

Three Realms 641

Chapter 641: Tragic Ruins

Because Jiang Chen hadn't revealed his identity yet, he was still seen as Mu Gaoqi to others. However, it also left those very same people wondering why "Mu Gaoqi" was part of the group. Everyone recognized his potential, and he had indeed accomplished meritorious deeds in the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles. But, hadn't he only recently assailed the sky origin realm? At best, that would put him at seventh level origin realm, no? How could he represent the Regal Pill Palace at such an occasion with that sort of cultivation level?

In the Rosy Valley, there were more than twenty geniuses who were eighth level origin realm and above, and a good handful of ninth level origin realm and above. But none of those had been brought along instead of Mu Gaoqi.

Everyone felt that this was Elder Yun Nie using his connections to sneak him in through the backdoor. However, no matter how they questioned things internally, no one could speak of their suspicions. After all, Mu Gaoqi's potential was obvious for all to see. Who dared offend him? Offending him was to offend a future heavyweight of the Regal Pill Palace. The potential of an innate wood constitution meant that he would be able to affect the sect's fortunes for a thousand years to come. It was likely that even the palace head would have to treat him with due respect and consideration in a hundred years.

The Regal Pill Palace hadn't had a pill king appear in the last couple hundred years. Even the most exemplary Elder Yun Nie was still one step away from taking those exams. Mu Gaoqi on the other hand, was estimated to have the potential of a seventh rank pill king. This kind of potential would make him immensely popular even in a first rank sect. Therefore, apart from Elder Lian Cheng, who sported a darkened expression on the way, the others had no objections. They even laughed and chatted with "Mu Gaoqi", occasionally displaying an act of brotherly love between fellow disciples. Everyone was well aware that they had to look differently at him now.

Mu Gaoqi was an existence they couldn't afford to offend, so why bother being standoffish? They should instead try to build good relations with him as early as possible. Even Shen Qinghong became much more outgoing after breaking through to the sage realm. He was quite close with "Mu Gaoqi" and frequently gave him cultivation pointers. All of this greatly tired out the fake Mu Gaoqi. It wasn't hard for Jiang Chen to pretend to be Mu Gaoqi. He only had to conceal his sage realm presence and no one would be the wiser. However, it was a lot more difficult to pretend to be an ignorant little boy and accept martial dao pointers from Shen Qinghong. Thankfully, Ling Bi'er stepped in to save Jiang Chen.

Only Ling Bi'er was aware that the "Mu Gaoqi" in front of her was an imposter, and that he was Jiang Chen instead. Whenever anyone found an excuse to approach Mu Gaoqi with great enthusiasm, she would always find another pill dao topic to discuss at length with Mu Gaoqi. Beauties came first, so the others didn't have much to say about that. This helped out Jiang Chen greatly, and coincidentally turned into a scene that Elder Lian Cheng wanted to see the least. He was a bit depressed because Shen Qinghong seemed to be escaping from his grasp lately.

Shen Qinghong's personality had changed greatly ever since breaking through to the sage realm. Some changes were good, but whenever Elder Lian Cheng complained about Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder

Yun Nie suppressing him, Shen Qinghong would always dismiss it with a laugh and voice the opinion that the two were likely not targeting the honored master, but doing so out of consideration for the sect. Although these words were meant to comfort Elder Lian Cheng, they instead grated on his ears. You're my top disciple, alright? Why do you sound like you're making excuses for Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie? Were you brainwashed during this trip to Mt. Rippling Mirage?

The change in his best disciple further threw Elder Lian Cheng's mentality off kilter. It was as if someone had stolen something from him, particularly as he'd continuously hinted at Shen Qinghong this time that he had to display a better performance. Setting aside the other geniuses in the Myriad Domain, Shen Qinghong had to at least firmly suppress the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. This was the only way in which Elder Lian Cheng would be able to obtain that remaining sky rank spirit herb.

Although he kept hinting that he wanted Shen Qinghong to take the sky rank spirit herb and present it to his master, his disciple's responses always left that little bit to be desired. This further displeased Elder Lian Cheng. He felt that Shen Qinghong's wings had filled out and was no longer heeding his words. Now that he saw Shen Qinghong laughing and chatting with Elder Yun Nie's disciple, he was even more unhappy.

Although Palace Head Dan Chi vaguely detected some awkwardness in the latter, he pretended he didn't know anything. He knew that emotions were running a bit high in Elder Lian Cheng, but it was something he would have to come to terms with himself. Others were unable to help him with what he was grappling with.

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The Grand Myriad Ceremony was held in the ruins of the Myriad Empire. To be frank, the ceremony that happened once every thirty years was a memorial ceremony. They would honor the past glories of the Myriad Empire and remember the experts who had perished in that disaster. They were also reminding the geniuses of the Myriad Domain to never forget the humiliation of the Myriad Domain.

In short, a brainwashing ceremony.

However, there was great value for such a ceremony. That part of their history was indeed a humiliation for the Myriad Domain. Only through finding courage after this period of shame would there be a future for the Myriad Domain.

Even though the ancient site of the Myriad Empire was nothing more than ruins after a couple hundred years, the sheer prosperity of the Empire in its heyday was still obvious. Every corner and detail of the ruins was testament to the glories of yesteryear, and how impressive the Myriad Empire had once been. However, time washes even the sturdiest bulwark away.

Even the strongest empires and most glorious histories were but wisps of smoke after several hundred years.

As Jiang Chen followed the group traipsing through the ruins, he sensed the devastating atmosphere that seemed to linger around them. He couldn't help but reflect, "The Great Scarlet Mid Region is entirely domineering alright. This was basically pulling the Myriad Empire up by the roots! Not only did they destroy the entire royal family, they also slaughtered all cultivators above sky sage realm." In Jiang Chen's eyes, this matter didn't seem as simple as a mere sacred maiden of their area being defiled, even

though this had been publicly touted as the region's excuse for invading the Myriad Empire. From what Jiang Chen had heard from Palace Head Dan Chi, combined with what he saw in front of him, Jiang Chen felt that things shouldn't have been so dire if it'd just been the matter of one sacred maiden.

Perhaps the Great Scarlet Mid Region had long since had ulterior motives, and their sacred maiden being defiled was just an excuse. After all, the Myriad Domain bordered the Great Scarlet and was also very strong. At that time, they were also showing an upward trend. How would the Great Scarlet allow competitors to coexist peacefully next to them? Therefore, from Jiang Chen's perspective, the Great Scarlet destroying the Myriad Domain was very likely a power grab, and not about defending their sacred maiden's honor.

Jiang Chen didn't believe that the royal descendants of the Myriad Domain would've been so idiotic as to be unable to identify the sacred maiden of a neighboring region.

"Eh? What's that?" A disturbance suddenly started within the Regal Pill Palace crowd as one of the followers pointed ahead, struck by fright.

There were two structures in the distance, wreathed by mist. As the group looked over, their hearts spasmed. Even Jiang Chen felt a wave of discomfort.

Of the two buildings, the one on the left was made of human skulls and rose several meters into the air, the skulls piled on top of each other to form a high tower. Various restrictions floated around the tower, appearing quite sinister and frightening. The one on the right also rose several meters into the air, but this one was made of various hacked off limbs. They were stacked together in an orderly manner to form a tall tower, also with strong restrictions around them.

Dan Chi sighed lightly when he saw the towers. "These are the towers of bones and bodies that the Great Scarlet Mid Region built from the corpses of Myriad Empire royalty in order to display their might and strength. They've erected these to warn the descendants in the Myriad Domain."

"They were this ruthless and dominating?" Shen Qinghong was immensely taken aback. It was the first time the young folks had participated in the Myriad Grand Ceremony, so it was naturally their first time seeing such a frightening scene.

