sect disciples who've entered to immediately report to us if they find any trace of Jiang Chen? We can even utilize those from other sects and offer them benefits for them to be our eyes and ears. We can heavily reward anyone who finds Jiang Chen!"

There would always be heroes putting themselves forward in the face of great rewards. Elder Wu Hen nodded enthusiastically at this idea. "Let's do it this way then!"

Chapter 569: Unexpected Discovery

Although they would offer high rewards, they wouldn't be proceeding in a haphazard manner.

Elder Wu Hen spoke, "The crux lies with the Sacred Sword Palace and the Tristar Sect. The Great Cathedral has just received the Longevity Pill and won't help us against the Regal Pill Palace. The Dark North Sect wears the same set of pants as the Regal Pill Palace, and will certainly inform the Regal Pill Palace as soon as they hear this news." n-*OverE!*

Elder Wu Qi nodded. "That makes sense. The second batch of people is about to enter soon, and there are many Sacred Sword Palace disciples and elders within them. I remember that Wang Han has a strong hatred of Jiang Chen. If we offer a high reward, I'm sure he'll be willing to help."

Wei Qing also drew close at this point to interject, "Wang Han is a narrow-minded person. Harvesting spirit herbs is of secondary importance for the Sacred Sword Palace this time, and making trouble for the Regal Pill Palace is their primary goal. I'm sure that even if we don't give him any reward, Wang Han would be willing to give us clues once he learns that we're hunting Jiang Chen down."

Wei Qing quite understood Wang Han's perspective on this, as the two of them were actually very similar in this regard. Wang Han was both prejudiced against Jiang Chen and hated Jiang Chen because the latter had refuted him in public, whereas Wei Qing nursed a grudge because Jiang Chen was affecting his attempt to get the girl.

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“Oh?” A Tristar Sect elder revealed a teasing smile as he skimmed a message glyph. “Just what kind of grudge does Jiang Chen have with the Walkabout Sect? Merely supplying tips is enough to gain a hundred thousand upper rank origin spirit stones?”

The previous first disciple of the Tristar Sect, Zhu Feiyang, also received a message glyph at almost the exact same time. “A hundred thousand upper rank origin spirit stones? And I’ll be able to obtain it if I immediately tell the Walkabout Sect when I discover traces of Jiang Chen?” A smile crept onto Zhu Feiyang’s handsome face. “It’d be a pity to turn away wealth that comes knocking at my door. It looks like the Walkabout Sect has hardened their heart to seize the Regal Pill Palace’s Longevity Pill recipe!”

The second batch of twenty entered the mountain after the first ten days were up, and so word of this bounty from the Walkabout Sect spread more and more. Those from the Walkabout Sect also appeared in increasing numbers within the mountain.

Jiang Chen had avoided people as much as possible over the past few days since he didn’t want to run into anyone. Although he’d easily thrown off the Walkabout Sect’s pursuit, he was well aware that his pursuers wouldn’t give up so easily. It might even be that all those who were newly entering Mt. Rippling Mirage now had a primary mission of locating Jiang Chen, and harvesting spirit herbs had become of secondary importance.

Jiang Chen knew the value of a sky rank spirit herb better than anyone else there. Even breaking away from the Regal Pill Palace would be worth it for a sky rank herb. It was a good thing that he’d curbed the Walkabout Sect’s actions with wordplay when they’d negotiated back then, so as much as they wanted the spirit herb, they would never be able to reveal this secret. Otherwise, judgement from the heavenly oath would descend upon the Walkabout Sect.

That day, Jiang Chen happened to be passing by a cliff when he heard fierce sounds of fighting originating from the other side of the mountain. He briefly extended his senses for a moment and determined that the combatants didn’t seem to be those of the Regal Pill Palace. Since it wasn’t one of his own in jeopardy, he couldn’t be bothered to stick his nose in. He was about to leave when he heard one of them bellow, “Du Lihuang, don’t you be too ridiculous! I discovered this true saint spirit herb first!”

