

Three Realms 621

Chapter 621: Hagglng

If the origin realm's nascent soul was analogous to forming a tree from spirit essence, then the sage realm was equivalent to forming an entire forest of similar trees. Thus, stepping into the sage realm was the equivalent of a single tree growing into a whole forest. Jiang Chen cycled his qi through his body, forming a connection between the surroundings and himself. He drew on and strengthened that connection till he'd become one with the heavens and the earth. With Jiang Chen's qualifications and talent, stepping into the sage realm from the origin realm was but a matter of time. There were no major obstacles in the way.

Jiang Chen had not forgotten about the scene he'd caused when he'd broken through to the origin realm during the alliance ceremony between the Precious Tree Sect and the Regal Pill Palace. He'd spontaneously broken through to the origin realm after comprehending the dao beneath the Precious Tree and caused a stunning heavenly phenomenon to appear. Everyone present at the Precious Tree Sect was shocked and speechless in the face of such an awe-inspiring display.

Fortunately, this time around he was safely in the sacred grounds of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, so no one would be alarmed even if a terrifying phenomenon did materialize.

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Within Mt. Rippling Mirage.

Three figures were lingering over a small hill. None other than the three who had forcefully broken into Mt. Rippling Mirage by cracking its formation, they'd immediately sensed that the mountain range was a completely separate world.

Cao Jin was highest in the air, looking into the distance with an abstruse look in his eyes.

The second rank pill king, Shi Zhen, was probing in all directions and could not help but sigh when he noticed a few areas. Fatty Wu Heng, on the other hand, was systematically checking his surroundings for hidden formations.

After Cao Jin had spent some time gazing into the distance, he drifted down and asked Fatty Wu Heng, "Well? Are there any hidden attack formations?"

Wu Heng shook his head, "There aren't many attack formations here. Along the way, I noticed some transportation matrixes scattered here and there, but as the main formation is closed, these transportation matrixes can't be activated. We'll have to forcefully break out when we want to leave."

Cao Jin nodded and turned to look at Shi Zhen, "Junior brother Shi Zhen, this Mt. Rippling Mirage contains the Divine Befuddlement Miasma. It'll be up to you to detect it beforehand."

"Rest assured, I've made my preparations."

Inviting Shi Zhen on this trip had been to offset any of Mt. Rippling Mirage's sudden situations. Armed with the Tristar Sect's knowledge, Cao Jin had made thorough preparations for everything inside this mountain range. Wu Heng was in charge of breaking formations while Shi Zhen was to deal with the problem of the Miasma.

Mt. Rippling Mirage covered an extensive area, but the trio took their time. They were in no hurry to leave. Along the way, Shi Zhen would give lamenting sighs, "The spirit seeds still remain, but the spirit herbs have all been harvested. It seems this Mt. Rippling Mirage really does have some good things."

Shi Zhen was a second level Pill King and had seen many valuable items before. However, some of species of herbs in Mt. Rippling Mirage still surprised him. "I never expected that there would be such a good place in the Myriad Domain."

The three of them launched an exhaustive search within Mt. Rippling Mirage. They occasionally came across spirit herbs, but they were all of the true saint rank. Cao Jin was very generous and allowed Shi Zhen and Wu Heng to divide the true saint herbs amongst themselves. He really wasn't interested in them unless there were a large amount of them, like a thousand stalks of Sage Fledging Grass.

Mt. Rippling Mirage was far too large for the three groups from the six sects to completely sweep the place clean. Thus, the three of them discovered many nooks and crannies that were missed, obtaining quite the harvest of spirit herbs. Eventually, all of them had earth rank spirit herbs in their possession.

About half a month later, they had searched through all of Mt. Rippling Mirage, leaving no corner untouched by their consciousness. However, the person who they wanted most to find, Jiang Chen, seemed to have disappeared without a trace. n--OvelbIn

On this day, the three of them stood before a large waterfall. Cao Jin had an excited but serious expression on his face, "According to the Tristar Sect's information, Mt. Rippling Mirage contains a mountain within a mountain. The location where we are now can only be considered the main mountain. There is also an ancient herb garden inside that opens every three thousand years. The entrance to that garden should be near these waterfalls."

"Around here?" Shi Zhen looked up at the large waterfall, awed by those dreamy curtains of water. However, as a second level pill king, he was still very vigilant. After inspecting the surroundings without finding anything, he turned to Cao Jin. "Senior brother Cao, there isn't any Miasma in this area."

Cao Jin nodded and glanced towards Wu Heng, "Junior brother Wu, how confident are you?"

Wu Heng's face was solemn, "This formation is many times stronger than the outer formation. It's virtually impossible to break through this formation with my ability."

"Not even with the formation shattering technique?"

"If I was an emperor realm expert, then I would have a 40% chance of creating a gap large enough for us to enter with the formation shattering technique."

"This requires emperor realm level strength?" Shi Zhen's disappointment was evident.

"Mm, this formation is from ancient times. Furthermore, for whatever reason, this formation is currently in a relatively weak state. If this formation was in its peak state, then I'm afraid even an emperor realm expert wouldn't be able to crack it."

Wu Heng's understanding and ability with formations was certainly deep enough to notice that Mt. Rippling Mirage's overall formation was currently in a partially lifted state due to Jiang Chen's intrusion.

However, even though he'd noticed that, the formation blocking the way to the ancient herb garden was incomparable to the outer formation – its defenses were extremely high.

"So our steps come to a halt here? We can't enter that ancient herb garden?" Cao Jin couldn't bring himself to accept that outcome. He knew that Jiang Chen had not left Mt. Rippling Mirage. Since Jiang Chen wasn't in the main mountain area, then he must be in the ancient herb garden. Thus, they would be able to find Jiang Chen if they entered the ancient herb garden. By finding Jiang Chen, those sky rank herbs, earth rank herbs and the Longevity Pill recipe would all be at his fingertips. Naturally, Cao Jin wasn't willing to be stymied at this last step.

Wu Heng stared at the waterfall, his eyes focused, and did not immediately answer Cao Jin. A complicated look appeared in his eyes, as if he had made a difficult decision. He suddenly said, "Senior brother Cao, the formation shattering technique can be simultaneously deployed by three people. If three people were to use the technique in unison, the power would increase by at least fivefold."

"Three people in unison?" Cao Jin's eyes lit up, "The power can be increased fivefold?"

Shi Zhen's eyes also glowed.

Wu Heng nodded, "However, this technique is an ancient art that I only discovered after paying a great price while I was out adventuring. In the Ninesuns Sky Sect, I alone possess this art."

Cao Jin and Shi Zhen immediately understood Wu Heng's words – he wanted to haggle. After all, it was reasonable to expect that sharing an exclusive technique would come at a price. Cao Jing smiled faintly, "What are your conditions?"

Shi Zhen also looked at Wu Heng. He knew that Wu Heng wanted to renegotiate the distribution of benefits. The fatty scratched his bald head and adopted a completely harmless smile. "Both of you will benefit endlessly if I pass this formation shattering technique onto you. So first of all, I would like both of you to swear to never pass this technique onto others."

"Naturally." Cao Jin and Shi Zhen did not argue with that condition, nodding quickly.

"Second naturally involves the distribution of benefits. I paid a great price in order to obtain this formation shattering technique. Therefore, if that Jiang Chen has five sky rank herbs, I'll take two, Senior Brother Cao Jing takes two and Senior Brother Shi Zhen takes one. As for earth rank herbs, Senior Brother Cao will get five portions, I'll take three portions, and Senior Brother Shi Zhen receives two portions. Any other valuables will also be divided up according to this ratio."

Aside from the sky rank herb allocation, Cao Jing did not disagree with this distribution method as he would still receive his original half of the resources. However, the remaining half that was originally divided equally between Wu Heng and Shi Zhen had now shifted to Fatty Wu taking three portions and leaving Shi Zhen only two portions.

"The distribution method was set a long time ago. Fatty Wu, are you trying to take advantage of the situation to hike up the price?" Shi Zhen was naturally unhappy.

"Senior Brother Shi Zhen, you can't put it like that. The original agreement between the three of us was for each of us to do their part. I've already done my part. I didn't nitpick or haggle when we were breaking through the outer formation, right? Now, this formation can't be broken. But passing on my

formation shattering technique isn't within our agreement. Since it's not part of our original agreement, I would take a loss by passing on the technique. It's not unreasonable for me to want some kind of compensation for eating this loss, right?" Fatty Wu's argument was bolstered by a tone full of conviction.

Cao Jin would only lose out on one sky rank herb, but he didn't want to set a precedent. If Fatty Wu could dicker about his technique now, then maybe Shi Zhen would haggle over curing the Miasma once they entered the ancient herb garden. A lot of future trouble would come from this one instance.

"Fatty, don't try to take a mile after gaining an inch." Cao Jin said in a frosty tone.

Fatty Wu chuckled wryly, "We can forget about it if both of you don't agree with my suggestion. Anyways, I've already done my part. If you want me to teach you the formation shattering technique for free... well, that's impossible."

Shi Zhen complained angrily, "Fatty, we're all from the same sect. If you keep splitting hairs like this, how are we supposed to cooperate?"

Fatty Wu wasn't someone who was ever willing to suffer a loss. It was impossible for him to teach them the technique for free. However, he saw that Cao Jin and Shi Zhen weren't willing to compromise and sneered, "Don't try to oversimplify the situation. I can agree to not changing the distribution method. Instead, you two can take out a technique in exchange. Senior brother Cao, teach me your "Milky Way Point". Senior brother Shi Zhen, you can use your unique "Seven Blossoms Fire Control" method in exchange." Since the distribution method wasn't open for alteration, Fatty Wu took a step back and wanted to trade art for art.

Cao Jin and Shi Zhen looked at each other, hesitated for a second, but finally nodded. "Then it's decided. We'll trade art for art. However, everyone must swear a heavenly oath not to pass on these arts to anyone else."

The three of them began their transaction and were all happy after achieving their goals.

Although the formation shattering technique was profound, it wasn't difficult for them to learn it given their respective levels of talent. Cao Jin and Shi Zhen had mastered the essentials after roughly five days.

Chapter 622: Finally Entering the Sage Realm

Jiang Chen continuously circulated his energy within the forbidden area of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. Multiple currents of origin power coursed through his body like vast armies in one direction, as if numerous rivers and creeks converging on the ocean. He felt the internal dimension of the purple manor within his dantian continuously increase and grow.

Three distinct flower-shaped illusions began to congeal above his head, becoming clearer by the moment. Jiang Chen knew that he'd reached the critical moment for breaking through to the sage realm. "Let's do this in one move, go!"

There was only one thought left in Jiang Chen's mind, to rush forward with all his might. He was currently rowing against the current in a canoe and had to maintain his current momentum. The origin power within his body was akin to a flood dragon struggling up an enormous waterfall, continuously battering against the various shackles within his body.

Wham! Bam!

Great rumbling noises sounded from the the purple manor within Jiang Chen's dantian, as if it had come from a deep abyss. Jiang Chen's bones and meridians shone gold as they resonated with the energy wrapping around them, creating a harmonized chorus.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen felt his body relax as the origin realm shackles in his body shattered like a great glass dome.

Crack!

No different than glass, the shackles shattered into shards and were disintegrated into particles by the origin power surging through them. The origin power within him shot into the skies in a magnificent column, rising through the air like a vigorous dragon or tiger. At that instant, the three flowers over his head became as clear as could be, as if they were lanterns flaring to life.

Coalesce the three flowers, and break through to the sage realm!

The sage realm was broken into three levels: mortal, earth, and sky sage. Entrance into each level would be accompanied by natural phenomena. In the mortal sage realm, the natural phenomena to note was the three flowers that would coalesce over the cultivator's head. Entering the earth sage realm would beget golden lotuses that cover the ground, and the sky sage realm would usher in a rain of flowers from immortals.

However, when Jiang Chen broke through to the sage realm, all of the origin energy in his body shot towards the clouds, rending the skies and earth open. The skies seemed to be bisected by an enormous blade as light itself was divided in twain, a clear line marking the delineation of black and white. Multi-hued clouds rushed furiously towards the void, as if desperate to fill a vacuum.