Elder Lian Cheng snorted coldly. "The strong reign as kings. The Great Scarlet Mid Region is strong and had a righteous excuse. They could naturally do as they wish."

Palace Head Dan Chi followed up solemnly, "Take a good look; this is the shame of the Myriad Domain. As a member of the region, you all should never forget this humiliation. Just as Elder Lian Cheng has said, the strong can do as they like. If you fall behind, you can only passively accept this. How would any of us be willing to fall behind and forever be subject to beatings?"

One had to say, these two towers were more convincing than any amount of blood stirring words. Any cultivator made of flesh and blood would feel their blood froth and boil at seeing such shaming architecture and be greatly affected by them.

"This is only the first, there's also Bloodlight River further on, as well as Petrified Infant Forest and Petrified Women Forest..." Dan Chi's tone was heavy as he spoke of those. It was rather easy to

understand Bloodlight River. Surely it was the river of accumulated blood from those who'd died that shone redly.

"What's Petrified Infant Forest?" Someone was curious.

"You'll know when you go further inside." Dan Chi waved his hand.

They continued to pick through the ruins and arrived at the moat that surrounded the Myriad Empire's imperial city.

"Do you see this river? The water within this river turned red after that disaster, and has yet to run cleanly even after hundreds of years. To this day, it's known as Bloodlight River."

As the group crossed the moat's bridge, an incredibly strong scent of blood invaded their noses, along with a peculiar sense. As soon as they sensed it, everyone's chest was compressed as scenes from that slaughter hundreds of years ago rose unbidden in their minds; the disaster that had been straight from the depths of hell...

It was as if they could still hear the howls and sobs of agony from the Myriad Empire's royalty and the violent roars from the enemy, as well as the ear piercing sounds of clashing weapons...

"Everyone keep a tight leash on your consciousness. This sense of blood is very terrifying. It will give rise to all sorts of illusions through the restrictions. If you let it, it'll impact your morale and eat away at your mind!" Dan Chi hurriedly reminded everyone.

Jiang Chen's hairs also stood on end as he watched Bloodlight River flow through the ruins. An unspeakable sense of disgust and hate grew for the Great Scarlet Mid Region's mercilessness. This was the height of villainy if the region had exacted such a price just because a sacred maiden had been violated.

Chapter 642: The Cocky Sacred Sword Palace

It wasn't until everyone crossed the bridge and was a few hundred meters away that the sense of blood faded to a barely perceptible level.

"Be mentally prepared; the palace is up ahead, and there are even more ghastly sights inside..." Dan Chi reminded everyone, his tone somber.

The so-called palace was also ruins, but some of the half shattered walls and the outlines of the crumbled structures demarcated where the palace began. The group threaded their way through the ruins and saw a spacious platform extend in front of them with something on it. But when they drew closer, their hearts pounded as their stomachs roiled and threatened to expel their contents.

The scene in front of them could no longer be described as ghastly. It was the epitome of ruthlessness and showed a utter lack of human nature!

The platform was filled with sculptures, starting with infants to the left. The oldest were barely seven, eight years old, while the youngest seemed not even old enough to walk. These babies had obviously been alive, and once made of flesh and blood. It seemed like they had been drenched in molten metal,

and directly cast into sculptures. Some of the infants lacked heads, others limbs, and still others slashed open so that their guts spilled out. None had been given an easy death.

To the right were the women. Every single one was naked, and the molten liquid had been poured over their heads first. Every cruel sight imaginable had been inflicted on them. The molten metal had captured every detail of the harrowing expression on their faces, giving silent voice to the horrifying torture they'd been exposed to before they'd died.

"Animals! Absolutely filthy, what barbaric animals!" Even the young folks couldn't help but curse loudly when they saw this scene. With his memories of two lives, even Jiang Chen had the urge to go on a rampage. While it wasn't unheard of to destroy a kingdom or slaughter a clan in the world of martial dao, this went far beyond the realm of the acceptable.

But even if one were to kill or take revenge, there was no need to do so in such a cruel manner. The towers of bones and corpses, Bloodlight River, and all these sculptures... this was no longer something that could be put under the purview of the word "revenge". Although Jiang Chen hadn't met anyone from the Great Scarlet Mid Region till date, he could absolutely imagine how tyrannical and brutal they were from the ruins of the Myriad Empire. It was so appalling that it was a rare tragedy on earth.

Exhibiting one's strength in such a brutal and merciless fashion was truly uncommon in the world of martial dao.

"Why haven't we destroyed them? So they can rest in peace?" Ling Bi'er asked in a low voice.

"Destroy them?" Elder Lian Cheng snorted coldly. "You're too naive. Every one of those restrictions contain methods unique to the Great Scarlet Mid Region. They'll strike back as soon as you touch them. Not only that, but those of Great Scarlet will also know at first light if you did. They left a warning that they wouldn't mind coming back for another round of slaughter if these things were destroyed. And..."

"And what?"

"They said that if they come again, there won't be any cultivators left in the Myriad Domain able to reach origin realm when they leave." Elder Lian Cheng's facial muscles twitched slightly when his words left his mouth. He was obviously very wary of the Great Scarlet Mid Region as well.

Palace Head Dan Chi walked up and waved his hand. "Alright, let's not talk more about this for now. I expect that the other sects have already arrived. Let's convene at the altar first."

The altar was located within the Myriad Empire's imperial ancestral temple, just a slight distance from the atrocity of the statues. The others were all too willing to leave such a depressing area, so they all followed Dan Chi. As the temple that honored the ancestors of the Myriad Empire royals, it naturally hadn't been left intact. It too was a destroyed mess. But this was where the remembrance and memorial would be held.

When the Regal Pill Palace arrived, they noticed that the Dark North Sect and the Great Cathedral had already arrived. n--OveℓBIn

"You're here too, ole brother Dan Chi?" Honored Master Tian Ming was slightly startled when he saw how few the Regal Pill Palace had brought.

“You’re here early, ole brother Tian Ming.” Dan Chi greeted him warmly.

Those of the Great Cathedral all had solemn expressions on their faces as they looked over at the Regal Pill Palace. Xiang Wentian merely nodded his head at Dan Chi from afar. It was apparent that everyone’s emotions were quite complex when they came here. No one was in the mood for small talk.

“Are the other sects not here yet?” Dan Chi looked around.

“The Walkabout Sect should be here soon, I’m not sure about the Sacred Sword Palace. The sects below us should also be on their way.”

Apart from the traditional attendance from the six great sects, some of the fifth rank and sixth rank sects would also come pay their respects. It was just that it’d always been the six great sects who held sway on everything. Now that the Tristar Sect was destroyed and its territory carved up, they were now the five great sects.

The Walkabout Sect group arrived as they spoke. They had brought roughly two hundred with them, just like the Great Cathedral and the Dark North Sect. So when they saw how few the Regal Pill Palace had brought, Walkabout Sect Head Wei Wuying smiled, “Ole brother Dan Chi, your Regal Pill Palace is keeping quite a low profile this time.”

Dan Chi smiled faintly, “It’s a remembrance and memorial ceremony. There’s nothing untoward in bringing a small group.

Wei Wuying chuckled, not saying anything else. Yet, from the distance was a particularly proud snort, “I say that it’s not about a low profile, but rather that you’re scared out of your mind by the Ninesuns Sky Sect, hmm?”

Everyone knew without having to think that the Sacred Sword Palace had arrived, thanks to this voice and tone. Only the Sacred Sword Palace would act like mad dogs whenever it concerned the Regal Pill Palace. They had to lunge forward for a bite no matter what. And indeed, Wang Jianyu appeared, a large sword slung across his back, taking large strides over to the group. Behind him came a great number of the Sacred Sword Palace senior executives and genius disciples. They outnumbered even the Great Cathedral! It looked like they were determined to shine at the ceremony this time.