Jiang Chen seemed to recall hearing this voice before.

He listened carefully and discovered that it was actually the little daoist Ku Zhu from the Dark North Sect. This little fellow seemed taciturn and withdrawn, but he actually hid an ox-like temper and stubbornness. As for Du Lihuang, Jiang Chen recognized him as a Sacred Sword Palace disciple that he hadn’t had much interaction with. His cultivation level was second only to Wang Han and another genius at the first level sage realm in the Sacred Sword Palace.

“Cut the bullshit. It doesn’t have your name on it, so it’s not yours. There’s no difference between you discovering it first and me discovering it second! What, can I take this mountain back home with me if I’m the one who discovers it first?” Du Lihuang’s tone was domineering and completely unreasonable.

Ku Zhu grew agitated in his frustration. “Shameless, despicable!”

Du Lihuang laughed heartily. "Don't try that on me, little daoist Ku Zhu. I'll give you ten breaths of time. Don't blame me for taking action if you don't get the hell out after that. This Aletheia Icegrass is mine!" [1]

"Aletheia Icegrass!" Jiang Chen's thoughts raced when he heard the name of the spirit herb. Although this spirit herb was just an ordinary true saint rank herb, it was one of the necessary items needed to cure the Miasma that was troubling Ling Bi'er's father. Jiang Chen wouldn't have been interested in it otherwise. He'd planned on leaving, but now halted his footsteps. He couldn't pass up this Icegrass like this.

He'd entered Mt. Rippling Mirage for so long, but it was the first time he'd bumped into one of the four vital ingredients for the Miasma. Even just one was already rare enough. As Jiang Chen pondered, Du Lihuang engaged Ku Zhu in battle.

Du Lihuang was at ninth level origin realm, whereas Ku Zhu was at seventh level. The two were a full two levels of cultivation apart. Adding the fact that the Sacred Sword palace focused on sword dao, which made their battle strength a tier stronger than the other sects, Ku Zhu quickly found himself fighting an uphill battle. However, he was rather fierce and quite stubborn. He refused to concede even a single step even when he started coming worse off in the exchanges. He put up a stubborn resistance in front of the Aletheia Icegrass, as if he was defending his own territory, and refused to give even an inch of ground.

On the other hand, Du Lihuang was cocky and overbearing. "Ku Zhu, I don't want to kill you, but that doesn't mean I won't kill. Don't blame me for being heartless if you still insist on staying in the way."

Ku Zhu was a pile of stubborn old bones. The more someone threatened him, the more it provoked his inner pride. "Du Lihuang, don't think about seizing the Aletheia Icegrass unless you kill me today!"

Du Lihuang frowned. "You refuse a toast only to drink to a forfeit!" Truthfully, he really didn't want to kill anyone in Mt. Rippling Mirage, unless he found a Regal Pill Palace disciple. Untold troubles would follow if it was revealed that he'd killed someone. Although he was confident he could do this cleanly and smoothly, it'd be disastrous if Ku Zhu managed to get a message out somehow. The Sacred Sword Palace might even end up warring with the Dark North Sect! This was a consequence that he alone couldn't bear. However, Ku Zhu's attitude was like a stone in a latrine, hard, foul, and completely infuriating Du Lihuang.

Ordinarily speaking, when sect disciples met, the stronger disciple would dictate the terms. If one side found that they were the weaker one after exchanging moves, they would have the self awareness to back out. Yet, Ku Zhu didn't have that sort of mentality at all. Du Lihuang did indeed have the urge to kill someone as irritating as this.

However, it wasn't that easy for him to kill Ku Zhu either. Although Ku Zhu's cultivation was a bit weaker, his defense was quite ferocious, and he was finding ways to hold on with a few of his Dark North Sect secret techniques. Even Du Lihuang wasn't finding it easy to break through Ku Zhu's defenses time and time again if he didn't call upon his own secret arts in return.