The heavenly phenomena that had appeared in the Precious Tree Sect had once again made its appearance, and worse, it was three to five times stronger this time! Luckily, this area completely enclosed the breadth of the phenomena as rainbows started forming, reflecting off each other in the sky. Light flashed, and darkness roiled, competing for attention as they formed various divine forms.

"I'd thought that what had happened in the origin realm was an accident, but who knew that the disturbance upon setting foot in the sage realm would be even greater. It's a good thing that I'm ensconced in the forbidden area of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. If I'd been in the Regal Pill Palace, it's likely everyone would've connected it to me."

Once could be explained as accident, but twice was never an accident. It was impossible for for natural phenomena to just so happen to appear every time he broke through. In the instant he did, the seal reappeared in the universe of his consciousness, materializing in a patch of empty space. Nine small water droplets made a ring of stars, forming a strange seal in a marvelous chain. This seal seemed to thrum with exceedingly frightening power, as if sealing off some sort of great terror.

When Jiang Chen had broken through to the origin realm last time, he'd detected this seal and had attempted to investigate it, only to come up empty handed. He'd also accidentally touched the seal last time, triggering the heavenly phenomena. He'd been quite careful this time, but had triggered an even more frightening phenomenon. It looked like each breakthrough to a new realm would be perceived by

the seal, which in turn would trigger these phenomena. They weren't triggered because Jiang Chen had sought it out. This time however, the seal was noticeably clearer. Contrary to when he'd entered the origin realm, he could now clearly sense the existence of the seal.

Last time, his consciousness hadn't dared draw near to the seal. And now that he'd broken through to the sage realm, although Jiang Chen's consciousness still felt as if needles were being jabbed into his mind, it wasn't as bad as when he was in the origin realm.

"It looks like my consciousness has continuously improved with my strength, and I've grown used to the seal." Jiang Chen had come to the conclusion that his consciousness was being subconsciously steered by the seal as his mind hovered around it, sensing it. It was being steered to the vast expanses of the heavens of his past life, back to that ancient era. The memories of his past life spilled over as if an avalanche had finally been freed, and so Jiang Chen hastily stopped his explorations.

Wham!

The seal made from the nine beads slammed shut and Jiang Chen's consciousness recovered its usual serenity.

"The vast myriad worlds..." It was as if lightning had struck Jiang Chen as he stood dumbly. He was unable to speak for the longest time. He was finally certain, as of this moment, that his father had been the one to arrange for his reincarnation into this world. If not his father, there was no one else who would seal such a powerful strength into his consciousness.

Although Jiang Chen didn't know what exactly had been sealed within, he firmly believed that no one else other than his father was even capable of leaving such an extraordinarily strong seal in his consciousness.

"Father..." Jiang Chen thought back to his past life; how the Celestial Emperor had sheltered and harbored him, how the heavens had shattered in his past life and order collapsed...

All of a sudden, Jiang Chen felt the stirrings of an explosive power starting from deep within his chest. He acutely felt its desire to burst into this world.

"Sage realm! This is just the beginning! I must continue to improve and make sure my efforts aren't in vain. One day, I will undo that seal, and see what father left behind in my mind! One day, I will carve my path back to the heavens and find my father!" It took him a great deal of effort at that point, but Jiang Chen managed to calm himself down, and see about finding his inner peace again.

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Cao Jin and Shi Zhen had picked up the formation shattering technique quickly, and had gotten to the point of practicing together for the last couple of days. They'd convened in front of the great waterfall in Mt. Rippling Mirage and were prepared to use the Moonshatter Awl to attack the formation. The three of them together could increase the force behind the attack by a multiple of ten. Although it might not be enough to break open the formation, Wu Heng had made his calculations and felt that he still had a certain amount of assurance in ripping open the formation enough to let them pass.

“Watch my hand seals, everyone. It’s time to put everything we have to the test.” He had taken the role of conductor for this task. Three hand seals flashed, causing a silver light to flash. The moment the silver light appeared, he roared, “Now!”

The three of them held nothing back, working cooperatively to channel an incredible amount of power into the Moonshatter Awl. The resulting thick laser of silver light crashed onto the waterfall with an earth shattering impact.

Wham bam bam!

The waterfall didn’t even shudder, but a faint trace appeared on its mirror-like surface.

No?

“Keep at it!” Wu Heng knew that breaking through the formation with a single blow was nothing more than a pipe dream. Their only hope lay in a continuous assault. So, the three of them didn’t stop as they continued to fire off attacks in sequence.

Suddenly, the water curtain of the waterfall seemed to slow for an instant. From there, the water flowing down the waterfall began to reverse, and the length of the sky suddenly sported an enormous tear. Clouds had already begun to spiral around the epicenter of the phenomena. The entirety of Mt. Rippling Mirage seemed to have been awakened by a mysterious power as numerous life forms poked their heads out in curiosity. They bore silent witness as the heavens and earth shook.

Natural phenomena!

Cao Jin instantly stopped his attacks as he looked solemnly at the horizon. The cloud layers were all snaking through the sky as an uncountable number of birds and beasts called and roared together. Rainbows danced through the air as a general atmosphere of auspicious prosperity settled in the air. Divine figures could be vaguely made out, slipping in and out of various forms.

“How... how can this be?” Shi Zhen was stunned as a hint of fear appeared in his eyes. “Is this because of our attacks?”

Fatty Wu had originally thought the the formation had elicited the phenomena as well, but there was nothing out of the ordinary around the formation. He shook his head with an exceedingly ugly expression, “It’s not because of the formation.”

Cao Jin’s face had already darkened immensely. He was well read and widely versed, and naturally recognized this as the natural phenomena brought about from an expert breaking through. However, even someone in the emperor realm breaking through to a Titled Great Emperor would have such a tremendous momentum.

“Could it be that a Titled Emperor has been acknowledged by the heavenly dao and become a legendary empyrean expert?!” Cao Jin murmured to himself, but his words were loud enough to stun Wu Heng and Shi Zhen. A Titled Emperor breaking through? They weren’t certain if there was even an empyrean expert in the Upper Eight Regions, but one may be hiding in a mere Myriad Domain? If there really was one, then they were no different than ants in front of that existence. Perhaps the other’s consciousness had already locked onto them. To act so unreservedly in such an honored one’s territory, weren’t they courting death?

So therefore, even Cao Jin's face was filled with wariness. It felt that a great catastrophe was descending on them. The phenomena lasted for a full half hour before slowly dissipating, and the three stood where they were without moving, doing their best to imitate stone sculptures. They didn't dare do anything as they were deathly afraid of offending the concealed empyrean expert, resulting in a fatal blow. If it really was an empyrean expert, he would be able to kill them with one thought.

It wasn't until the phenomena had dissipated to the point where they couldn't sense it that the three of them looked at each other, cold sweat drenching them.

"It's... disappeared?" Shi Zhen stammered. "Senior brother Cao, was that really a Titled Great Emperor breaking through to the empyrean level?"

Cao Jin was now a bit uncertain as well. If that was truly the case, the three of them would've been discovered a long time ago. However, his instincts hadn't warned him of any danger even now.

"Was it a misconception, and the phenomena wasn't triggered by an expert going through a tribulation?" Fatty Wu felt that they'd been quite lucky. If it had been such an expert, he felt that the three of them would have long been dust by now.

Cao Jin cautiously sent his consciousness out and then nodded. "It shouldn't have been such an expert breaking through. Otherwise, we would've felt an even stronger aura from the heavens. It's impossible for an empyrean cultivator to not have released even the slightest aura. It looks like this phenomena was triggered from within the mountain and not from a cultivator. If this is an ancient ruin from the ancient times, it's impossible for anyone or anything in there to have remained alive until now!" n.(σ)-
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"Then... do we continue?" Wu Heng looked at the formation. If we continue our attacks, we'll be able to tear open a rip in the formation in half a day!"

Cao Jin thought momentarily and spoke decisively. "Fortune favors the bold. We must continue our attacks to enter the ancient herb garden. We'll leave immediately once we find Jiang Chen!"

Chapter 623: Challenging the Tower of Inheritance

Jiang Chen had completed all his preparations. He stood beneath the foot of the tower of inheritance, ready to begin. He would challenge the tower, receive the inheritance, and leave the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's sacred grounds. Those goals were foremost in his mind as he entered the tower.

Entering the tower was no different than entering another independent world. Enshrined within was a statue, a likeness of one of the ancestors from the Ancestor Cliff. The statue seemed to embody wisdom, a gentle smile on its face as one hand formed a mudra. Jiang Chen walked to the center of the floor and examined the surrounding walls. Various tadpole-like runes were etched into the walls. As he inspected them, they began to unfurl from the walls, wriggling in the air like they'd obtained life of their own.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen discovered that the area had been locked down. The entire tower was now completely isolated from the outside world, and the door he entered through had vanished without a trace. The floor began to vibrate and rumble beneath him. Looking down, he discovered that he had

inadvertently been standing in the center of a circle. If one took a step back, one would recognize the circle radiating out to form an enormous turntable, which was then divided into eighths.

A voice sounded out from the ancestor statue at this time –

“Successor, welcome to the tower of inheritance. By entering this tower, you’ve proven that you’ve reached the initial requirements of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect with respect to strength, comprehension and affinity. Whether you can become the successor of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s heritage will depend on your performance here and now.

“This is the first floor of the tower – the Floor of Wisdom. The turntable beneath your feet will turn three times, with each turn heralding a test question for a total of three questions. One correct answer will grant you the right to enter the second floor. Answering two questions correctly will grant you the right to enter the third floor. If you answer all three questions correctly, not only will you be granted access to the two upper floors, you will also receive this floor’s heritage.”

As the voice faded, the turntable under Jiang Chen’s feet started to rumble again, turning. One of the grids of the turntable suddenly started glowing with a pale golden light. Accompanying the golden light, a question popped up on the grid. Jiang Chen couldn’t help but smile when he saw this question.

The topic of this question wasn’t the least bit unfamiliar to him. Interestingly though, it was related to the library’s journals. More accurately speaking, it was about what was written down in those journals. The question didn’t have anything to do with formations, nor did it relate to the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s inheritance. To be frank, it was simply trivia about daily life.

However, Jiang Chen was erudite and well-read. Coupled with the fact that he had diligently read through all the journals, this question was no problem for him. He used his consciousness to transmit his answer into that grid.

Rumble...

The golden light gradually dimmed and the question in that grid slowly faded away. A golden light arced directly into the ancestor statue. As the golden light drilled into the statue’s forehead, a crack suddenly appeared, revealing an open eye.

The turntable once again began to turn beneath Jiang Chen’s feet, bring the next question to the fore. The subject matter was still limited to the contents of the library, but instead of coming from one of the journals, it came from one of the library’s books. This question was actually about an anecdote related to formations and didn’t have much to do with the study of the formation itself. Jiang Chen once again transmitted his answer according to his memories.

The second grid’s question also slowly faded and another golden light arced into the ancestor statue. This time however, the light shot into the left eye of the statue. As Jiang Chen watched this wondrous scene, he formed a vague speculation. This Floor of Wisdom’s purpose was to test wisdom, not martial ability. In fact, Jiang Chen had already guessed the hidden purpose of this test. It was a test of the successor’s sincerity.

If the successor was not sincere and lacked the patience to read through all of the journals and books in the library, instead directly making for the three formations, then they would have no hope of inheriting

anything even if they did enter the tower of inheritance. But if the successor was able to keep their composure and diligently read all the books, then this first floor's test would naturally pose no difficulty. Thinking of this, Jiang Chen couldn't help but admire the tower's designers. Everything was interconnected, forming chains of cause and effect.

Thinking back to his experience at Ancestors' Cliff, Jiang Chen realized how ingenious the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's inheritance assessment really was. This floor's test in particular meant that a grasping and avaricious person with little interest in those books would ultimately receive nothing.

Once they'd been stymied on this floor, then they would likely remain stuck in the tower until their death. Jiang Chen exclaimed in admiration and also sighed with relief. He felt fortunate that he was diligent enough to read through all the books once. If he hadn't done so, then he might have been stuck here at his wits' end. After all, one wouldn't be able to return to the library to look for answers once they entered the tower. As Jiang Chen was woolgathering, the third question made its appearance.