“Wang Jianyu, is your zodiac sign a dog? You just can’t resist going in for a bite whenever you see my Regal Pill Palace, hmm?” Palace Head Dan Chi fired right back.

It was obvious that the conflict between the two wasn’t something that could be mediated anymore. The other three sects didn’t say anything, especially the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect. It looked like they’d made up their minds to watch the show.

Wang Jianyu halted not too far in front of Dan Chi, a cocky expression on his face as he swept his eyes over the latter. He then looked behind the palace head with a hint of mockery. “Dan Chi, it looks like you’re not much of a palace head either. You don’t have enough charisma at all! Why else would you have shown up with so few people, and these crab and shrimp-like minor character at that?”

This description deeply infuriated the geniuses behind Dan Chi, particularly Shen Qinghong. He roared, “If my Regal Pill Palace are crab and shrimp, what does that make your Sacred Sword Palace? The fish that eat the trash off the ocean floor?”

“Blasphemy!” Wang Han was behind Wang Jianyu and took the opportunity to stride forward, looking sideways at Shen Qinghong. “Shen Qinghong, who was the cowardly turtle at Mt. Rippling Mirage last time? What, do you think you’re something after breaking through to the sage realm?”

Wang Han’s aura blashed outward as he spoke, so strong that it seemed to be an enormous sword that’d just revealed its sheen and blatantly crashing down on Shen Qinghong. Although Shen Qinghong had broken through to the sage realm, there was still a difference between him and Wang Han at peak second level sage realm. He instantly felt like the very air had been filled with the edges of a blade as this aura expanded to cover him. However, he wasn’t in the sage realm for nothing, so even though he felt it slightly difficult to bear up in the face of this aura, he wasn’t being crushed by it.

The two geniuses had already started facing off privately when Dan Chi waved his hand lazily, breaking off this competition in the shadows. He said faintly, “Qinghong, this is the ancestral temple of the Myriad Empire. Don’t act rashly here.”

Wang Han didn’t continue when he saw Dan Chi interfering, but he also didn’t forget to take a shot at Shen Qinghong, “Shen Qinghong, I forgot to congratulate you. Without that vermin Jiang Chen, you’re truly the first genius in the Regal Pill Palace. But as for your strength...” he drawled out his words. “I still stick to what I said before, your name isn’t on the list of the preeminent geniuses in the Myriad Domain!”

Wang Han had used these words in the Pill Battles to provoke Shen Qinghong. At that time, he and Zhu Feiyang were all first level sage realm, and Shen Qinghong was one step away. Now that Shen Qinghong was in the sage realm, Wang Han had reached the peak of second level, still firmly ahead of Shen Qinghong. Therefore, he fell back on his old tricks and attacked Shen Qinghong verbally, wanting to crack his confidence and his dao heart. As the top geniuses of their respective sects, they’d inherited the grudges of the previous generations. As the future leader of the Sacred Sword Palace, Wang Han was more than happy to take hits at the Regal Pill Palace.

Ling Bi’er, on the other hand, couldn’t listen any further. She furrowed her brows “Wang Han, this is the imperial ancestral temple. You seemed to be displaying your might and power at an inappropriate location. If you’re so talented, then go to the Great Scarlet Mid Region and wash away the shame of the Myriad Domain! You’re throwing around your weight quite well in a small, dispirited place like this.”

A sinister smile flashed through Wang Han’s eyes as he swept his glance over Ling Bi’er’s face and chest. He smiled leisurely, “I’ve often heard that the first beauty of the Regal Pill Palace is pure and innocent. Looks like that’s all talk. I saw you being quite close with that vermin Jiang last time. Now that his life has been cut short, are you planning on shifting your attentions elsewhere?”

Jiang Chen had been planning on being low key and just observing the situation with his appearance as Mu Gaoqi. He hadn’t been bothered to pay any attention to Wang Han hopping up and down. But, he could no longer sit idly anymore now that the other was mouthing off about “that vermin Jiang Chen” and disrespecting Ling Bi’er. He walked forward and looked dispassionately at Wang Han. “Wang Han, you seemed to have lost quite a bit of face in last time’s trip to Mt. Rippling Mirage. What, do you feel like you hadn’t lost enough face?”

Mu Gaoqi?

Even the other two geniuses amongst the four great Regal Pill Palace geniuses, Jun Mobai and Nie Chong, didn't dare stand out to defend Ling Bi'er at this time. But a cowardly Mu Gaoqi had dared to? Even Shen Qinghong was startled, much less Jun Mobai and Nie Chong. They thought this to be unbelievable.

Wang Han was even more baffled as he looked at "Mu Gaoqi". He rather thought he was hearing things. He had a slight impression of Mu Gaoqi, but only that this fellow was Jiang Chen's follower. And a cowardly and timid one at that. An ant dares rebut me to my face? Wang Han's astonishment suddenly transformed into boundless fury.

Chapter 643: Alliance Proposal

His tone rapidly dropping, Wang Han stared straight at Jiang Chen. "It looks like I'm too easy to talk to normally, hmm? Even a stray cat or dog like you dares throw its weight around in front of me?"

It was apparent that Wang Han also hadn't realized that Mu Gaoqi was the person he hated with a fiery passion—Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen laughed easily, "Wang Han, who doesn't know how to talk big? Looks like you've forgotten when you had to slap yourself?"

One didn't have to reveal someone's shortcomings when cursing at them, just like it was entirely possible to humiliate someone without denying them face. Jiang Chen's words were more effective than any variant of curse word he could come up with. When Wang Han had targeted Jiang Chen back then, he'd ended up being mocked in return and had to slap himself in the end. He'd always viewed this occurrence as a great humiliation. It was both a taboo topic and open wound for him.

With Jiang Chen bringing up those old matters, those who'd witnessed it back then couldn't help but feel smiles creep up their faces. Although they hid them well, someone as perceptive as Wang Han still felt enormously humiliated. He grew so angry that all of the hairs on his body started to rise.

"Kid, you... you're called Mu Gaoqi right? Innate wood constitution, right?" Wang Han's tone had dropped to a new low as he stared at Jiang Chen like a viper homing in on its prey.

Jiang Chen felt a bit apologetic. Gaoqi ah Gaoqi, don't blame your brother for making enemies for you, alright? His expression wooden, Jiang Chen responded noncommittally, "So what if I am?"

"So what if you are? Wang Han spoke through gritted teeth. "I once said that in the world of martial dao, pill dao is nothing but a side dish. You were glorious without parallel in Mt. Rippling Mirage, but martial dao is king in the Great Myriad Ceremony. Kid, I hope you can still talk this tough after you meet me in the ring!"

Now that they had erupted into open hostility, Wang Han didn't bother concealing his murderous intent at all.

"Martial dao is king, hmm? Those in the know recognize you for what you are, a minor character in the Sacred Sword Palace. Those who don't would actually think you're the true inner disciple of some first rank sect." Jiang Chen was completely contemptuous of Wang Han's threats.

Jiang Chen had heard too many similar threats since the first time they'd met in Mt. Rippling Mirage. Wang Han in particular had voiced his promises of violence four or five times. It was just that with Jiang Chen's current level of cultivation, he wouldn't be afraid even if he faced off with Wang Jianyu of eighth level sage realm, much less Wang Han.

You think you're strong? You're cocky? Was he stronger or more arrogant than Cao Jin? No one was surprised that Wang Han was throwing his weight around, but everyone's impression of Mu Gaoqi was that he was a notable little sheep. When had this kid developed such personality? Was boldness something that was contagious? Jiang Chen's strength and his ways had left a deep impression on those of the six great sects on Mt. Rippling Mirage, and now that they saw Mu Gaoqi acting thus, they were all reminded of Jiang Chen.