As they ferociously fought with each other, Jiang Chen quietly snuck in through the ground and used the Lotus to steal that blade of Icegrass. He did so covertly and extremely surreptitiously.

Du Lihuang and Ku Zhu's battle raged on as both fully focused on each other. They didn't even realize that the spirit herb they were fighting over had already been taken. Jiang Chen had used their fight as cover and had planned on dusting himself off and leaving. However, when he thought about it, the Dark North Sect was on good terms with the Regal Pill Palace. Moreover, Ku Zhu would certainly end up dead if the two kept fighting like this.

He laughed heartily and sent over a message from afar. "Gentlemen, thanks for the Aletheia Icegrass. Have fun sparring with each other!"

His words were actually to help Ku Zhu out of the situation. He rather admired Ku Zhu's personality and so didn't want him to die to Du Lihuang's sword for no reason.

Indeed, the message immediately caused the two fighters to freeze. When they looked in the direction of the Icegrass, both their expressions froze. Du Lihuang's face immediately grew ugly and cold. "Who dares steal from me?!"

However, only silence answered him. There was no response at all.

Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered to engage in a pointless fight with Du Lihuang. He'd gotten the Icegrass, it was time to leave. He naturally wasn't afraid of Du Lihuang, but there was no way he'd uncover his own trail for this. Du Lihuang wasn't scary, but the elders of the Walkabout Sect were definitely scary.

Ku Zhu remained motionless for a long moment before nodding in deep thought. He looked at Du Lihuang expressionlessly before he turned to leave.

Although Du Lihuang was incensed and privately cursing at Ku Zhu for ruining his affairs, there was no point in killing the other now that the Icegrass had been taken. "Kid, this is the last time. Remember this well, I will certainly kill you the next time you wreck my plans!"

These threats were nothing more than a breeze to Ku Zhu. Not even a hint of reaction flickered on his face.

Du Lihuang leapt up and sped off, in hot pursuit of the one who'd called out. The voice had been obviously doctored, so he couldn't tell who it was, but he was certain that it had come from this direction. He ought to have a decent chance to catch up if he gave chase now. Although he wasn't confident that he had the true saint herb in the bag, it was a blatant provocation that someone had just waltzed in to take his prize. Du Lihuang was a high spirited and arrogant person, how would he be able to take this lying down?

Jiang Chen sped through the ground at the highest speed possible after obtaining the Icegrass. Du Lihuang ended up chasing for quite a while, but never picked up a trail he could follow.

Fifty kilometers into his chase, he ended up on a wide path, with absolutely no idea where to go. He looked around blankly, but to no avail.

Rage grew in his heart as his thoughts spun furiously, and he slashed viciously at one of the large trees off on the side.

Wham!

His sword aura swept out as the large tree collapsed, all of its branches and leaves torn to shreds.

“Are you looking to die?!” A figure suddenly burst out from beneath the tree, cursing loudly. The figure hurtled towards Du Lihuang like a bolt of light, and lashed out in a punch.

Du Lihuang had no idea that someone was hidden at the roots of the tree either, and the rage in his heart erupted when he saw that this person was charging at him without another word. He slashed at the figure with his sword without another thought.

Bam!

His sword aura was still roiling towards the figure when the punch arrived, numbing Du Lihuang’s body with the reverb. The boxing aura covering the fist transformed into a stunning attack and slammed into Du Lihuang’s shoulder through his sword aura.

Bam!

He somersaulted into the air as his body was thrown back several meters, spitting out a mouthful of blood along the way.

The characters of the first part of this spirit herb seems to be part of the name of a particular flower in Chinese—a flower growing on the banks of the three rivers of the underworld, said to be able to summon the memories of the dead whilst they were still alive. The connotations made me think of the river Lethe in Greek mythology, whose effects are the opposite of this flower, washing away the memories of the souls when they were alive. “Aletheia” is the state of being evident, factuality and reality. It’s the opposite of the word “Lethe”, and the meaning seems particularly appropriate given the uses for this spirit herb. Hence, I borrowed a bit from Greek culture here!