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This question was even more interesting. It asked Jiang Chen what he would do if he became the successor to the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect and enemies had come knocking at the door. Would he firmly meet the enemy head-on or prioritize safety to perpetuate the sect's lineage? This question somewhat troubled Jiang Chen. Normally, a sect should prioritize passing on the torch. However, the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect was different. In order to fight against the invasion of foreign enemies, the whole sect had ended up pulling out all the stops. This sort of spirit that dismissed death wasn't something a common sect could compare themselves to.

In particular, those rows upon rows of tombstones in that vast sprawling cemetery had left an immense impact on Jiang Chen. He pondered for a moment, and felt that the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect was the type that would rather forgo all paths of retreat than ever compromise with their enemies. They would rather die for justice than live in humiliation. This was the character of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.

Thinking of this, Jiang Chen seemed to have found the answer. He made his choice – resolutely fight head-on. Sure enough, this answer was correct and another golden light shot into the ancestor statue's right eye.

As the three golden lights shot into the ancestor statue, it suddenly seemed to come to life and a sonorous voice spoke slowly, "Successor, congratulations on passing the first floor's test. Not only are you granted access to the second and third floors, you will also receive the inheritance of this floor."

As the voice faded, a dark grid suddenly appeared on the turntable under Jiang Chen's feet. A box coalesced in the center of the dark grid and slowly floated over to Jiang Chen. There was a book inside the box, labeled "The Heart of Formations". This book was clearly an outline of the methodology involved in all of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect formations. Jiang Chen naturally did not refuse the book. Though he had also researched formations in his past life, he was not as confident in formations compared to pill dao. He knew quite a bit about the dao of formations, but he lacked a systematic understanding of them. "The Heart of Formations" would certainly remedy this shortcoming to a point. Furthermore, since it was part of the inheritance, Jiang Chen naturally did not have a reason to refuse.

As Jiang Chen accepted the book, the turntable underneath suddenly exerted a force that sent Jiang Chen straight to the second floor. Jiang Chen was only able to glimpse a flash of light before he abruptly appeared in the second floor of the tower. The second floor of the tower of inheritance was very different than the first floor. If the first floor was dedicated to wisdom, then this second floor could only be described as the embodiment of killing intent. Jiang Chen felt as if he had suddenly entered a killing field from hell. The surrounding walls looked as they were floating oceans of blood, giving off a ghastly ambience.

Ping ping ping.

Jiang Chen suddenly heard a crisp sound, akin to numerous beads dropping onto the ground. The contrast of those crisp sounds in such an environment lent them a sinister touch. Jiang Chen gazed deeper into the floor, and discovered an ancestor statue rising from the sea of blood ahead of him.

That ancestor statue had a chain of rosary beads in hand that seemed to have spontaneously broken. The golden rosary beads fell to the ground, scattering across the floor with brittle sounding pops. Jiang Chen's heart suddenly sank as he blurted out, "Soldiers from beans?"

Each bead flashed as they struck the ground. Twelve golden armored warriors suddenly appeared in front of Jiang Chen. Each one was armed and their combined killing intent was like a physical weight that descended on the are.

"Kill!"

A low roar sounded out as an armored warrior wielding a battleaxe strode forward, striking down with his weapon. Jiang Chen was quick to note that the warrior coming towards him with vigorous steps was at the sage realm level. He didn't dodge, instead activating his Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods, erupting with a ninety meter tall golden aura.

Bam!

As that giant battleaxe crashed into the thirty feet tall golden aura, it was as if the axe had struck a firm, yet flexible wall. Although the axe left a three meter deep scar in the aura, it was ultimately unable to break through. In response, Jiang Chen chuckled and struck back with a domineering bare fist. The golden giant was blown back by Jiang Chen's punch and quickly transformed into a shadowy golden light. The shadowy golden light didn't stay long, congealing back into a pale golden bead that rolled on the ground.

Jiang Chen's confidence greatly increased. Since setting foot into the sage realm, the defense of his indomitable golden body from the Nine Transformations had undergone a qualitative upgrade. This battleaxe warrior was only a puppet formed from a rosary bead and not a true martial cultivator. Frankly speaking, even a real flesh and blood martial cultivator in the sage realm was no longer capable of relying solely on a physical attack to break through Jiang Chen's golden body. However, Jiang Chen's actions in sending a golden warrior flying seemed to have annoyed the other armored puppets.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Five golden warriors rushed towards him, each from a different angle, and wielding a variety of swords and spears.

Jiang Chen growled, "Invincible to Gods and Demons!"

The aura of his golden body inflated by another thirty percent, as if it was an enormous balloon. The five attacks were ultimately unsuccessful, only penetrating nine or so meters into the aura. Jiang Chen smashed them all back relying on nothing but his fists and feet. These armored warriors were merely soulless puppets whose attack power lay in their initial charge. Once they failed to break Jiang Chen's defense, these puppets simply did not have the time to launch a second attack or muster a defense before being sent flying by Jiang Chen.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Another three golden warriors quickly shot forth. This time, Jiang Chen did not dare grandstand anymore. These new three warriors had an aura comparable to earth sage realm experts. He didn't dare to disregard them even though he knew he would only need to endure a single blow from each.

Chapter 624: For Everything That Exists, There Exists Its Counter

Since breaking through to the sage realm, Jiang Chen had entered new heights, whether in terms of martial cultivation, battle capability, or his arts and techniques. Even facing three golden-armored warriors who boasted of strength equivalent to the earth sage realm wasn't enough to faze him. He simultaneously circulated his golden body to its limit and called upon the Lotus. Hundreds of vines writhed around him, setting up an impenetrable barricade. *no v E) LB) 1n*

The three earth sage realm warriors far exceeded the five warriors at the human sage realm. Although Jiang Chen had the Lotus restraining them, the three warriors that charged at him had enough momentum behind them to launch their attacks from beyond the Lotus' barricade. However, it came at a price. The strength behind their attacks had greatly diminished.

Yet when they crashed into the golden aura, that one hundred and twenty meter tall aura around Jiang Chen exploded outward like an enormous, golden bubble!

Although the aura had been destroyed, Jiang Chen's physical body's defensive capability wasn't inferior to the golden aura. With the aura ablating part of the three attacks, his body alone withstood the remainder of the attacks without trouble.

Jiang Chen didn't remain passive either, punching out in quick succession. As each punch landed on the three warriors, they were blown away. Each one transformed into clouds of golden light and returned to their bead forms. There were only three warriors left to face now, and they had already surrounded Jiang Chen in a triangle formation. These three were even stronger than the last, reaching sky sage realm strength!

"Come on then!" Jiang Chen was fully confident in his skills, and boldly challenged them. He didn't panic when facing the three sky sage realm warriors. If he'd met them in real life, he would've retreated without another word. He wouldn't have fought them head on. At his current level, he was fairly confident in facing a sky sage realm cultivator. But to battle three at the same time was courting death! Jiang Chen wasn't the foolhardy sort. But this challenge had a set of unique circumstances. The warriors were puppets, and they only had the strength to launch a single blow. All he had to do was last through a single strike.

Even so, Jiang Chen didn't dare treat that blow lightly. The only thing he could rely on was pure ability. There were no tricks to be played here; this was the tower of inheritance, and the rules were made by that existence. Even if Jiang Chen wanted to escape, there was no place to escape to. The only thing he could do was to face the challenge head on.

He activated the Golden Body again and summoned the magnetic golden mountain. The Lotus roared fiercely to life, erecting an even stronger defense around him. Jiang Chen was using almost all of his trump cards at the moment. The only one he was holding back was Long Xiaoxuan. It wasn't that he didn't want to summon the dragon, but that he was worried that the rules within the tower would reject all living beings apart from the inheritor. Therefore, he'd rather go at it alone than summon Long Xiaoxuan. If the rules rejected any other living beings and activated, they might kill him along with Long Xiaoxuan.

Although Long Xiaoxuan was a true dragon, he had yet to grow into his full strength. He would be the same as Jiang Chen in front of the overpowering formations of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, just a piece of meat for others to carve up as they would.

"The tests of the second level need to be conquered through force alright. It looks like the warnings of the residence's owner were right. Attempting the tower requires a minimum cultivation level of the sage realm. Even with all my trump cards, I likely would've stopped at this level had I rashly barged into the tower of inheritance." Jiang Chen locked gazes with the final three golden-armored warriors. All of a sudden, they all blurred into motion at the same time!

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

"Well met!" Jiang Chen wasn't afraid at all as he gestured, sending three magnetic storms to meet them head-on. The magnetic golden mountain expanded explosively under his control, emitting a powerful magnetic power and protecting the air over Jiang Chen's head.

Bam bam bam!

The three streaks of golden light tore through the Lotus' restraints with an unbridled, tyrannical momentum. However, even having broken through the Lotus' siege, the Lotus wasn't so passive as to just let them pass without challenge. It chased after the attackers and sought to restrain them again.

However, the warriors were all puppet warriors of the metal attribute. Their weapons and affinities were a natural counter to the vines of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Whoosh whoosh whoosh! Countless vines were continuously hacked into pieces, decorating the air with wriggling severed vines. Although the warriors were fierce, their speed was still affected by the Lotus' actions.

By the time they'd made their way to the second round of defenses, Jiang Chen's magnetic storms were waiting for them. As wild as the warriors' attacks were, their momentum decreased another degree as they strove to break through the magnetic storms. When they'd finally broken through and was about to attack Jiang Chen's Golden Body, that was when the magnetic golden mountain crushed them mercilessly!

Crack crack crack!

The three streaks of golden light were mercilessly extinguished. Like a candle flame blown out by a fierce wind.

Wham wham wham!

The three lights returned to their bead forms and rolled off into the distance. The warriors possessed the metal attribute, and the magnetic golden mountain was a metal treasure. Its power was far in excess of the three beads. Thus it was natural that it would firmly suppress the warriors.

“Hoo!” Jiang Chen breathed out lightly. He hadn’t thought things would be so easy after the magnetic golden mountain made an appearance. He hadn’t needed to attack at all before beating the golden-armored warriors back to their original form.

“For everything that exists, there exists its counter. This saying is true alright!” If Jiang Chen had been forced to rely on his own strength to fend off the three sky sage puppets, he would’ve been hard-pressed even if he had gone all out. But the magnetic golden mountain had neatly countered the warriors, crushing them with ease. This had been out of Jiang Chen’s expectations.

The twelve beads suddenly rolled towards each other, as if alive, forming a circle of rosary beads again. The seas of blood around him vanished in the next instant, revealing the original appearance of the tower. So the seas of blood were an illusion as well!

The ancestor statue glared ferociously at Jiang Chen, the rosary hanging in midair.

“Congratulations inheritor, you have passed the level of slaughter. This ring of Soldier Rosary Beads is the reward for your success. Go to the third level! The third level is where the true legacy of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect awaits.”

A blinding light appeared in the second level as the voice faded, enclosing Jiang Chen within. Jiang Chen’s figure disappeared into the void as he was brought to the third level. He took a cautious look around and noticed that its design wasn’t much different from the first level. There was only a few additional hints of desolation on this level.

There was an ancestor statue standing in the middle of the level. Weighty and dignified, it imparted a boundless feeling of awe. If the statue on the first level could be described as benevolent and amiable, and the statue on the second level brimmed with killing intent, then this one on the third level was the personification of unparalleled magnificence. Jiang Chen knew that this was the end of the tower, and that the majority of the sect’s inheritance would be found on this level. He couldn’t stop his emotions from fluctuating.

He’d spent two years here waiting for this day!

“Calm yourself. This is the last trial and I can’t have all my efforts go to waste at the last second.” Jiang Chen warned himself silently. But what was the trial of this level? He looked around curiously but didn’t see anything. He’d triggered the trials very quickly in the first two levels, but where was the test on this level?

He focused his attentions and looked around, but still didn’t run into any hints. “There were tests everywhere in the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, I can’t become numb and overconfident. If I’d been greedy and touched the ancestor statues, I would’ve been sent to a formation of sure death. If I hadn’t

perused the books and journals in the library, I would've failed the first level of wisdom. If I hadn't listened to the warning and come in before I had reached the sage realm, I would've failed the test on the second level of slaughter..."

Jiang Chen traced through all that had happened since he'd entered the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. He discovered that it was quite apparent what the sect looked for with regard to the qualities of its inheritor—honest and sincere, conscientious yet bold, and one with unperturbed composure.