Mu Gaoqi was Jiang Chen's follower from the beginning, but had he also inherited Jiang Chen's style since Jiang Chen hadn't emerged from Mt. Rippling Mirage? The usually quick-witted Wang Han, the one who'd jeered the Regal Pill Palace geniuses into speechlessness just moments ago, was now flushing a purple-red in his rage by the unknown Mu Gaoqi.

Wang Jianyu sneered when he saw this charade, "Dan Chi, your Regal Pill Palace spends most of their time cultivating verbals arts, doesn't it? All of them are so sharp-tongued, but these little unorthodox methods are all just jokes at the Myriad Grand Ceremony."

Dan Chi said noncommittally, "It sounds like your Sacred Sword Palace wishes to dominate the ceremony this year? I'll await your results with bated breath." He turned around to lightly admonish his people, "Alright, this is the ancestral temple; there's no need for verbal sparring." He then smiled at Honored Master Tian Ming. "Ole brother Tian Ming, the Longevity Pill that we promised you in Mt. Rippling Mirage has finally been refined. My apologies for the wait."

Delight blossomed on Honored Master Tian Ming's face after a stunned moment. "What? It's been refined?"

The Regal Pill Palace hadn't taken out any Longevity Pills over the past few years, making the Myriad Domain feel that only Jiang Chen, and no one else, had the ability to refine the Longevity Pill in the Regal Pill Palace. Everyone gave this matter solemn attention when they heard, complex looks appearing in their eyes.

Tian Ming had readied the price for the pill and carried it on him every moment for all these years as he waited for the pill to appear. Those assembled watched them complete the transaction with complicated emotions. The other second and third rate sects of the Myriad Domain all arrived at this time.

"Alright, the hour for the ceremony to commence is arriving. Prepare yourselves, everyone!" Xiang Wentian of the Great Cathedral announced.

The Great Cathedral was the first sect of the Myriad Domain and the strongest, so none of the other sects objected when he started things off. In reality, everyone knew that the remembrance and memorial ceremony was just a formality. After hundreds of years, it was unrealistic to expect everyone to still have deep feelings for the Myriad Empire royal family. As opposed to remembering the royals, one might as well say that this was more about honoring the glorious history of the Myriad Domain.

The procedure for the ceremony was extremely complex, and the process full of grave pomp. There were numerous large and small sects in the Myriad Domain, and more than a hundred with the right to be present here. With several thousand people gathered, it lent a very solemn air to the entire proceedings. It took two hours before everything wrapped up. *nOve.0b/In*

“Everyone, there is a tradition of a martial arts segment at the end of every Myriad Grand Ceremony. I have something to announce before that segment kicks off.” Xiang Wentian’s tone was determined. “The Tristar Sect betrayed the Myriad Domain and has already been struck from our list of brothers. There is no more Tristar Sect from now on. Even if they rise from the ashes, they will forever be traitors to us, and everyone should condemn them. Because of this, I must remind everyone that what the Myriad Domain is to us. It is our mother, and as such, we must be loyal to it. Whoever becomes a traitor will be nailed to the pillar of shame of our region for all generations to come!”

The Great Cathedral had always been domineering, but its loyalty to the Myriad Domain wasn’t any less than that of the Regal Pill Palace. Xiang Wentian’s gaze was flint hard as he expanded his consciousness to cover the entire gathering, shocking all those present. Xiang Wentian’s cultivation level was at peak of ninth level sage realm! He had the right to assail the emperor realm! The changes of turning back time that the Longevity Pill had brought Xiang Wentian were simply too stunning. It had turned a decrepit old man who’d been on the verge of losing his cultivation into one glowing with the vigor of youth, enabling him to take another step further in his cultivation and earn the right to potentially ascend even higher!

“Can it be that after hundreds of years, an emperor realm cultivator will finally appear in the Myriad Domain again?” Everyone felt great emotion surge in their hearts. One had to know that since the empire had fallen, and all sky sage realm cultivators in the Myriad Domain had been slaughtered, another emperor realm cultivator hadn’t appeared for the last six hundred years. If Xiang Wentian could break through to the emperor realm, it would mark a new page in the Myriad Domain’s history.

Honored Master Tian Ming in particular was feeling quite fervent. He was the second oldest present, and although he wasn’t in as much of a hurry as Xiang Wentian, he itched to swallow the Longevity Pill immediately and refine it when he saw the stunning changes in Xiang Wentian.

“Alright, let’s head to the Rings then!”

The Myriad Rings were an emblematic structure of the Myriad Domain. But of course, they too were lying half in ruins at the moment. Even so, that didn’t present much of an issue to use for martial competitions.

Every Myriad Grand Ceremony would hold the martial competition here, and a new Myriad Hidden Dragons Ranking would be generated each time. The competition for a spot on the rankings was exceedingly fierce at each ceremony, because there was a direct correlation between one’s ranking and the quotas for entering the Paramount Realm. There were a hundred slots available, and only a hundred names on the Hidden Dragons Ranking.

Therefore, earning a spot on the rankings would bestow one the right to enter the Paramount Realm. This was the final resting place of the many emperor realm cultivators in Myriad Domain history, and it contained the countless martial dao reflections of those experts, their martial dao essences, and even essences of life. It was full of fortuitous occurrences and held great temptation for the young disciples.

This was also why that even though all the sects had guessed that some unexpected happenings might occur during the ceremony, they had still brought large numbers of geniuses to attend. They were all aiming for the Paramount Realm. Therefore, the Regal Pill Palace stood out in a very bizarre way by only bringing a few young disciples. Even the fifth rank sects had showed up with more disciples than the Regal Pill Palace.

“Everyone, I’m sure you’ve heard a few rumors lately in regard to the Myriad Empire’s Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal. Regardless of the veracity of those rumors, we should face them with courage.” Xiang Wentian stood at a high vantage point as he looked over the assembly resolutely. “The betrayal from the Tristar Sect and the fact that unknown forces are stirring to action means that the survival of our Myriad Domain is at a critical moment. Therefore, I call upon everyone to set aside our own ambitions and unite together. If the Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal really do reveal themselves, then that means the fortunes of our Myriad Domain have yet to decline. As long as we unite, we’ll be able to withstand the strongest enemies and the most difficult situations.” Although Xiang Wentian didn’t voice it clearly, it was obvious that he was already styling the Great Cathedral as the leader of the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen didn’t think there was anything untoward about this, and even rather admired Xiang Wentian for his speech. It took courage to step forward at a time like this. Even Palace Head Dan Chi was ready for the worst case scenario in disbanding the sect. No matter what their considerations were, the Great Cathedral’s bravery in standing out and sounding a call to action at a time like this was commendable.

“Heh heh, why don’t you speak plainly, old brother Xiang?” Wang Jianyu suddenly spoke up. “I rather think the appearance of these two treasures is a bit amiss.”

“Indeed, Brother Xiang, tell us if you have any thoughts so we can all think about them.” Wei Wuying of the Walkabout Sect piped up as well.

Xiang Wentian looked at Dan Chi and Honored Master Tian Ming, nodding when he saw that the two weren’t protesting. “Alright, then I’ll cut to the chase. I propose that us Myriad Domain sects make use of this time’s ceremony to swear oaths of blood to make it through these difficult times together.”

“An alliance?” Wang Jianyu bursted out laughing. “There have been many alliances since old, but how many of them have actually succeeded? Not to mention, who’s the alliance head of this following? Who gives the orders? Everyone has their own thoughts. I don’t think that this alliance has a chance of holding.”

“Indeed, everyone has their own desires. I too think an alliance isn’t very reliable.” Wei Wuying shook his head.

“Tian Ming, what do you think?” Xiang Wentian looked at Honored Master Tian Ming.