Chapter 570: The Appearance of the Ancient Herb Garden

This unknown figure had shot out of the ground and sent Du Lihuang flying with a single punch, but his anger still wasn’t satiated. He was angrily stalking towards the prone Du Lihuang, intent on ending him right there when someone called out in the distance, “Brother Yue! Hold! Stay your hand!”

The person who’d punched Du Lihuang’s lights out looked about 23 years old, but a mane of brown hair around his shoulders currently gave him the appearance of a furious lion. He was the genius heir to the Sacred Lion family of the Great Cathedral—Yue Baize. His strength was on par with Xiang Qin of the Sacred Elephant family, nearing second level sage realm. How was his punch something that Du Lihuang of the ninth level origin realm would be able to take? Although Du Lihuang had been able to bully Ku Zhu, he wouldn’t last a single exchange with Yue Baize. *noVE/18*(In

Yue Baize was in a towering fury, but halted from his mission to kill Du Lihuang as he turned to look sharply in the direction of the shout. Speeding towards the two was the white-robed first disciple of the Sacred Sword Palace, Wang Han, another first level sage realm genius.

Wang Han closed the distance rapidly until he arrived in front of Du Lihuang. He quickly fed him a pill, then tapped several acupuncture points before finally bringing back Du Lihuang to the world of the conscious. Du Lihuang’s mind was in a foggy, confused state until he saw the glowering Yue Baize, who had fury writ plain over his face. He was both incensed and frightened. He’d finally understood that it’d been Yue Baize who’d struck at him so furiously just now.

“Wang Han, get the hell out of the way!” Yue Baize was still deeply enraged, as evidenced by the knuckles that popped as he clenched his fists. It was evident that he was planning on releasing every ounce of his rage on Du Lihuang’s body right up until he’d squeezed the other to death with his bare hands.

Wang Han’s aura turned chilly as he questioned in a low voice, “Brother Yue, just what matter is it that’s caused you to act so?”

Yue Baize couldn’t be bothered to explain. “Are you going to move or not?”

At the end of the day, Wang Han was also a sage realm genius. How could he let himself be overcome by Yue Baize’s aura? Those of the Great Cathedral were always cocky, and Wang Han had put up with this charade for far too long now. When they’d been fighting over the Longevity Pill earlier, Xiang Qin had directly threatened him then. Wang Han hadn’t retorted then due to considerations of sect relationships. But now? Now Yue Baize was freely threatening him!

Wang Han had focused on sword dao for twenty three years and was one to not hide his light to begin with. How would he accept this repeated humiliation? Anger ignited in his heart as Yue Baize spoke with an utter lack of regard for him. He didn’t look at Yue Baize and spoke to the side instead, to Du Lihuang. “Junior brother Du, just what is going on here? Brother Yue has no grudge with you, so why did he hit you? Speak freely; although our Sacred Sword Palace doesn’t willingly provoke others, we’re not people that just anyone can step on.”

As the senior brother of the younger generation in the Sacred Sword Palace, how would he be able to retain his stature if word got out that he didn’t stand up for his peers? Therefore, his words were neither fawning or humble, and in fact carried subtle undertones of anger.

When Du Lihuang saw that Wang Han wanted to step forth on his behalf, he didn’t conceal anything either. “Senior brother Wang, I was pursuing someone but didn’t catch up to them, so I destroyed a random tree. Then, this person emerged from the ground and didn’t bother understanding the situation at all before punching me. How do I know what madness he’s up to?”

Wang Han flicked a glance at the destroyed tree and spoke coldly, “Brother Yue, it’s not like this tree is a particularly rare species. I don’t understand your actions in wanting to kill my junior brother just because he destroyed a tree. That’s simply too overbearing!”