Thus, when Jiang Chen's thoughts traveled here, he remained where he was without moving. He didn't take a step in any direction. Rather, he studied the ground at his feet and stood in the same place.

It was at this moment that the statue suddenly shot out beams of splendor from its finger. The radiance sank into the ground as the layers of the earth began to peel back like it was a newly sprouting bamboo shoot. Jiang Chen suddenly recognized the pattern. The vast floor had turned into an enormous checkerboard!

This composition!

He was taken aback as he gazed at the checkerboard. Many pieces had been placed on both sides, but what was most exceedingly rare was that Jiang Chen had actually seen such a composition problem before. Not in this life, but on a divine level in his past life! As opposed to saying this was a composition for checkers, one might as well call it a battle simulation. He'd seen this before, and its name came easily to him—the Slaughter of Immortals.

It had been named such because even immortals and gods would be hard-pressed to even salvage this particular composition. More importantly, it'd been derived from an actual battle. Once someone managed to recreate this situation on the battlefield, even gods and immortals would fall. Whether in terms of checkers or actual battle, this composition was exceedingly difficult to solve.

Jiang Chen lost his train of thought as he stared at the composition before him. The inheritance of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect was the Slaughter of Immortals?

What does this mean? Jiang Chen sank deep into thought. "Do they mean for me to solve this?" Countless thoughts flashed through his mind as he stared absentmindedly at it. The various memories from his past life about various compositions continued to awaken and pass through his mind.

Chapter 625: The Three Treasures of Inheritance

Jiang Chen hadn't been able to solve this "Slaughter of Immortals" setup in his past life, but that didn't mean a solution didn't exist for it. He had seen someone come up with a solution before, and that person had been his father, the Celestial Emperor.

The Celestial Emperor had sat across from one of his most trusted subjects that day and used a board to simulate solutions to this particular problem a countless number of times. In the end, the Emperor had displayed stunning wisdom and come up with an incredible method to solve it. Jiang Chen had sighed with absolute amazement as he watched from the side.

This matter had left a deep impression on Jiang Chen. And now that he was seeing it again, he felt a great sense of kinship. Delving into the memories of his father in his past life made a warm feeling rise in Jiang Chen's heart.

“It looks like it’s thanks to father’s blessings that I ran into this composition on the Divine Abyss Continent. Who other than one with father’s intelligence could solve this?” Jiang Chen’s heart was overflowing with gratitude. Who would’ve known that his father would reach over from the beyond to help him? Jiang Chen no longer hesitated and began to solve the situation on the checkerboard.

He discovered that the tower seemed to be controlling the game through an unknown power. Each step it made was all very formulaic, very much like rote memorization, following the sequence that he had seen so long ago. This made things even easier for Jiang Chen; his opponent wasn’t even alive. He held a great advantage when it was a formation program controlling everything. After all, there wouldn’t be any unexpected changes. Since the other rigorously followed the sequence, Jiang Chen didn’t need to simulate any possible changes to the solution. He just followed his father’s steps and reacted accordingly.

Roughly an hour later, Jiang Chen broke through the composition through sheer memory. The moment he did so, the surroundings in front of him suddenly lightened as a pathway opened up, letting Jiang Chen proceed directly through the center of the board. As the bridge rose into existence, the checkerboard around it suddenly disappeared to reveal an empty void, like a black hole, leaving only the bridge spanning the distance between the two sides.

Cold sweat ran down Jiang Chen’s back as he watched it all happen. If he hadn’t sat down at the checkerboard just now and instead tried to barge through, there was no doubt that he’d have been swallowed by the space rift formed by the black hole. The tower of inheritance is filled with traps alright!

In the instant that Jiang Chen stepped foot off the bridge, all the restrictions in front of him vanished, replaced by clouds of light that gathered around the feet of the ancestor statue.

“Congratulations, inheritor, for the fact that you have made it here makes you the most ideal to inherit the sect’s legacy. The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect will surely grow great again in your hands. Although this checkers composition looked like a mere game, it is actually a battle formation that we often use to defend against strong enemies who are foreign to the area. The many sects and races of the Divine Abyss Continent have faced multiple setbacks in the face of this formation. Whoever can solve this formation that takes shape here in the form of a game of checkers, only they hide within them the hope of destroying the battle formations that the enemies of outer regions are accustomed to using...”

Jiang Chen finally understood the meaning of the trial on the third level. The test of this level was pinpointed at the battle formations that were often used by foreign enemies! In his past life, it was a common sight to use a game of checkers to simulate a battle on that level, but who would’ve thought that the Divine Abyss Continent would have this level of accomplishment as well! In that moment, Jiang Chen was filled with admiration for the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.

“The three items of inheritance from my Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect can be found within these three balls of light. The first is the Crimson Heaven Medallion. This is the medallion of the sect and our ultimate token. No matter how far away our disciples may be scattered or how far back their legacy goes, seeing this medallion is as if seeing a forefather of the sect.

“The second is the Crimson Heaven Formation Flag. This flag is one of our greatest treasures, and to possess this flag is to be able to kill enemies with a flip of your hand, summoning the winds and rain as you please. This treasure is one of the rocks we’ve been able to establish and maintain the sect upon.

“The third is the ultimate legacy—the Crimson Heaven Formation Disk. Refining this formation disk will allow you to not only simulate the ten great formations of the sect, but also allow you to control the land of the entire sect as well.”

Jiang Chen’s heart raced; this was exactly what he’d wanted to hear! This disk was the ultimate treasure of the sect. Not only could it simulate the ten great formations of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, but it could also manipulate the sect’s territory as well. He’d be able to come and go as he pleased! Jiang Chen was delighted at the rewards. However, he wasn’t the sort to forget himself after receiving some benefits. He knew that since he’d inherited the sect’s legacy, then the person in front of him was his senior and forefather. The three clouds filled with treasure there hadn’t been placed like such without a reason behind it.

Jiang Chen immediately bowed before the treasures. “With the ancestors of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect as witness in front of me, I, Jiang Chen, do hereby inherit the legacy of the sect today. I will surely rebuild the sect in the future, revive the sect’s formations, and inherit the sect’s spirit...”

Jiang Chen looked at the treasures only after he’d completed all this. The Crimson Heaven Medallion was a token of the sect. Since he had inherited the sect’s legacy, he couldn’t reject it and so carefully put it away. There were eighteen formation flags, and Jiang Chen played with them for a bit, noticing that there were two sets of flags—one primary and one secondary.

The primary flags had been made out of wondrous materials that was noticeably of excellent quality. In Jiang Chen’s eyes, the expert who had used the primary flags had definitely been an empyrean expert who had surpassed the level of Titled Great Emperor.

The secondary flags were relatively weaker, but they were still an utmost treasure in the eyes of the current Divine Abyss Continent. Even the Upper Eight Regions might not have been able to bring out such a set of flags. Nevertheless, he put them all away with a lack of fanfare. With these flags, he felt that he would be greatly aided in setting up formations in the future, as if a tiger gaining wings.

The third item, and also the greatest—the Crimson Heaven Formation Disk. It wasn’t big, about the size of two palms, but the materials used in its creation startled Jiang Chen. Each one surpassed the secular planes and had reached the divine levels!

Even though they weren’t at a supreme divine level, Jiang Chen believed that ordinary empyrean cultivators would never have been able to refine this formation disk! He held the forefather of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect in even higher regard now. Someone capable of refining this disk was certainly no ordinary character.

“Hehe, what a pity that with my current strength, this formation disk won’t be put to full use in my hands. Even if I refine it, I wouldn’t be able to generate the ten great formations of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. Even if I managed to somehow squeeze them out, the formations wouldn’t reach their full potential. It’d be similar to me failing to draw a tiger, and drawing a dog instead.” Jiang Chen was very

cognizant of his level of strength and knew that although the formation disk was wonderful and he could refine it with his current strength in the sage realm, he was far from being able to use it fully.

“From observing this formation disk, I might be able to call upon one or two of the formations when I’m in the emperor realm, but I’d be able to deploy them at only twenty or thirty percent of their maximum strength. As for now, I wouldn’t be able to deploy even ten percent of its strength. It’d be a waste of a treasure instead.”

Jiang Chen decided that he would indeed refine the formation disk, but refrain from using it under any circumstances. He sat down without hesitation and began to start the refining process. It wasn’t entirely complicated, just one that involved erasing the original consciousness left on the disk and then putting his own imprint on it. This was a simple matter for Jiang Chen’s current level of consciousness.

He succeeded in removing the vestiges of the other consciousness on the disk in roughly three days, and branded his own mark onto it. Finally, the disk was now his own treasure, bound only to him. Although he was still incapable of summoning the ten great formations, the formations of the sect were now completely under his control. However, the great formation of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect was exceedingly complicated, with layers, interlocking segments, and roughly a thousand large and small formations. Although Jiang Chen had refined the disk, he still needed quite some time to digest it all.

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen’s consciousness was abnormally strong, so he only spent another half month after refining the disk to thoroughly grasp all of the large and small formations within the sect. Now all of them answered to a mere thought.

Jiang Chen breathed out with a comfortable sigh after he’d completed his study. He was now certain that he could leave. After two years, he was anxious to return to his people. “Who would’ve thought that a single curious thought two years ago would confine me to this place until now? But it’s not as if this venture has been unfruitful.”

Jiang Chen didn’t regret entering the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. Although he’d been trapped for two years, he’d gained much. The forbidden area of the sect as well as the outskirts of Mt. Rippling Mirage were now all under his control. This was quite the wondrous feeling. “Mm, these formations had been exquisitely designed. The fact that the ancient herb garden opens once every three thousand years is actually a product of that strict and ingenious design, taking into account the appearance of sky rank and earth rank spirit herbs. The dao of formations is a great one indeed!”

The more Jiang Chen understood formations, the more he sighed with amazement.

“Hmm?” His consciousness suddenly shifted. He’d felt some ripples of disturbance more than once while he’d mentally patrolled the various formations. Since the formations were under his control, there shouldn’t have been any ripples. The presence of ripples meant that the formations were operating. Normally speaking, they wouldn’t activate unless someone blundered into them.

“What going on?” Can it be that the Regal Pill Palace is forcefully breaking through the formations in order to save me?

However, he quickly discarded that thought. The formations around Mt. Rippling Mirage weren’t something that anyone on the level of the Myriad Domain could break through. If they could, they wouldn’t have wasted the effort to hold Pill Battles every thirty years. They could just break through!

So if it wasn't, who was it? Was it something that lived in Mt. Rippling Mirage? Jiang Chen's curiosity was now fully roused.

Chapter 626: Who's the Prey?

Since the formations that covered the entire Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect were now under Jiang Chen's control, he only needed to inspect them closely to find the problematic areas. His first sweep covered the interior of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. His consciousness first swept through the tower of inheritance, then the cavern, Ancestor Cliff, the cenotaph... There were no problems with the ruins within the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.

Jiang Chen's consciousness swept outward to explore the three platforms of the altar in the outskirts of the ancient herb garden. He finally understood the purpose of the three platforms. Clearly, each level corresponded to one of the three ancestors, and thus, the three legacies. He continued to expand his consciousness beyond those altars; there were no problems around the lake. As he used his consciousness to examine every possible area, he didn't find any fluctuations in the formation in the interior of the ancient herb garden either.

Jiang Chen's consciousness continued to spread outwards when suddenly—

It came to a stop, locking onto the entrance to the ancient herb garden, in front of that great waterfall. Three figures were at the entrance to the great waterfall, furiously attacking the Rippling Mirage Great Formation around the exterior of that waterfall. ~~no~~¹⁷E-16-1n

"Who's this?" Jiang Chen used the formation to investigate these newcomers, keeping his consciousness concealed. All of them were similarly unfamiliar, but each possessed terrifying potential. Jiang Chen could feel a startling power and presence emanating from the blue browed youth in particular. He had never even seen this kind of mighty pressure in the Myriad Domain, not even from Sect Head Xiang Wentian of the Great Cathedral.

"They, they, they're not from the Myriad Domain, are they?" Jiang Chen was greatly taken aback. He'd suddenly realized that the power radiating from the three people was slightly similar to that of Ding Tong's. It wasn't just Ding Tong, but it was also akin to the Ninesuns Sky Sect members he'd met back in the Precious Tree Sect.