The old sect head had the personality of a nice guy, so he smiled, “I can accept an alliance as long as it benefits the Myriad Domain.”

Old fox! Everyone cursed inwardly.

“What about you, ole brother Dan Chi?” Xiang Wentian then looked at Dan Chi.

Dan Chi thought for a moment before speaking, “We can consider such an action, but this covers too much without specifics. For instance, will everyone truly unite as one when enemies invade, and fight back valiantly without fear of death? What if the enemy seeks to take us down one by one, will other sects support the ones that’ve been attacked with their full force? An alliance is a good thing, but I’m afraid of a situation in which everyone will still keep to their own after the alliance is made. At that point, there’s not much of a point in creating this alliance.”

Dan Chi’s question was a practical one, and one that quite precisely described the current situation of the Myriad Domain.

Chapter 644: The Great Scarlet Mid Region n)-OvEℓIn

In a rare moment of agreement, Wei Wuying nodded, concurring with Dan Chi. “Palace Head Dan Chi’s words are exceedingly right. Everyone now knows that the Ninesuns Sky Sect is covetously eyeing our Myriad Domain, but even so, I don’t believe that they’ll dare openly invade us. After all, they’re not the only first rank sect in the Upper Eight Realms. But if they use the strategy of defeating us one by one, like how they infiltrated the Tristar Sect, then it would be exceedingly difficult to defend against them.”

Honored Master Tian Ming also nodded. “Those words make sense. Who would’ve thought that the Tristar Sect was secretly being controlled by the Sky Sect? To put it bluntly, it’s hard for any of the sects here to guarantee that there are no eyes and ears of opposing forces present in any of us. It will be difficult to hold fast to an alliance.”

Xiang Wentian didn’t grow angry when he saw that everyone was against his idea. It seemed to be well within his expectations. He smiled confidently, not speaking until everyone was done. “All of what you speak of makes great sense. I ask you another question, could these situations have occurred when the Myriad Empire was strong?”

When the Myriad Empire was at its strongest, the power of the empire ranked far above all the sects. Imperial power controlled the entire region, and none of the sects dared ignore any of the commands it issued. It could be said that to hear their edict was to obey. Any word from the Myriad Empire royal family was virgin gold and solid rock, and all powers beneath it had to answer the call without the slightest delay. That was because the Myriad Empire had been the weathervane of the Myriad Domain, and the ruler of it all.

With a liege and centralized power, everyone naturally knew where they should sink their efforts. Even if they had their own personal ambitions, no one dared openly do anything that would ruin the greater picture. The world of martial dao was one in which the strong were worshipped and the weak flocked to the strong, after all.

With a strong Myriad Domain, the various powers under the Myriad Empire’s banner had also benefitted as well. That was why the Myriad Empire had then created the most glorious era in Myriad Domain history. This was why later descendants honored them in remembrance and why everyone still held that time in memory with pride. At the heart of it all was one word—strength. They had grown so strong that the Great Scarlet Mid Region neighboring them had grown uneasy. This strength naturally had the ability to make all the sects in the Myriad Domain submit wholeheartedly to them. Thus, the developments that Dan Chi had spoken of wouldn’t have happened in the time of the Myriad Empire.

Xiang Wentian smiled faintly, "I trust everyone is familiar with the history of the Myriad Empire. Only a strong empire and a strong core power will be able to lead the Myriad Domain into ever stronger heights. Therefore, an alliance is only the first step. The future of the Myriad Domain still lies in rebuilding the Myriad Empire and reforging our days of glory!" Xiang Wentian finally voiced his true intentions—rebuilding the Myriad Empire!

This was the childhood dream of every cultivator in the Myriad Domain. This was also the goal that the various sects in the Myriad Domain had all been silently working towards. However, they all had an unspoken accord and no one had ever voiced these words before. Yet Xiang Wentian had finally broken that accord today, and said it openly at such a gathering. This also meant that the status quo had been broken, and the situation of the five fourth rank sects in the Myriad Domain would very possibly be upended after today. Was the Great Cathedral finally showing its fangs after biding its time for so many years?

The heavyweights of the other sects all had complicated expressions on their faces for a moment. Honored Master Tian Min, Wei Wuying, Dan Chi, and Wang Jianyu all stared solemnly at Xiang Wentian. The second and third rate sects didn't even dare breathe loudly. It was apparent that they knew this was an arena solely reserved for the heavyweight sects. They could only go with the flow, and had no right to speak at all.

Wang Jianyu was the first to step out. "Ole brother Xiang, how difficult will it be to rebuild the Myriad Empire? Do you think the Great Scarlet will allow us to do so easily?"

"I ask you only this, is everyone content to forever see the Myriad Domain below others, dominated and underfoot? Do we have to live out our days in fear? Depending on the favor of others?"

"That's true, but the problem isn't that. Isn't it too early to speak of rebuilding the empire? Who will be in charge of doing so? The Great Cathedral?" Wang Jianyu was just as hotly ambitious as any other sect head. He naturally wasn't willing for the Great Cathedral to take the reins of power.

"Whoever shall obtain the Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal will be put in charge." Xiang Wentian flicked a faint glance at Wang Jianyu. "Younger brother Wang, do you have some personal ambitions in mind, what with all the objections you're bringing to the table?"

Wang Jianyu spoke coldly, "And does elder brother Xiang not have any plans in mind?"

Xiang Wentian laughed. "Everyone has their own goals in mind, which is why I proposed that whoever obtains the national treasures shall be in charge of rebuilding the empire."

"And so I wonder where they are." Wang Jianyu snorted coldly.

"Since rumors about them have appeared, we must treat them seriously. Whoever has the greatest fortune will obtain them. Wang Jianyu, you've always believed yourself the favored son of heaven. Why are you so lacking in confidence?"

"Elder brother Xiang, it may be that all of us discovers the treasures at the same time when they appear. Who do they belong to then?" Honored Master Tian Ming smiled.

"It's simple, we'll settle it by force then. In the Myriad Grand Ceremony, the strong are revered. Whichever genius can obtain the top slot in the ranking shall win the two treasures for their sect. That

sect head will be in charge of rebuilding the empire, and the other sects must support them wholeheartedly.”

Settle it by force?

The other sects all smiled ruefully. If it came down to martial strength, the Great Cathedral naturally had the advantage as the strongest sect. Whether it was Xiang Qin or Yue Baize, they were almost invincible amongst the younger generation in the Myriad Domain. They were double insurance for the Great Cathedral!

“Elder brother Xiang, what a nice plan, hmm!” Wang Jianyu snorted coldly.

Xiang Wentian responded lightly, “You don’t need to be sarcastic, Wang Jianyu. We still need strength to execute some matters, no matter how difficult they may be. If the Myriad Domain maintains its status quo as a pile of loose sand, then we’ll become someone’s vassals in less than thirty years. At that time, our family, our descendants, and generations thereof will be enslaved and be lower than any others. Do any of you want this to develop?”

These weren’t words of an alarmist. Even the slowest person could see now that the Myriad Domain was indeed in a perilous situation.

Xiang Wentian spread out his hands. “My Great Cathedral doesn’t want to make unilateral pronouncements either. We can vote to decide if we want to rebuild the empire. The fate of the Myriad Domain will affect everyone here, so all sects should have voting rights.”

Wang Jianyu wasn’t actually against rebuilding the Myriad Empire, he was just against the Great Cathedral holding all the power.

“Right, let’s take a vote!”

“The fate of the Myriad Domain should be decided as a group!” The various smaller sects also started speaking up.

Palace Head Dan Chi was highly in favor of rebuilding, but he felt that now wasn’t the proper time for such a thing. In addition, he’d always viewed rebuilding the empire as his duty to bear. Now that he saw the Great Cathedral steal a march on him, but the Regal Pill Palace not having enough power yet to contest it, he couldn’t help but be a bit dejected. Even so, he didn’t lose his sense of reason.