Wang Han’s tone was highly displeased. This tree was only a spirit rank tree, not even worth a second look. If Yue Baize was making a move because of this tree, then Wang Han would have much to say about it.

Yue Baize’s fierce eyes narrowed in a glare. “Wang Han, does that mean you’re going to stick out your neck for this?”

Wang Han snorted coldly. “Well, isn’t that funny? Can’t I ask why you want to kill my junior brother? Me, sticking my neck out? I’d say you’re trying to be a tyrant!”

Du Lihuang’s internal injuries had taken a slow turn for the better after being fed the pill. He was now standing next to Wang Han, his hand on the hilt of his sword and ready to spring into action. As soon as anything happened, he would throw all caution to the wind and team up with Wang Han against Yue

Baize. Although there was a large gap between his strength and and Yue Baize's, if he teamed up with the top genius of the Sacred Sword Palace, they'd definitely be able to fight, and possibly even kill Yue Baize.

Yue Baize looked at the two of them coldly, also sizing up their strength versus his. Although he knew that he was a bit stronger than Wang Han, both sides would still end up heavily injured after the Sacred Sword Palace's secret arts. When throwing in a Du Lihuang to the mix, he was actually at a disadvantage when outnumbered like this. Not to mention that he was lying here in wait not for fun, but to track down a particular spirit creature. The spirit creature liked to inhabit this particular spirit tree. Yue Baize had sensed this creature's presence around the tree, which was why he'd hidden beneath the ground to await his prey.

But who'd know that Du Lihuang would lose his mind for no reason when passing by and destroy the tree? This had thrown Yue Baize's plans into complete disarray. Born of the Great Cathedral, Yue Baize had always been domineering and tyrannical. How would he not be incensed when someone had ruined his plans? No wonder he'd come charging out to kill Du Lihuang without another word. He also wasn't afraid to see Wang Han brimming with battle intent. He gave a sharp nod, "Wang Han, you want an explanation? I'll give you an explanation! I entered the mountain yesterday and only have ten days worth of time. Then I happened to run into a Silverlion, and found this Lion Pagoda Tree to be its favorite habitat. I've lain in wait for a day now, waiting for the Silverlion to return. Your idiot junior brother really is something. He just passes by here, loses his mind, and then destroys the tree for no reason at all. You want an explanation from me!? Well, tell me, where do I go for mine?!"

The Silverlion was an absolutely sacred spirit creature to the Sacred Lion tribe. Not only could they form a contract with this spirit creature, they could also use its blood to enhance their own bloodlines. The Great Cathedral was particularly adept at using the blood of various spirit creatures to strengthen and temper their bodies to break through the shackles of martial dao. Du Lihuang's unintentional venting had completely destroyed Yue Baize's plan.

Wang Han finally understood why Yue Baize had reacted so violently, but he couldn't back down now with how things had developed. "Even if my junior brother ruined your plan, it's not punishable to the point of death, is it? It's just a Silverlion, is that more important than a genius at the peak of the origin realm?"

Yue Baize snorted coldly. "The hell does the peak of the origin realm have to do with me? Can it strengthen my bloodline? Can it help me break through? Can it strengthen my body? I'll kill Li Duhuang if you don't give me an explanation today, even if I have to waste all ten days I have here!"

Wang Han's face darkened. He knew that every single of those Great Cathedral folk were crazies. They would definitely accomplish whatever they'd said. "Brother Yue, it's said that one has to be lenient whenever it's possible. Even if junior brother Du has ruined your plans, he didn't do so purposefully. Is it not enough that your punch made him spit blood?"

"You want to trade a mouthful of blood for my Silverlion? Wang Han, don't you think you're much too naive?" Yue Baize's hackles had gone completely up as killing intent exploded out of him.

Wang Han was at a loss for words, this Yue Baize was employing the logic of a robber! He hadn't even gotten the Silverlion, but he was talking as if he had and it'd been Du Lihuang who'd let that creature go.