"Disciples of the Ninesuns Sky Sect?" Jiang Chen slightly strengthened his consciousness, quickly recognizing the background of these three people.

"Why have they come here?" Jiang Chen's brain was momentarily filled with questions but he immediately realized that the Tristar Sect must have exposed the secret.

Initially, everyone had sworn heavenly oaths before entering the ancient herb garden. Jiang Chen had known for a while now that the Tristar Sect was colluding with the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Hence, he had even specifically reminded Elder Yun Nie to close off the Tristar Sect's loophole. Common sense dictated that the Tristar Sect would not reveal the secret for fear of suffering the tragedy of a heavenly tribulation. But when he saw these three disciples of the Ninesuns Sky Sect, Jiang Chen had a hunch that the Tristar Sect had already revealed everything!

Although he didn't know what method the Tristar Sect had used to evade heavenly judgment, Jiang Chen was almost entirely certain that only the Tristar Sect had enough motive to reveal this matter. Moreover, from the situation, they'd probably only revealed it to the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Otherwise, there wouldn't just be these three knocking at the doorstep.

Although Jiang Chen's consciousness had become very powerful, he still couldn't cover the entirety of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's outskirts. Even though he'd spotted the three enemies, he couldn't hear what they were saying. However, Jiang Chen immediately came up with a countermeasure.

He descended from the tower and walked out of the cavern, returning to the area around the altar. Through the transportation formation on the altar, he returned to the altar in the ancient herb garden. Then, he released a pack of Goldbiter Rats, instructing them, "Go, scout the area."

The Goldbiter Rats had already been trained to become Jiang Chen's eyes and ears. They quickly confirmed the reason behind the group's arrival. As expected, these three were from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. The one in charge of shattering the formation hadn't actually broken through the formation. Instead, it seemed he'd used some special method to create a temporary crack in the formation.

Jiang Chen had naturally heard of this kind of formation splitting art. Who'd have expected that this disciple of the Ninesuns Sky Sect would know such a high-level technique? He actually impressed Jiang Chen. "As expected of disciples from the Upper Eight Regions. Bringing this kind of technique to the Myriad Domain is truly overkill. To be able to crack this ancient formation, even temporarily, he rather has some skill."

Although Jiang Chen hated the insufferably arrogant Ninesuns Sky Sect, he knew that offending members of a first rate sect would have severe consequences. Even that Ding Tong, who was only a second rate disciple of the Ninesuns Sky Sect, had been difficult to face. None of these three people were weaker than Ding Tong. That blue browed youth, in particular, possessed a deep and immeasurable power. Jiang Chen had a suspicion that, even if his strength was not yet of the emperor realm, he would be fairly close.

Even if Jiang Chen summoned Long Xiaoxuan, there would still only be a fifty percent chance to win over these three enemies. Moreover, Long Xiaoxuan was one of the cards that he definitely couldn't reveal to the world. Once he was exposed, there would be no end of problems. Hence, Jiang Chen sank into momentary contemplation. What was a surefire way to chase these three away?

If it had been the Jiang Chen of two years ago, there was no way he would've bothered to make a plan after catching sight of them. The first and only course of action would've been retreat. Even then, whether he would be able to successfully do so would be another question entirely. But, after two years of rigorous training, his abilities had risen to another level, along with his confidence. Moreover, Mt. Rippling Mirage was now his territory. The combination was enough for Jiang Chen to feel that he had a serious chance in the upcoming fight.

"These three probably want to enter to kill me. Then, I will allow them to enter." Jiang Chen could see that if any one of these three used the formation splitting technique, none by themselves could create a crack. But the three of them had cooperated to assault the formation continuously for many days. It was very possible that their efforts would bear fruit soon.

“Men die for wealth, while birds die for food. It looks like even the disciples of the Ninesuns Sky Sect couldn’t help their greed when they heard of the ancient herb garden.” Jiang Chen sneered silently when he saw the insanity gripping the three.

However, at the same time, a sense of sorrow surfaced in his heart. With things as they were now, the cons of the ancient herb garden appearing ultimately outweighed the pros. The Tristar Sect’s exposure of the secret would bring great calamity to the Myriad Domain. From today onwards, the Myriad Domain might not know any more peace!.

On the other hand, Mt. Rippling Mirage was now under his control. Without the right token, no one else could enter the restricted grounds of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. They could at most reach the altar. But, Jiang Chen still did not wish for outsiders to continuously intrude into this mountain. Although Mt. Rippling Mirage was only the outer restricted area of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, it was still part of the sect’s territory. And now, it had even become Jiang Chen’s personal territory.

Anyone who ventured inside without an invitation should die!

Jiang Chen took a moment to plan his course of action and came up with the general gist of a plan. When it really came down to things, there was still some time until the Myriad Grand Ceremony, so he wasn’t in the greatest of hurry to leave. These three had used a formation shattering technique to enter the ancient herb garden with the intention to kill him and plunder his sky rank herbs. Jiang Chen’s lips curved into a cold smile. “Kill me? It seems they think of me, Jiang Chen, as some kind of prey to be eaten. When they enter the ancient herb garden, we shall see just who the real prey is.”

He began to make preparations as he spoke. Although this was his territory, Jiang Chen didn’t dare to be careless. None of these three were the benevolent sort. The only enemies of this level that Jiang Chen had faced before were Ding Tong and Elder Chen of the Sacred Sword Palace. Moreover, Jiang Chen had only defeated them after summoning Long Xiaoxuan. Even the weakest of these three people were at least on par with Ding Tong. And that blue browed youth was more than equal to the combined strength of five Ding Tongs. Jiang Chen had no reason to underestimate this kind of opponent.

Fortunately, it looked like he still had a day or two before these three people cracked the formation. Two days of preparation were enough for Jiang Chen to make many arrangements. “If those three people can use the formation shattering technique, there must be a formation master among them. No wonder they dared to trespass into Mt. Rippling Mirage!”

But even a formation master ultimately could not compete with the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s formations.

“Even with the combined efforts of three people, they still need a lot of time to create a sizable crack. I’ll only need to eliminate one of them after they enter to make it so that they can’t use that formation splitting technique anymore. Then, they won’t be able to leave this place until the formation opens. During that time, they’ll be no different from turtles in a jar, waiting to be slaughtered...” Jiang Chen smiled slightly and disappeared with a flicker of his shadow.

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Two days later, Fatty Wu Hen stood in front of the great waterfall. His forehead was beading over with perspiration but he was unusually excited, “Soon, soon. Everyone, work hard and put in all your effort!”

Boom!

Although the Rippling Mirage Great Formation was powerful, given that it had lasted from the ancient era, its defensive power had degraded to less than a third of its peak. As such, the combined continuous efforts of the three had finally allowed them to create a crack in the formation. At the sight of gaping void, the three went wild with glee, rushing in at full speed. As if they were standing at the gates of heaven, they fought to be first through the void.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh.

Three shadows rapidly flew in before the formation on the great waterfall snapped shut with crash. Clearly, although the three had cracked the formation, it lasted but for a split second. Nonetheless, the three were in high spirits right now. After spending so much time and effort, they had finally entered.

“Mm, there’s so much spirit energy in this place. It’s significantly different from the outside. It seems that this is indeed the ancient herb garden you’ve mentioned, Senior brother Cao,” Shi Zhen clucked his tongue in wonder after surveying his surroundings. He casually pocketed a stalk of a true saint spirit herb. “I hadn’t imagined that true saint spirit herbs would sprout everywhere here. It seems that this ancient herb garden is truly deserving of its name!”

Cao Jin clearly did not intend to simply pluck some true saint spirit herbs after entering this place. With a wave of his hand, he gathered the other two close to him, “The two of you, we’ll have more than enough time to pluck all the spirit herbs from this place after. Our top priority right is to find Jiang Chen. But there’s something I must tell you guys first—we might not be able to find Jiang Chen on this trip.”

“What?” Fatty Wu and Shi Zhen’s expressions instantly shifted. “Senior Brother Cao, what do you mean? We’ve already come this far and you’re saying that we might not find Jiang Chen?”

“Don’t panic. Initially, the Tristar Sect’s report said that one of the elders of the Sacred Sword Sect had also not made his way out. It’s very likely that he stayed behind to kill Jiang Chen. Hence, whether it’s Jiang Chen or that Sacred Sword Palace elder, we cannot let them slip away. If the elder killed Jiang Chen, it’s very possible that Jiang Chen’s treasures fell into his hands.”

After the other two heard this, both of them replied, “As long as the treasures exist, that’s fine. A mere elder of a fourth rank sect isn’t worth worrying over.”

Cao Jin nodded. “Even so, the three of us shouldn’t split up too far in case we stay long enough for catastrophe to strike. After all, if these ancient ruins have any strange traps, we can at least take care of each other by staying together.”

Even someone as powerful as Cao Jin was being extremely cautious. The other two had no reason to be conceited about their abilities and nodded one after another.

Chapter 627: Destroying One First

It had to be said that although Cao Jin looked extremely haughty, he was actually extremely cautious. He knew how to properly read the situation and grasp the timing to leave when things take a turn for the worse. He had received enough information from the Tristar Sect to know that there shouldn’t be any more threats apart from the Miasma when he entered the ancient herb garden. Yet, he still maintained his cautiousness, taking the attitude of a lion exerting its full power to capture a small rabbit. As they

were also affected by Cao Jin's line of thought, Wu Heng and Shi Zhen also did not dare to let down their guard.

Although they also felt that neither Jiang Chen nor that Sacred Sword Palace elder posed a threat to them, they were prepared for anything that might come. All three people spread their consciousness into a cone and began to sweep every corner of the ancient herb garden.

The ancient herb garden wasn't even a tenth of the size of the main mountain in Mt. Rippling Mirage. The three people's consciousness were very powerful, especially Cao Jin, whose consciousness could cover a startling amount of space.

The three found many clues after roughly three hours of searching. However, all of them had been left behind at the start by members of the major sects. But those people had already left, so they didn't provide much by way of information. However, Shi Zhen was somewhat despondent because along the way, he spied the telltale signs that many stalks of earth rank spirit herbs had been plucked. This made him want to pound his chest and stamp his feet with annoyance. "Senior brother Cao, look at this..." A sense of urgency suddenly entered Shi Zhen's voice. "These are the remains of Sage Fledgling Grass. This must have been a large patch of Sage Fledgling Grass!"

"How much?" Cao Jin breathed. Several hundred stalks of Sage Fledgling Grass would sound like sweet music to his ears.

"Judging by the area, I feel like there should have been several thousand, perhaps even tens of thousands!" Shi Zhen's breathing also quickened. So many stalks of Sage Fledgling Grass—even for the Ninesuns Sky Sect, this was still a startling amount of wealth!

Cao Jin raised a blue brow and muttered, "So, what the Sacred Sword Palace said about Jiang Chen receiving several thousand stalks of Sage Fledgling Grass was most likely true?"

"True or not, wouldn't we know everything once we capture that brat?" Fatty Wu sneered. The three people glanced at one another, setting off once again.

They soon came face to face with a tall cliff. Shi Zhen suddenly raised his hand as surprise flashed in his eyes.

"What is it?" Fatty Wu furrowed his brows.

"There should be highly ranked spirit herbs here." As a second rank pill king, Shi Zhen's judgment regarding this area far surpassed Cao Jin and Wu Heng's.

"How high?"

Shi Zhen's gaze zeroed on the patch of tall cliffs before he nodded, "I'll go check."

Cao Jin and Wu Heng both frowned, clearly displeased with Shi Zhen's actions.

Shi Ye smiled indifferently. "Relax, just deduct whatever I get from when we divide our gains later."

Cao Jin and Wu Heng glanced at each other. At any rate, they'd have to split whatever they gained from Jiang Chen when they found that brat later. No matter what Shi Zhen found now, they could just deduct it from his share later.

“Be careful,” Cao Jin reminded them.

Shi Zhen nodded and retrieved a medicine hoe with one hand. He shrouded himself in flowing light before soaring towards the clifftop. Sage realm experts were equipped with the ability to fly. Shi Zhen had obviously learnt some kind of special flight technique. His body traveled through the air like a large bird, arriving in front of the cliff face in the blink of an eye.