“Palace Head, we have no need to object. The Great Cathedral has come prepared, but has obviously chosen a bad timing. We just need to sit still and observe what happens.” Jiang Chen hadn’t spoken all along, but chose this time to pass along a silent message to Dan Chi at this time. Jiang Chen could understand the Great Cathedral’s ambitions. He was also rather admiring of the Great Cathedral’s courage. However, it was an obvious misstep to talk about rebuilding the empire at this time. Right now, the Great Cathedral couldn’t fend off external enemies such as the Ninesuns Sky Sect, nor could they unite the fourth rank sects within the Myriad Domain under their rule.

Just as Jiang Chen had anticipated, the Great Cathedral had done their homework this time. The majority of the fifth rank and sixth rank sects actually supported them rebuilding the Myriad Empire! Only the Sacred Sword Palace, the Walkabout Sect, and the small sects who were closer to them voted against. The Regal Pill Palace and the Dark North Sect both abstained from the vote. In this way, seventy

to eighty percent of the sects were in support of rebuilding the empire. It appeared that the Great Cathedral was acting in accordance with public consensus.

“What say you, younger brother Wang and Wei?” Xiang Wentian looked at Wang Jianyu and Wei Wuying with narrowed eyes.

“Hmph, the Great Cathedral obviously came prepared. What else can I say? Since elder brother Xiang has the ability to rebuild the empire, my Sacred Sword Palace will be awaiting those developments then.” Wang Jianyu harrumphed coolly.

Wei Wuying smiled ruefully, “Since this is something that the people want, my Walkabout Sect has nothing to say either. If the Great Cathedral can indeed obtain the Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal, then we will absolutely support you.”

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Just as the Myriad Grand Ceremony had gotten underway in full force, the neighboring Great Scarlet royal family had summoned a few of its largest powers for a meeting. The Great Scarlet emperor was sitting loftily on a dragon seat, emanating an imposing and regal demeanor. He was an extreme expert of sixth level emperor realm, capable of summoning the wind and rains with a flip of his hand. He had great power in the Great Scarlet Mid Region.

The sects who had been summoned this time were all the largest sects in the region. There were three third rank sects, and almost twenty fourth rank sects in attendance.

“Everyone, we’ve received some news lately that the Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal of the old Myriad Empire will reappear soon. Although that empire has been destroyed, the pathetic ants of the Myriad Domain still haven’t changed their nature and still cling onto the glory of their Myriad Empire. As long as their hopes of rising from the ashes remain, they still remain a threat to us.” The emperor spoke.

“Your Majesty, a mere Myriad Domain is just a dancing clown. We can send out our armies and arrive on the border with but a single command from Your Majesty. Within ten days, we can raze the Myriad Domain to the ground.” The one speaking was a third rank sect head. Although his strength wasn’t on par with the emperor, he was very close.

“Your Majesty, why worry about small things like these? It’s said that the strongest sect of the Myriad Domain has reached but ninth level sage realm. This kind of strength isn’t worthy worrying about at all!”

“Brother Meng, you speak incorrectly. The centipede can go on wriggling even when he’s already dead. Even though the Myriad Domain may not amount to much now, they still hold some ceremony every thirty years as a propaganda for hate against our Great Scarlet. In my opinion, they’ll likely forget what pain is once their wounds heal. We need to teach them a lesson again.”

“Hey, what are we all arguing about? His Majesty must have a plan; we have been summoned here for a reason. Let’s listen to his words.” It was apparent that the emperor had great authority in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Everyone grew silent, looking up at the emperor and waiting for the imperial order.

Chapter 645: Hotly Ambitious

The emperor smiled slightly. “The Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal are objects that provide an air of legitimacy for the Myriad Domain. If they appear, they can’t be allowed to end up in the hands of the various sects, or they’ll have enough of an excuse to rebuild the empire. We had an appropriate excuse when we invaded last time, but we don’t have a good excuse to place our army on their borders this time.”

Although there were a great number of factions in the Divine Abyss Continent, there was still the greater picture to consider. The Great Scarlet Mid Region couldn’t openly deploy their armies on the border of another region for no reason. The other regions wouldn’t sit idly by if that happened.

“Your Majesty, we can absolutely find a reason if we don’t have one. Didn’t we leave behind multiple restrictions in the Myriad Domain? We can destroy those restrictions and then blame it on their sects, pinning the crime of disrespect on them. Wouldn’t that be an easy thing to accomplish?”

In reality, Great Scarlet had purposefully left behind the towers of bones and corpses, Bloodlight River, and Petrified Infant Forest to set the stage for a future invasion of the Myriad Domain. The Great Scarlet emperor nodded with a slight smile. “That is doable, but we don’t plan on sending forth a large army this time. The third rank sects don’t even need to participate.”

There were three third rank sects in the Great Scarlet Mid Region, and any one of them was strong enough to annihilate the combined force of all the sects in the Myriad Domain. The fourth rank sect heavyweights were delighted to hear this. This meant that the emperor was giving them a chance to prove themselves!

The strength of a Great Scarlet fourth rank sect wasn’t something that the fourth rank sects of the Myriad Domain could compare to. Each one had at least one or two emperor realm cultivators holding down the fort. It was only because there were three third rank sects in the Great Scarlet Mid Region already that the fourth rank sects were unable to advance further. After all, the quota for high level sects in each region was limited. The fourth rank sect heavyweights were delighted to hear their emperor’s words and rose to their feet.

“Your Majesty, the Qitian Sect requests to do battle.”

“Your Majesty, my Bamboo Sect requests to do battle.”

“Your Majesty...”

“Your Majesty!”

The fourth rank sects all clamored loudly for attention, afraid that someone else would steal a march on them. Everyone knew that this was a rare opportunity. Not only could they accomplish a meritorious deed for the emperor, they could also go to the Myriad Domain and loot to their heart’s delight. Who knew how much they could gain in terms of resources? The benefits were plain to see.

Although the Myriad Domain was in decline, that was only in regard to their talent. They still had all the resources that they had formerly. Although they’d been greatly injured in the disaster six hundred years ago, this period of time had also enabled them to recover roughly seventy percent of their resources, even if their martial strength was less than thirty percent of their peak. Being able to go to the Myriad Domain again to raid and loot meant an unprecedented chance to strike it rich.

A slight smile clung to the lips of the Great Scarlet emperor, a smile that embodied within it the wisdom of controlling everything. He raised his hands lightly and pressed them down. The heavyweights of the four sects all quieted down and returned to their seats, the very picture of docility.

“We know of your desire to do battle. However, this fight will be different from the one six hundred years ago. We had a good pretext for war last time, one no one could refute. However, even if we find an excuse this time, we must make good use of it. There must be no question of our legitimacy. Do you all understand?”

The Great Scarlet royal family had personally lead the armies six hundred years ago. This time, the Myriad Domain was only at thirty percent of its peak strength. There was no need to use a butcher knife to kill a chicken and create such a fuss.

“For the operation this time, the restrictions are key, but the most critical items are the Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal. This two items are relevant to the Myriad Empire and thus a continuation of the war of that time. We have sufficient reason to make our move as long as it has to do with the Myriad Empire, understood?”

The fourth rank sect heavyweights all nodded, finally understanding what the emperor meant. Legitimacy was of utmost importance. They had to find a proper, righteous excuse before beating someone.

The Great Scarlet emperor waved his hand and began sounding off, “Qitian Sect, Bamboo Sect, Golden Glyph Sect, Zither Sect—the four of you shall travel to the Myriad Empire ruins and suppress the ceremony!”

“Four Quadrant Sect, Cloud and Wind Palace—you two shall go destroy the Great Cathedral.” n)-
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“Mystic Fire Sect, Nine Waves Sect—you two shall go suppress the Dark North Sect.”