“Brother Yue, you haven’t captured the Silverlion yet, so how is this a fair comparison? If that beast really does like this area, it will certainly return. Brother Yue may yet capture it if you remain here in wait. You might actually be missing the opportunity to capture it as you dither with us.”

Yue Baize broke out in loud curses. “Bullshit! The Silverlion is a highly cautious creature. As if it’ll return when it sees that the Lion Pagoda Tree has been destroyed! Wang Han, I don’t care how glib your words are today, Du Lihuang must die today if you don’t give me a satisfactory explanation!”

Wang Han’s gaze chilled. “What kind of explanation do you want?”

“Compensation, or death!” Ye Baize continued in his domineering fashion.

Wang Han shook his head. “Impossible. Yue Baize, we can do this all day. You’re the one who injured someone and you want compensation? Do you think my Sacred Sword Palace is some random pushover?”

Yue Baize laughed oddly. “So this means you think my Great Cathedral is easy to bully?”

Wang Han snorted derisively. “No one wants to bully your Great Cathedral, but it’s you who’s aggressively overbearing.”

Yue Baize spread out his hands. “Stop putting on that act with me. Wang Han, I know the two of you want to team up against me. Just because I don’t make my move today doesn’t mean I won’t do so tomorrow. You may have helpers, but I’m not here all by my lonesome either!”

Wang Han knew that those of the Great Cathedral were extreme in their style and quite united in their actions. If Yue Baize summoned reinforcements, it would turn into an absolute nightmare for them. There weren’t that many Sacred Sword Palace people entering the mountain to begin with. Yue Baize only needed to meet up with Xiang Qin to be able to trounce all four genius disciples from the Sacred Sword Palace.

Wang Han thought momentarily and said to Du Lihuang, “Junior brother Du, since some people seem quite unreasonable, you should go find a transportation matrix and leave Mt. Rippling Mirage, lest some people chase after you endlessly.”

It wasn’t that Wang Han was afraid, he was just being cautious, and he didn’t think he needed to embroil themselves in a fight with the Great Cathedral right then. When it come to those insane people, pissing off one of them was akin to pissing off the entire lot. He didn’t want to fight a bunch of crazies, so having Du Lihuang depart the premises was the best course of action.

Du Lihuang also recognized the circumstances and became resigned. He nodded with a quick jerk of his head, “Alright.”

Yue Baize’s face darkened as his rage threatened to explode. Just when he was about to blow up, his face flickered, and he flipped his hand over to read a message glyph. At almost the same instant, Wang Han received one as well. Both of their faces turned grave as they read it through.

Wang Han suddenly smiled and spoke to Yue Baize, “Brother Yue, the appearance of a hundred lakes and a rippling mirage is a phenomenon that comes about only once in a millennia here. According to the words left behind by the Myriad Empire, these are the signs of a hidden ruins emerging. It rarely

emerges even once in a few millennia, and the spirit herbs there are possible even more precious than that Silverlion by ten, or even a hundred times. Do you still want to stay here and waste time?”

Yue Baize had obviously received the same message, notifying him to meet at a certain place. He weighed the situation and glared ferociously at the two. “Wang Han, this matter isn’t over!”

He left with the force of a yellow tornado after speaking, swiftly vanishing from Wang Han’s sight.

Du Lihuang felt a bit awkward. “Senior brother Wang, then...”

Wang Han thought for a moment. “A rare sight is appearing in Mt. Rippling Mirage. An ancient ruin will certainly reveal itself this time. That hidden herb garden has only appeared once in Myriad Empire history, and that one time was enough to confer more than a thousand years of glory onto the Myriad Domain. Back then, the Myriad Empire obtained several sky rank spirit herbs, resulting in the appearance of four emperor realm cultivators in the next few decades. This was one of the most glorious times of Myriad Domain history. Junior brother Du, don’t leave yet; come with me. Our Sacred Sword Palace must have a slice of the pie no matter what this time!”