The cliff was covered in shrubs and greenery. Shi Zhen expanded his consciousness and inspected his surroundings. Suddenly, his eyes fell upon a bush about fifty meters to his right.

“Sky rank spirit herb, Sundevourer Ganoderma?!” Shi Zhen was delighted. Never had he imagined that there would actually be a stalk of sky rank spirit herb hidden here! Moreover, this Sundevourer Ganoderma was no ordinary sky rank spirit herb!

But, why had no one from the Myriad Domain plucked such an obvious stalk of a sky rank spirit herb? Just as Shi Zhen was about to step forward to harvest it, he stopped dead in his steps.

He felt that the appearance of this sky rank spirit grass was somewhat suspicious. Could this be a trap? Shi Zhen was not an impulsive person. The more he thought about this, the less he was in a hurry to harvest it. Instead, he scoured the location, circling the area around the sky rank spirit herb repeatedly to figure out if the herb was real.

It was clear that this sky rank spirit herb could not be more genuine. Its concentrated spirit energy was very lifelike and could not possibly have been generated by an illusion. As Shi Zhen hesitated, Wu Heng called out from below, “Senior brother Shi Zhen, time is of the essence. What are you dithering for?”

Cao Jin also asked, “Junior brother Shi Zhen, what do you see?”

Shi Zhen stepped forward to check under their urgings and chuckled, “Caution prevents blunders. I’m only checking if there are any traps in this area.”

Shi Zhen no longer hesitated after that. After thinking carefully, had he perhaps been too cautious? Cao Jin and Wu Heng were just below him after all, and while he was not overwhelmingly powerful, there was still no need for him to tiptoe around mere denizens of the Myriad Domain.

An elder of Sacred Sword Palace? He was just only earth sage realm. And Jiang Chen had been reported to be only an origin realm cultivator. As Shi Zhen thought about this, he instantly regained his confidence. He leapt in front of the Sundevourer Ganoderma. With a swing of his medicine hoe, he prepared to pluck the herb—

When the scenery suddenly changed before his eyes.

“Careful, junior brother Shi Zhen!”

Although the scenery before his eyes had changed, that Sundevourer Ganoderma remained in its original spot. Shi Zhen ignored everything else as his medicine hoe danced, digging at the roots of the herb. At that precise moment, the cliff face surrounding the spirit herb abruptly erupted with countless vines, twisting around Shi Zhen without warning. Shi Zhen had been completely engrossed in the Sundevourer Ganoderma. How would he have expected this to happen?

He suddenly felt a cold draft on his neck.

Whoosh! Shi Zhen's head shot upwards. His body however, fell into the dense shrubbery with a plop.

It was at this moment that Cao Jin and Wu Heng hastily arrived. When they saw Shi Zhen's head land on the ground, their expressions changed drastically.

Cao Jin shouted lowly, "Smoke and mirrors and tricks! Who's there?!"

Suddenly, Cao Jin's Moonshatter Awl lashed out at a patch of space. With a ray of blinding light, countless talismans fluttered to the ground. Their surroundings returned to normal in the next instant, unmarred except for Shi Zhen's corpse, which hung from a large tree not far from them.

Wu Heng's expression was dark. "Senior brother Cao, this is the work of an expert formation master. Just now, senior brother Shi Zhen must have been snared in a formation technique. He must have been caught off guard..."

Cao Jin furrowed his blue brows. His gaze was frosty as he surveyed the area, trying to spot the formation master in the shadows. But no matter how he probed with his consciousness, he couldn't find a thing.

"Formation master!" Cao Jin fumed between gritted teeth. "Since when did the Myriad Domain have a formation master? Wu Heng, since Shi Zhen has been lost, you and me, our plans will..."

Wu Heng's heart was also filled with shocked rage, but also a trace of relief. At least the corpse hadn't been him. Moreover, with Shi Zhen's death, there was now one less person to divide the spoils with. "Senior brother Cao, senior brother Shi Zhen previously refined a pill to defeat the Miasma here. His loss won't affect the big picture that much."

This was the truth. Shi Zhen's cultivation and martial prowess was undoubtedly the weakest among the three. His value lay in handling the Miasma. Nevertheless, Cao Jin still felt depressed. He didn't know if the pill that Shi Zhen had refined was effective or not, but with things how they were right now, he could only push forward. Luckily, they knew the rough location of the Divine Befuddlement Miasma from the Tristar Sect's reports. As long as they crossed the lake carefully, they shouldn't need to worry overmuch.

However, what worried Cao Jin at the moment was, just who was this mystery enemy? Was it that elder of the Sacred Sword Palace or Jiang Chen of the Regal Pill Palace? No matter who it was, this person would not be an easy opponent. He was fortunate that he had Wu Heng with him, a person similarly adept at formations.

Patting Wu Heng's shoulder, he said, "Junior brother Wu, our enemy is very cunning and obviously has had time to prepare. The facts that his advanced preparations were for us and junior brother Shi Zhen's overconfidence were why this tragic murder happened."

Wu Heng nodded, "Senior brother Cao has no need to worry. We won't fall for this kind of formation usage a second time. What's there to be afraid of as long as we're a bit more careful?"

This was the truth. All three of them had previously taken the attitude of a hunter hunting prey. They had all believed that they were hunting Jiang Chen down. Never had it occurred to them that they could

be the prey instead. It was precisely because they had been too aggressive that they had failed to consider the perspective of the prey and had thus been tricked. But now, both Cao Jin and Wu Heng were aware that their opponent was not someone who would simply sit and await his death.

Although Shi Zhen's death had shaken them and even caused them to panic temporarily, they only took a few moments to calm down. Shi Zhen might have been lost, but that was not necessarily a bad thing. At least they could confirm that there was someone here in this ancient herb garden. Whether it was Jiang Chen or the elder from the Sacred Sword Palace didn't matter to Cao Jin and Wu Heng. What was important was the numerous sky and earth rank spirit herbs! Moreover, Shi Zhen's loss meant that there was one less person to split their gains with, so that was just as well.

As the two people steeled themselves, the upbringing of a large sect's disciples displayed itself. They plowed onwards without even touching Shi Zhen's corpse. Clearly, they were extremely cautious. The enemy might have laid a trap on Shi Zhen's body, and it would be bad if they were infected by some kind of poison.

"Junior brother Wu, I guess that this person should be Jiang Chen, not Elder Chen of the Sacred Sword Palace," Cao Jin sent a silent message Wu Heng.

"How makes you say that?" Wu Heng remained unsure.

"Simple. If it was Elder Chen, he wouldn't be able to combat the Divine Befuddlement Miasma without the pill. As long as Jiang Chen escaped to an area infused with the miasma, there's nothing Elder Chen can do. It's already been two years since the Myriad Domain's sects left this area. If this person is still alive, this proves that he must be Jiang Chen instead of Elder Chen." Cao Jin's deductions made a lot of sense.

"It's even better if it's Jiang Chen. Even if an origin realm cultivator learnt a few dirty tricks, just how much trouble can he stir up for us?" Wu Heng replied.

However, Cao Jin reminded him, "Don't underestimate our enemy. He's already killed Ding Tong. The fact that he could ensnare Shi Zhen in an insidious trap means that we have been too careless thus far. You musn't underestimate him. I didn't think... that there would be a person from the Myriad Domain who could surprise even me!"

With a quick gesture, he rapidly set off in a certain direction with Wu Heng. Clearly, Cao Jin had captured various traces through careful investigation.

Chapter 628: Toyed By the Formation *nOve-Lb.1n*

When two sage realm cultivators reached their maximum speed, the distance they could cover was quite stunning. However, Cao Jin came to a sudden stop with a quick gesture.

"What is it, senior brother Cao?" Fatty Wu knew of Cao Jin's strength. By now he'd already positioned himself as Cao Jin's right hand man. Cao Jin was the conductor of all of their operations.

"I sense something's wrong nearby. Stay on your guard." As a peak ninth level sage realm expert, Cao Jin's instincts were far superior to Wu Heng's.

With his level of cultivation, the only time Cao Jin had been rebuffed was when he'd encountered the mysterious Miss Huang'er. Under normal circumstances, he should've been able to trample everyone in the Myriad Domain with his cultivation.

"Look over there!" Cao Jin arched a blue eyebrow as his eyes locked onto a bush beside the road.

The duo carefully approached the bush while preparing themselves for action. They would attack at full force the second they encountered even the slightest hint of resistance. They parted the bush, and found a corpse hidden behind it. More accurately speaking, it was Ding Tong's corpse!

"Ding Tong?!" Fatty Wu cried out involuntarily. They both knew that Ding Tong was already dead, but they didn't imagine that he would die in such a place! With a wave of his hand, Cao Jin kept Fatty Wu away while pointing at Ding Tong's corpse from afar.

Pfft!

Struck by the finger's force, Ding Tong's corpse abruptly transformed into a wisp of green smoke and vanished completely.

"A crude smokescreen!" Cao Jin sneered before he raised his voice and yelled, "The same trick is worthless once you use it more than a few times, you scoundrel. I know you're nearby. I may spare your life if you come out now like a good boy, but if I have to catch you, I'll make you wish that you were dead!"

While he spoke, Cao Jin fully activated his eye arts and began searching the area. He'd obviously trained extensively in them, and a faint purple light sparkled stunningly in his eyes, continuously expanding outwards. Fatty Wu cooperated fully as well and started to make his preparations as well. However, his expression suddenly changed. A quick look around and he noticed that the ground beneath them had changed. Not only that, everything their eyes rested on had turned into yellow sand!

How could this be?

Cao Jin's eyes shifted slightly and he asked lowly, "Another formation?"

Fatty Wu nodded with a tight expression on his face. "A formation indeed, and an exceedingly sophisticated one at that. Senior brother Cao, I feel that we've irritated those within the mountain. The level of this formation isn't something that belongs to the Myriad Domain!"

These words also made Cao Jin start. "Someone within the mountain? Who could there be? How would the Myriad Domain sects dare enter if there was anyone here?"

Fatty Wu was also baffled. "I don't know why, but this formation feels quite sophisticated, almost on par with our Ninesuns Sky Sect."

Cao Jin snorted coldly. "We could crack open even the Rippling Mirage formation. How would this one here stump you or I?"

Fatty Wu nodded, "Right, and we have the formation splitting technique as well!"

This technique was a rare art, and even an expert like Cao Jin from the Sky Sect wouldn't know how to utilize it either. It had been Fatty Wu who'd been lucky enough to learn this ancient art. The two were about to erupt into action when several arrows descended upon them.

Cao Jin didn't grow angry when he saw this, but rather smiled instead. He caught all four of the arrows with a grandiose flourish of his sleeve. His mouth twitched as he restored his previous confidence.

"Junior brother Wu, deploy the formation splitting technique, I'll cover for you!"

The two split up their roles clearly.

"Alright!" Fatty Wu didn't tarry and flung out a rune. He locked onto the edge of the formation amidst the light and struck out fiercely.

In the next moment...

The scene in front of them suddenly changed as the mounds of yellow sand turned into nothing, and then was replaced by an expanse of fiery ocean. The two discovered that their new surroundings had become a sea of lava. Fire dragons spat out gouts of flame from the sea of lava. The heat wave that hit them face first caused the two some difficulties in breathing.

"How can this be?" Cao Jin frowned.

Fatty Wu also felt quite depressed. "Senior brother Cao, this seems to be a live formation, unlike the dead ones on the outskirts of the mountain. The formation splitting technique is quite useful for a dead formation, but it's tough to grasp if someone is actively controlling the formation."

When it came to formations, a live formation was much more threatening than a dead one. A live formation could change and adapt at any time. When it shifts without warning, one wouldn't be able to fully grasp the edges of the formation. How could they cast the formation splitting technique then?

Although Cao Jin wasn't a formation master, he still understood the theory. He knew that the fault of this matter didn't lie with Fatty Wu. It also wasn't the time to blame his teammate. He nodded, "Don't be depressed, feel it out slowly. The opponent has resorted to using a formation to deal with us, which proves that his strength is below yours and mine. The arrows just now also prove this point."

"Don't worry, senior brother Cao. Although this formation is strong, I will find its boundary without a doubt. As soon as I do so, I'll definitely be able to open a crack in it unless there's a special restriction on this formation that forbids the option of using the formation splitting technique."