“Thunder Note Hall, Great Roc Sect—you two shall go suppress the Regal Pill Palace.”

“Ice Spirit Sect, Desolate Oceans Faction—you two shall go cleanse all of the fifth rank sects in the Myriad Domain.” The empire had named sixteen fourth rank sects in the blink of an eye. Four would head to the ceremony, the other ten would team up in duos to the five fourth rank sects in the Myriad Domain, with the remaining two were tasked to manage all of the remaining fifth rank sects in the region. The ones who had been named all stood up to receive their orders. However, the two fourth rank sects sitting at the very front had yet to be called on. Their sect heads were feeling quite mystified.

Great Scarlet’s emperor soon locked his gaze on them. “Dragonslayers and Flowing Sands Sect, you shall go to Mt. Rippling Mirage. However, I will send a confidante with you; you two must listen to his commands.”

The two sect heads hastily stood up to receive their orders.

“Everyone, I’m sure you’ve heard of the rumors of the Myriad Domain ancient herb garden. Apart from handing over the sky rank spirit herbs that you obtain on this trip, you can take care of all other gains yourselves. There is no need to hand them over.” The Great Scarlet emperor was well aware of the

principle of giving his subjects a taste of something sweet in order to get them to act wholeheartedly. Everyone was delighted to hear these words.

The Great Scarlet emperor suddenly recalled something, “Oh right, if there is such a thing as a Longevity Pill recipe, you must investigate it thoroughly and present the recipe to us.”

The Longevity Pill could extend life by five hundred years. It was easy to predict the value of a pill like this. The Great Scarlet emperor even felt that if the pill recipe truly did exist, its value was even higher than sky rank spirit herbs!

The two sects in charge of the Regal Pill Palace were the Thunder Note Hall and Great Roc Sect. The two sect heads once again stood up and guaranteed, “Be at ease, Your Majesty. We will find this recipe even if we need to dig three meters into the ground.”

The Great Scarlet emperor smiled faintly, “Rumors state that the Regal Pill Palace also has many sky rank spirit herbs in their possession. Your burden is more onerous, and so you must investigate more thoroughly.”

“We will attend to this with all our might and not disappoint Your Majesty!” The two sect heads slapped their chests, affirming their promise.

The Great Scarlet emperor turned his gaze towards the Dragonslayers and Flowing Sands Sect. “On your trip to Mt. Rippling Mirage, look for a young man named Jiang Chen. According to my intelligence, he remains yet in Mt. Rippling Mirage. Not only does he possess a few sky rank spirit herbs, he’s the only one thus far who’s successfully refined the Longevity Pill. I want him alive, not dead.”

“Be at ease, Your Majesty, a mere Regal Pill Palace disciple will be simple to capture. To be favored by His Majesty is this kid’s fortune!”

The Great Scarlet emperor smiled faintly as more than a dozen medallions shot out, landing in each sect head’s hand. His tone was regal and filled with power, “One month. I only give you one month. If you don’t complete the mission in a month, then you have no need to return to see us.”

“Understood!” The sect heads nodded. Although a month wasn’t long, the mission didn’t appear too difficult to everyone. A Myriad Domain on the decline and so many fourth rank sects setting out at once—it was akin to a lion launching an attack on a rabbit.

The fourth rank sects of the Great Scarlet Mid Region were stronger than their Myriad Domain counterparts to begin with. The so-called fourth rank sects of the Myriad Domain were still affected by that disaster six hundred years ago, and their strength was still less than half of their peak. To send two Great Scarlet fourth rank sects to each Myriad Domain fourth rank sect was complete overkill, and nothing less than a dominating display of strength. In addition, all of the sects had sent representatives to the Grand Myriad Ceremony, and had left less than half of their total strength in the sects. Putting all the factors together, the already large gap in this competition of strength had just turned into an overwhelming difference.

The Great Scarlet emperor nodded with satisfaction when he saw the various sect heads brimming with confidence and flair. “Alright, time is of the essence. You all can go back to summon your people and make quick work of this mission.”

“Understood!”

When the sect heads of all the fourth rank sects had left the room, the Great Scarlet emperor smiled faintly and looked at the heavyweights of the three third rank sects who yet remained. “The third rank sects are the pillars of my Great Scarlet Mid Region. There is no need to use a butcher’s knife for cows to kill chickens. The situation around our region is rather complicated, and we need you three to defend our territory and support the empire’s fortunes. The burden on you is a hundred times heavier than them!”

The Great Scarlet emperor naturally needed to reassure the third rank sects some, having left them out of the operation this time, so that they wouldn’t develop feelings of estrangement. After all, some thoughts would still arise given that he’d set the third rank sects aside and had only deployed the fourth rank sects. “Due to your contribution to the Myriad Domain mission this time, each of you will receive one sky rank spirit herb from the harvest.”

As a hero of the times, the Great Scarlet emperor was well versed in the art of ruling. The heavy reward of a sky rank spirit herb each instantly quelled the grumblings in the hearts of the third rank sects. It actually left them slightly guilty, being rewarded like this without having put forth effort. Still, who wouldn’t be delighted at being able to receive a sky rank spirit herb for free? Although they might be able to loot other treasures in the Myriad Domain, what was any of it worth when compared to a sky rank spirit herb?

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Back at the Myriad Grand Ceremony, the new Myriad Hidden Dragon rankings had been erected and was just waiting to be filled with names. The rules of the martial competition segment had been announced as well.

There were several hundred young geniuses participating this year, and roughly two hundred from fourth rank sects alone. The Regal Pill Palace stood out in this regard, as their participants were heavily outnumbered by the other fourth rank sects’.

According to the rules, the fourth rank sect geniuses were seeded candidates. The ones from other sects weren’t, and they would be participating in the first round of eliminations. After the first round, winning non-seeded participants would face off with seeded candidates, with the winners moving on. This meant that fourth rank sect disciples didn’t need to participate in the first round, and the seeded candidates wouldn’t meet each other in the second round. They would only clash together in the third round.

Chapter 646: Huang’er, Bi’er, and the Lingering Affections of Young Women

Naturally, all the rules were forever advantageous to the strong and disadvantageous to the weak. The ceremony’s martial arts segment was no exception. Difference in strength meant difference in levels, and difference in levels meant difference in treatment.

This knockout competition’s first priority was to protect the interests of the fourth rank sect geniuses. Any disciple who didn’t belong to a fourth rank sect would not be qualified to become a seeded candidate, no matter how talented they were. Moreover, there were differences even amongst fourth rank sect disciples. All geniuses above the sage realm were categorized as first seeds. Ninth level origin

realm cultivators were categorized as second seeds, and anyone beneath ninth level origin realm were all categorized as third seeds.

This was to protect the first seeds from running into each other before reaching the final twenty participants.

While this rule appeared to be unfair at first glance, it was also the most common and popular rule in martial arts competitions. It also made a certain degree of sense. After all, everyone in the world of martial arts pursued strength. Therefore, it was only natural that those who had great strength and talent would be given better treatment than others.

Jiang Chen was currently assuming the false identity of Mu Gaoqi. Naturally, he found it inconvenient to present himself at his true level when he was masquerading as Mu Gaoqi. As a result, he was categorized as a third seed. Of course, Jiang Chen didn't need to participate in the first round of competition as the disciple of a fourth rank sect.

The several hundred geniuses who didn't belong to fourth rank sects began fighting intensely against one another to obtain a spot for themselves. Jiang Chen observed the first round contest for a brief moment. Even though the participating geniuses all hailed from second or third rate sects, it quickly became apparent that even fifth or sixth rank sects were not lacking in geniuses. This was especially true for the roughly thirty fifth rank sects.