"Just be careful. I'll cover for you, so don't worry about it attacking you." Cao Jin knew that his skill in formations was far below that of Fatty Wu's and thus wouldn't venture any ideas. However, it was a simple matter to protect Fatty Wu from being attacked by the formation. In actuality, Cao Jin had no fear in facing this formation, even if he wanted to break through it by force. However, Fatty Wu was just an earth sage realm cultivator. The power in the formation wasn't enough to hurt Cao Jin, but was more than enough to kill Fatty Wu. Although Cao Jin didn't have a deep relationship with Fatty Wu, he didn't want another one of his teammates to die at this moment!

If another one died, he would be alone. Although he wasn't afraid, his mental state would certainly be affected. This hidden opponent was obviously skilled in formations, so Fatty Wu's value was obvious. He

truly had stunning potential in the area of formations and was able to quickly grasp the edge of the formation again. "Over here, senior brother Cao!"

Fatty Wu tried the formation splitting technique again and shouted out softly, "Break!"

Yet, as soon as he spoke the word, the formation changed again to a wintry field of ice and snow. Every direction was covered in ice, as flakes of snow drifted through the air. A world of winter had seemingly descended upon the two.

"F*ck!" Fatty Wu couldn't help but curse. He'd finally found the edge of the formation again, but the opponent had shifted the formation just as he was about to break through it!

"Senior brother Cao, this fellow is toying with us!" He huffed and puffed. Although he was a crafty, shrewd person, he couldn't help but feel his anger rouse at the repeated setbacks.

It was rather Cao Jin who was calm and cold, "Be calm, the more he does thus, the more this proves that he's afraid of us."

Fatty Wu thought for a moment and felt that to be true. He nodded. "Then I'll study this formation a bit more and see what's going on."

He was about to walk forward when all of the layers of ice in this world of winter shattered into icicles and rose into the air. The sky gleamed with the jagged edges of ice for a moment, and with nary a sign, they began to shoot towards the duo. Cao Jin laughed coldly as he traced an arc with one hand, forming a dome-shaped protective circle that enclosed him and Fatty Wu.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft!

Countless icicles crashed onto the shield but only penetrated a meter in, their momentum expended against the protective dome.

"Break!" Cao Jin spread out his hands and sent a gust of wind billowing out, swallowing all of the countless icicles and shredding them apart, sending them drifting to the ground as icy dust.

"Senior brother Cao is so amazing!" Fatty Wu exclaimed in admiration.

Cao Jin spread out his hands. "Keep working at the formation!"

.....

Jiang Chen was also quite saddened as he manipulated the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven in the shadows. Although he was giving it his all to activate the disk, he was constrained by the abilities of his own body and so could only summon the lowest level formation. The Slaughter Formation at this level could possibly entrap the fatty, but was obviously insufficient in handling the blue browed youth.

"Is this blue browed youth the Yong Xingyun that Ding Tong spoke of? Only one of the ten great disciples would have this kind of ability!" Although Jiang Chen was slightly saddened, he wasn't dejected. After all, he'd been able to use the Minor Artifice Formation earlier to kill one of them. Now that he was repeating the same trick, it was tough to get the same results when his opponents were prepared. He took his failure to kill an enemy in stride. He was merely using the formation to feel out their methods so that he could know the enemy as well as he knew himself. "Of the two, the blue browed youth is

stronger, but the fatty is the formation master. If I can get rid of the fatty, the blue browed youth will be all alone and therefore much easier to take out.”

Jiang Chen also knew that it would be much easier to handle them if the two were separated. The power of his formation was greatly decreased when they were together. And of course, although Jiang Chen had the formation disk, he could only call upon the easiest level of formation. There were three levels, and Jiang Chen had just come into possession of the disk. It was difficult for him to call upon the second level.

“Sigh, I’d have much more confidence in facing off against these two if I could activate the medium level of the formation. If I could activate the advanced level, I could kill them within seconds!”

Jiang Chen knew he was only daydreaming about the most advanced level. He wouldn’t be able to unleash it before his strength reached sky sage level. Even then, the amount of spirit stones needed at that level was astonishing.

Each time Jiang Chen switched up the formation, it would distract the fatty just as he was about to make his move. This irked the fatty to no end, but what could he do? However, Jiang Chen also knew that it wasn’t a very sustainable tactic. There were only seven changes to the Ancient Formation of Slaughter. If he started the cycle over again, it would be easy for the opponent to grasp the core of the formation. For someone who knew the formation splitting technique, it would be easy for them to open a passage through this level of formation.

Thus, he had to use the next stage of his plan. If nothing else, Jiang Chen was a determined person, and when he knew that the formation wouldn’t be able to hold his opponent, he immediately moved onto the next step. He had to at least get rid of one of them first no matter what!

Chapter 629: Divide and Conquer

Fatty Wu suddenly grinned. “Senior brother Cao, the opponent’s formation is already repeating itself. This can only mean that there aren’t any more tricks to this formation.”

Cao Jin was delighted to hear this. “So he’s exhausted his bag of tricks! Junior brother Wu, now it’s up to you!”

Fatty Wu was in great spirits. He’d been wary of this formation before since it had a couple of variations, and each variation had its own unique dangers. It was more than enough to bring a great deal of pressure on the fatty’s shoulders, but his saving grace was that even though the formation was powerful and complicated, it was still only deployed at a basic level. Fatty Wu understood that this was a limit of the formation brought about by the low cultivation level of the formation master. If the formation master’s cultivation had been higher, then it would’ve been easy enough to confine and kill the two of them within this marvelous formation. Just as he mustered all his attention and energy to execute the formation splitting technique, the formation was suddenly taken down.

Whoosh!

The formation’s disappearance caused the scenery to return to what it was originally. The two stood by the path once again, weeds obscuring the path ahead of them as dense forest crowded in from each side.

Fatty Wu's face flickered through a variety of expressions as he looked around. He frowned, "Senior brother Cao, I was wondering why this fellow could swap through formation changes so quickly. It looks like he might not be a formation master after all."

"What do you mean?" Cao Jin didn't understand this sudden declaration.

"There are no vestiges of a formation setup in the surroundings. A strong formation would always leave some traces in the surroundings, or at least some spirit energy residue. There's no evidence at all to be found here."

"You mean to say..." Cao Jin suddenly thought of something as his expression flickered.

"This kid must've used up a seriously large portion of his good luck and gotten his hands on a strong formation disk, but doesn't really know how to use it. It would explain why the formation he could deploy wasn't too high a level. But, a formation disk!" A look of greed gleamed in Fatty Wu's eyes. To a formation master, a formation disk was even more enticing than sky rank herbs. With the fatty's experience in formations, how would he not be able to understand that this wasn't a formation that had been set up by hand, but one that had been projected by a formation disk?

Setting up a formation by hand required time and formation flags. A foundation had to be laid, and that would leave visible traces in the surroundings. Once the formation was destroyed, there would always be some glyph remnants still present in the air.

But the fatty hadn't sensed a single fragment.

What did that mean? It meant that the one who'd set the formation up hadn't done so through any particularly impressive methods, but had just used a formation disk to summon the entire thing. There were many advantages to a formation disk; it was quick, easy and very convenient. But the complexity of the formation deployed didn't necessarily indicate a corresponding level of skill behind the one deploying it. n/-Ov1b1n

"Senior brother Cao, you can have Shi Zhen's share. I only want my own and this disk." Fatty Wu took a deep breath and once more revisited the terms of dividing up the loot.

Cao Jin thought momentarily and felt that he didn't have much use for a mere formation disk. He nodded, "We're agreed."

The two suddenly felt an enormous pressure descend on their heads as they spoke. They lifted their heads, and saw an enormous mountain crashing down on them!"

"Get back!" Despite his great surprise, Cao Jin didn't panic. He raised his hand, and the mountain ground to a stop, arrested by his bare hand. As light shone from his hand, Cao Jin called upon his reserves of strength and actually lifted it up!

But it seemed that his efforts wouldn't fully pan out, as the mountain once again descended down on Cao Jin again. This was Jiang Chen's golden magnetic mountain, and the very embodiment of domineering strength. Even earth sage realm cultivators wouldn't be able to withstand this blow. But Cao Jin was Cao Jin, he wasn't at the peak of sage realm for nothing. His bare hand alone was enough to hold back the mountain, no matter how many times it crashed down on him. However, although he put

up a fierce resistance and was now itching to blow the mountain to smithereens, he couldn't shave off the slightest shard from the mountain no matter how much strength he used.

"This mountain is a bit odd!" Cao Jin was slightly surprised, because even someone as strong as him could feel a force of attraction acting on him whenever this mountain crashed down on him. There was an odd magnetic power to it, making it so that his return blows could never reach the core of the mountain. However, Jiang Chen's aim wasn't Cao Jin. He was well aware that it would be difficult to try and crush Cao Jin to death with the magnetic golden mountain. His goal was to just keep Cao Jin preoccupied.

The true target of his butcher's knife was the fatty! The fatty had been relegated to the outskirts by the titanic size of the mountain. When he saw how preoccupied Cao Jin was by the mountain, he guessed that the enemy wanted to separate him and Cao Jin. However, the fatty was bold and confident in his skills, unafraid of anything. He activated some of the talismans in his hand and set down some defensive formations around him.

Fatties were usually quite afraid of death, and often had many ways to protect their lives. This was also why the fatty was so persistent in studying formations. Formations would usually offer one more chances to save their lives when one's strength wasn't up to par. It was at this time that the fatty suddenly heard some small sounds. He was already feeling like there was an enemy behind every bush and tree to begin with, so he hurriedly looked around every which way.

He suddenly saw a few bead-like items roll to his feet. Fatty Wu's heart spasmed as he had an exceedingly bad premonition about this turn of events. Golden light abruptly flashed from the beads as they all turned into exceedingly sturdy golden-armored warriors. The warriors were wholly unreasonable, brandishing their weapons without another word and started charging at Fatty Wu.

He saw the six warriors that lead the vanguard at the human sage realm, but he was confident that his formations would be able to handle them. However, three earth sage realm warriors followed closely on their heels. This caused some panic to surge in his heart. He threw out multiple talismans in a row, trying to keep the earth sage level attacks from reaching him. And yet, he tragically discovered that that wasn't even the end after he'd beaten the warriors, this wasn't the end of things!

There were three more sky sage realm warriors right behind them! Their momentum and strength weren't on par with Cao Jin, but more than enough to take out the fatty when they acted together. Not to mention that there were a large number of earth sage and human sage golden-armored warriors as well! In his urgency, Fatty Wu kept crying out for help, "Help me, senior brother Cao!"

Cao Jin punched out with both fists when he heard the fatty's call, elegantly evading the magnetic golden mountain to take long strides towards the fatty. When the warriors saw Cao Jin arrive, the six human sage realm warriors leapt over to restrain Cao Jin.

A series of continuous solid punches that connected precisely with its intended targets sent all of the warriors flying with a dominating air. The caveat here though, was that Jiang Chen was manipulating them. When he'd met the warriors in the tower, they'd only had the strength for a single blow. But now that the "Soldier Rosary Beads" were in Jiang Chen's hands and had been refined by him, he could decide how to use them with a mere thought. Under his control, the warriors came pouncing over without fear just after they were sent flying.

On the other side, Fatty Wu was howling with pain and agony. Trying to fight three sky sage warriors at the same time had landed him in perilously hot water very quickly. Jiang Chen seized the opportunity to once again summon the magnetic golden mountain. This time, he didn't send it towards Cao Jin, but smashed it down on Fatty Wu with all his strength.

Fatty Wu was in a panicked mess already, and the magnetic golden mountain was the straw that broke the camel's back as it came crashing down on him. Under an expanding golden light, a ghastly scream echoed in the air as a pile of bloody flesh took the place of the little fatty..

Jiang Chen was delighted to see that he'd done away with Fatty Wu and formed a quick hand seal, putting away the magnetic golden mountain and the Soldier Rosary Beads. At the same time, he activated the formation disk of the Minor Artifice Formation with his consciousness to summon it. Jiang Chen knew that it was impossible to confine Cao Jin with the formation; he knew the formation splitting technique as well. All Jiang Chen wanted to do was to slow Cao Jin down and give himself a chance to retreat with ease.

He also knew that although he was first level sage realm, there was a great gap between him and the Cao Jin who sat at peak sage realm. Jiang Chen knew that he would have no chance winning a face to face encounter. He wasn't belittling himself; he was well aware of his many advantages, but there was still a gap between him and a top disciple of a first rank sect. To say nothing of anything else, the other would have treasures like a monsoon rain, and the resources he'd been able to make use of to date were at least ten times or a hundred times in excess of what had been available to Jiang Chen. That a genius of a first rank sect could train to this level was absolutely an indicator of the favor and attention showered on him. This wasn't something that Jiang Chen could measure up to. Therefore, he wasn't at all self conscious in the face of this gap.

A tempestuous fury, an everburning anger the likes he had never felt before rose in Cao Jin's heart when he saw Fatty Wu being crushed to death in front of him. He'd never thought that the two peers that he'd invited would die right in front of him. This was clear evidence that even if the opponent wasn't strong, his tricks and methods were endless. It was extremely difficult for one to defend themselves!

"Jiang Chen! I know it's you! I'll scatter your ashes to the wind!" Cao Jin struck out savagely with the Moonshatter Awl, creating a small crack in the Minor Artifice Formation. He blasted through the crack in search of Jiang Chen's presence, and tracked him down to the banks of the lake about an hour later.

Jiang Chen was leisurely standing on the side, watching an infuriated and raging Cao Jin. There were hints of mockery and jeering visible on his relaxed face.

"Jiang Chen!" Cao Jin's eyes were about to shoot fire. As one of the ten great disciples of the Ninesuns Sky Sect, he'd never lost his composure to such a state.

Jiang Chen, however, smiled faintly. "It looks like the Tristar Sect is a loyal dog after all. They'd rather have their sect be destroyed just so they could point their masters here."

Cao Jin stared fixedly at Jiang Chen, subjugating his anger and calming himself with effort. It was apparent that Cao Jin didn't view Jiang Chen as an ordinary opponent anymore. No matter Jiang Chen's level of cultivation, it was obvious from all that had happened that he was a strong rival and had to be

treated with full attention. “Jiang Chen, hand over the spirit herbs and the pill recipe for the Longevity Pill. If you do so, this Cao from the Cao family could possibly spare you.”

Jiang Chen laughed instead. “Cao family? Your surname is Cao? So you’re not that Yong Xingyun?”

“You know Yong Xingyun?” Cao Jin started slightly and then immediately guessed at something. He smiled coldly. “You were the one who killed Ding Tong alright! Good, very good! A mere Myriad Domain cultivator dared kill three Sky Sect disciples! Jiang Chen, I have to admit that you’ve got some balls!”

Chapter 630: Victory in Numbers, Who’s Afraid of Who?

Jiang Chen didn’t treat these words as a compliment at all. He was well aware of the frightening killing intent that hid behind Cao Jin’s words. This was an opponent dangerous enough to threaten his life, and the most frightening enemy he’d met since reincarnating. If he could kill this opponent today, that’d mean he had enough power to travel to the Upper Eight Regions and search for his father Jiang Feng.

Jiang Chen had only spent a short amount of time with his father in this life, but he’d felt the same fatherly love from Jiang Feng as he did from the Celestial Emperor. Adding to that his memories and emotions from his past life, although Jiang Chen’s feelings towards Jiang Feng weren’t as deep as his for the Celestial Emperor, they weren’t too far off.

Jiang Chen looked at Cao Jin with narrowed eyes, inwardly at solemn attention. This Cao Jin was a top genius of the Sky Sect alright; his demeanor and bearing was vastly different from the top geniuses in the Myriad Domain. He looked arrogant and insufferably cocky, but he never lost his reason. Even when he faced Jiang Chen, someone noticeably inferior to him, Cao Jin still gave his opponent the full weight of his attention. The focus with which he treated Jiang Chen left no openings to exploit. This was indeed the mindset of a lion using its full power to secure even a rabbit!

Jiang Chen was most on guard against an opponent who didn’t take anything for granted. If it’d been an opponent with eyes at the top of his head, who’d constantly dismissed Jiang Chen, then that would’ve created an opportunity for Jiang Chen. But an opponent who didn’t dismiss him at all left him with no choice other than to bring forth everything.

“Cao, tell me your name. I don’t kill nameless people.” Jiang Chen probed.

Cao Jin smiled remotely. “Spare me the crude provocation. My name is Cao Jin, one of the ten great disciples of the Ninesuns Sky Sect. I’ve already looted the Regal Pill Palace before coming here. What Palace Head Dan Chi, what Elder Yun Nie, every insect there was utterly pathetic. Jiang Chen, I hope you don’t disappoint me too.”

What?

Jiang Chen’s heart shook when he heard this and his eyes narrowed into a glare. However, he soon calmed down as the corner of his mouth twitched. He smiled faintly. “Cao Jin, don’t put on a front. If you had truly gone to loot the Regal Pill Palace, you would’ve known long ago that I handed over the sky and earth rank spirit herbs to the sect. What are you doing here then?”

Indeed, Cao Jin’s face froze over when he heard this. “You gave it all to the sect?”

Jiang Chen could tell from his reaction that he'd pulled one over Cao Jin. He smiled, "You fancy yourself clever, do you? Looks like you didn't get anything from your visit to the Regal Pill Palace, if you really even went there."

Jiang Chen was actually completely right. Cao Jin's expression turned even uglier. His trip to the Regal Pill Palace had been a complete humiliation. However, he was quick to adapt, as he laughed coldly, "Jiang Chen, you're going to die today no matter what you say and where the spirit herbs are."

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "Is that so? Come kill me then."

He activated the Cicada Wing and sped towards the center of the lake. When Cao Jin saw Jiang Chen do so, he knew that the latter wanted to use the terrain and the Miasma on the island. But what would he fear now that things had developed thus? He swallowed the pill that Shi Zhen had prepared beforehand, fully primed all the defenses he had and sped towards the island. He was determined to kill Jiang Chen this time!

The two of them landed on the island, one after another.

"Not running away anymore?" Cao Jin also landed when he saw Jiang Chen come to a halt, slowing down a few hundred meters away from him.

"Why should I run away?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

"Hahaha..." Cao Jin couldn't help but burst out laughing. "Why do you need to run? Do you think you have a reason not to run?"

"Yes." Jiang Chen nodded nonchalantly. "This is my territory, and whoever enters must die."

If it wasn't for him understanding Jiang Chen's strength and having witnessed Jiang Chen's methods, Cao Jin might've actually been scared. But since he had already grasped his opponent, he was thoroughly confident in himself. He'd been a bit dejected previously because Jiang Chen had attacked from the shadows while they had stood in the light. They'd been restricted at every step and Jiang Chen had thoroughly calculated their moves. Now that Jiang Chen was in the light, Cao Jin had nothing to fear, not with his strength. That formation disk of Jiang Chen's was of no threat at all.

If there was anything Cao Jin was worried about now, it was the matter of exiting rather than Jiang Chen. He'd been able to come in because of the formation splitting technique that the three had executed together. Now that Wu Heng and Shi Zheng had perished, this had become the biggest issue he needed to solve.

But after he took out Jiang Chen and plundered all his treasures, what was so bad about training here for a decade or so? The task at hand was still to kill Jiang Chen! He guessed that Jiang Chen had lured him here because the former was viewing the Miasma as a trump card. "Jiang Chen, if you think the Miasma here can affect me, then you're simply too naive." n/-Ovel01n

Cao Jin had scanned himself just now and noticed that the pill Shi Zhen had concocted was very effective. His defenses were also fully active, so it too was actively rejecting the invasion of the Miasma to a certain extent. He had identified the Miasma because he wanted to impact Jiang Chen's morale. Indeed, Jiang Chen's expression changed drastically when he casually mentioned it.

“Cao... you, you can handle even the Miasma?”

Cao snorted coldly when he saw how Jiang Chen’s expression had changed and stared at his opponent in a sinister fashion. “This is your last chance, hand over the spirit herbs and the Longevity Pill recipe. I can promise that I’ll let you live if you do so. I even won’t make trouble for your Regal Pill Palace.”

A hint of hesitation appeared in Jiang Chen’s eyes. His face had drained of all color. “Why should I believe you?”

Cao Jin took a step closer, bellowing, “Do you have any other choice?” He flared his aura as he spoke, the presence of a peak sage realm roiling outwards and crushing down on Jiang Chen.

A complicated gaze appeared in Jiang Chen’s eyes. A hint of a cruel smile appeared on Cao Jin’s lips as he suddenly snapped his fingers.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Six streaks of golden light flashed through the air, taking up positions around Jiang Chen. Once the light dimmed, six silver talismans floated in the air. The runes on each of them broke apart, reassembling to become six sparkling, golden wolves. Each of them had long flowing fur, and the dimmed golden radiance seemed to become a shield, giving onlookers a feeling of extreme ferocity and savagery.

Awroooo! Awroooo!

The six enormous wolves threw their heads back and howled to the skies, rattling Jiang Chen’s ear drums and piercing deep into his soul. It was as if the howls had the power to rip one’s very soul apart.

“Jiang Chen, you’re too naive!” Cao Jin laughed heartily. “You killed two of my peers right in front of me! Do you think I’d still let you live?!”

“Then... all that was just to distract me just now?” Jiang Chen frowned.

Cao Jin smiled. “What else do you think? How would I know if you’d played any other tricks if I didn’t distract you? But even if you have any tricks left, you won’t be able to use them anymore. You, a mere first level sage realm, have no future but becoming a chewtoy after being surrounded by my six golden wolverines!”

Cao Jin had been distracting Jiang Chen earlier because he’d wanted to set Jiang Chen at ease, and also because he was also using his consciousness to probe the surrounding terrain, just in case Jiang Chen was up to anything. After he was done with the sweep, Cao Jin made the first move in trapping Jiang Chen with the six wolves. Everything was in his grasp now, and he didn’t need to act anymore.

Jiang Chen suddenly smiled. “What a coincidence.”

“What coincidence?” Cao Jin’s tone was cold.

“Well, you said you were distracting me just now, but the same went for me. It looks like we really don’t trust each other.” Jiang Chen’s tone was casual as the hint of a leisurely smile flashed through his eyes.

“You want to win by numbers? Bring it on!”

He made a hand seal and summoned the Millionditch Stone Nest. Several hundred thousand Goldbiter Rats surged out furiously, instantly filling every square inch of empty space with hair-raising momentum. There were rats even beneath Cao Jin's feet.

The six wolverines were individually at earth saint rank, a cultivation level even higher than the Rat King! But as strong as they were, they were only six, whereas there were hundreds of thousands of Goldbiter Rats. In addition, the element that the rats were least afraid of were spirit creatures of the metal attribute.

The Goldbiter Rats' reputation of being able to destroy anything wasn't an empty boast. Even divine level experts could only retreat when they ran into a pack of ravaging Goldbiter Rats. If they set their sights on something, there would be nothing left of them except cracked bones. The Goldbiter Kingrats in particular were a race that could devour even the heavens!

Cao Jin had been delighting in his cleverness just now, exulting in the feeling of a plot well sprung. Who would've thought that Jiang Chen's trembling voice and crestfallen expression were just playing along with Cao Jin! This meant that Jiang Chen knew from the beginning that Cao Jin had a way to take care of the Miasma. Just as he was probing out Jiang Chen, so had Jiang Chen been doing the same to him.

The six wolverines scurried around in all directions, sending countless Goldbiter Rats flying through the air from the wind formed by the motion of the claws, filling the air with blood and fur scraps. However, when the Goldbiter Rats grew enraged, they were the sort to go berserk. The six wolverines had thoroughly enraged the Goldbiter Rats, particularly since Jiang Chen had promised them that they could have all of the flesh and blood of the wolverines. The six creatures weren't illusions made from glyphs, but spirit creatures with real flesh and blood. It was just that they'd been sealed by the runes as Cao Jin's contracted creatures.

These earth sage realm spirit creatures were nothing more than a feast for the Goldbiter Rats, so the latter became even wilder after receiving Jiang Chen's promise. No matter how the wolverines dashed to and fro, there were countless Goldbiter Rats who fearlessly leaped up to entangle them. Having evolved a few times, there were many saint realm rats amongst them, so they wouldn't necessarily die with a single blow from the wolverines' sharp claws.

The battle had become ever crazier.