Every one of these sects contained a number of origin realm experts, and some of them had even reached the ninth level origin realm. There were at least twenty to thirty cultivators who had reached the eighth level origin realm. Cultivators at the seventh level origin realm were practically everywhere. Of course, most of these fifth or sixth rank sect youngsters were at the sixth level origin realm. After all, these second rate sects in Myriad Domain didn't even come close to possessing the same amount of resources, talents and supplies that a fourth rank sect did.

After observing the competition for a while, Jiang Chen believed that there were indeed a small group of people among these second and third rate sect geniuses who genuinely possessed the ability to fight for a spot on the rankings.

The Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Trials would only rank the top hundred candidates. Jiang Chen estimated that these second and third rate sects would take up to a fifth of the available slots. "It would appear that Palace Head Dan Chi's analysis is correct. No one below seventh level origin realm has any chance to gain a place on the rankings."

Back when Palace Head Dan Chi had formed an alliance with the Precious Tree Sect, he already mentioned the Myriad Grand Ceremony and the Paramount Realm to Jiang Chen. At the time, he told Jiang Chen that only those who had cultivated to the seventh level of origin realm could guarantee themselves a spot in the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon rankings. Jiang Chen made a quick calculation. He would be able to enter the top 100 and secure himself a spot in the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Trials as long as he could survive three rounds of battle. He didn't need to participate in the first round of battle. Which meant that he could guarantee himself a spot in the rankings as long as he could defeat his opponents in the second and third round of battle.

Regal Pill Palace's Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai were all sage realm geniuses. Naturally, they were categorized as first seeds. Ling Bi'er and Nie Chong were both at the peak of the ninth level origin realm. They were categorized as second seeds. There was no doubt that these four were guaranteed spots on the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon ranking. Therefore, the only thing they were competing for was a higher placement. It was rather because everyone thought Jiang Chen was Mu Gaoqi that they were all doubtful of his chances to earn a placement at all.

The disciples of all fourth rank sects were all scattered throughout the audience. It was obvious that those of the Sacred Sword Palace were aiming for the Regal Pill Palace. With Wang Han as their leader, the geniuses of the Sacred Sword Palace sat on the opposite side of the Regal Pill Palace's disciples. They all looked aggressive and murderous, and continuously flared their auras to exert pressure on the Regal Pill Palace disciples. This was especially true in Wang Han's case. His hatred for 'Mu Gaoqi' right now was second only to his hatred for Jiang Chen, because he was ridiculed by 'Mu Gaoqi' earlier. Even his hatred for Shen Qinghong had been moved to third place.

"Mu Gaoqi..." Wang Han's chilly eyes locked onto Jiang Chen's figure from afar. His murderous intent was overflowing, and he didn't bother concealing a whit of it.

Countless formless murderous intent attacked Jiang Chen continuously, like an unending army. Wang Han's intent to strut around and show off his might was quite obvious. However, no matter how hard he pushed his sage level aura towards Mu Gaoqi, his efforts always disappeared like a rock sinking into the sea without a trace. This result greatly surprised Wang Han.

The Regal Pill Palace was an enemy sect. Naturally, the Sacred Sword Palace had researched the enemy disciples inside and out. This was especially true for Mu Gaoqi since he was known to possess an innate wood spirit constitution. The Sacred Sword Palace had appraised Mu Gaoqi several times, and come to the conclusion that he was a pill dao genius of average martial dao potential, timid personality, and an unstable realm of consciousness. It was exactly because Mu Gaoqi was such a person in Wang Han's mind that he'd continuously attacked the other in secret with his sage level aura.

His intentions were obvious. He wanted to wholly destroy Mu Gaoqi's consciousness and fighting will. In fact, he wanted Mu Gaoqi to have a mental breakdown. If a pill dao genius' consciousness crumbled, then his so-called talent in pill dao might as well be nothing. Plans always appeared ideal in one's mind, but reality in execution greatly surprised Wang Han. He exerted his powerful consciousness without letting up, but not only did Mu Gaoqi's consciousness fail to crumble under pressure, he wasn't even frowning from stress. It was as if the disciple hadn't even noticed his sage level aura.

"How is that possible? Since when did this Mu Gaoqi become so powerful?" Wang Han didn't believe for a second that Mu Gaoqi had changed. He observed Mu Gaoqi with cool eyes for a brief moment.

Wang Han came to a certain preliminary conclusion, "Hmph. It would appear that the Regal Pill Palace is aware that Mu Gaoqi's martial cultivation is lacking. That's why they've sent an expert to disguise himself as Mu Gaoqi's subordinate to protect him. If this expert isn't a master in disguise, then why else would he need to wrap himself in a cloak in broad daylight?"

As a matter of fact, Huang'er had been sitting obediently besides Jiang Chen all this time. She seemed to be disinterested in the battles happening on the arena. However, her mysterious attire caused Wang Han to misunderstand her as an expert sent by the Regal Pill Palace to protect Mu Gaoqi.

This was the first time Huang'er was associating with Jiang Chen in such close proximity. Although Jiang Chen had disguised himself as Mu Gaoqi and hidden his own aura, Huang'er could feel the sense of security Jiang Chen normally gave her all the same. In the past, the scent of a youth of the opposite gender had only filled Huang'er with repulsion. But Jiang Chen was so much different from others.

Huang'er's origin, breadth of her vision, the environment she lived in when she was young and the level of characters she'd previously come in contact with were countless times more sophisticated than anything seen in the Myriad Domain. However, Huang'er had never sensed such natural warmth from any other young man except Jiang Chen. He made her, a young woman who had never felt any ambiguous emotion during her twenty years of life, feel a little tipsy.

Indeed.

While it was true that Jiang Chen was born of the Eastern Kingdom and thus occupied the bottommost level of this world, the temperament he possessed couldn't be compared to anyone she'd ever seen. Huang'er hadn't thought this way when she'd first learned of Jiang Chen, and neither had Elder Shun when he first started paying attention to him. But when Jiang Chen easily and indifferently deduced that she was suffering from the Generation Binding Curse inside the Eternal Spirit Mountain, a crack appeared in the walls that Huang'er had surrounded herself with. Later on, when Jiang Chen broke through to the origin realm beneath the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn and triggered a natural phenomenon, the crack in her walls grew wider and wider. When they came to interact with each other every day in Rosy Valley, and she came to witness every step of Jiang Chen's swift growth, she came to recognize this young man's unique temperament from many different perspectives. nove)lb/1n

After Jiang Chen was imprisoned in Mt. Rippling Mirage for three years, and guarding over Rosy Valley in his absence, Huang'er finally understood what she kept looking for every day.

Yes, it was this proud, lonely, and peerless figure that she was gazing upon. Even if he had disguised himself, even if he'd hidden his aura, Huang'er could, with her eyes closed, sense the unique temperament that he seemed to be born with. Blades sang and swords rang above the arena, and a soft breeze caressed her face beneath the cloak. Suddenly, Huang'er wished that this moment could last forever. She wished fervently that this faint feeling of happiness could be preserved for all time, until the seas dried up and rocks rotted.

What Generation Binding Curse? What generations of marriage? She neither wished to think on nor face them. She only wished that she could stay with this young man in this strange land until forever came, even if she never confessed her feelings to him. However, all things must end, and her feeling of happiness was broken by the approach of a beautiful figure.

Ling Bi'er's graceful and perfect figure walked over from a bit away and sat down a foot away from Jiang Chen. "Junior brother, that Wang Han is treacherous and malevolent. You must watch out for him."

Jiang Chen replied with a calm smile on his face, "He is nothing more than a grasshopper after autumn. He won't be able to hop around much longer."

If these words had come out of Shen Qinghong or anyone else's mouth, Ling Bi'er would've felt disgusted. That was because she'd never liked boastful men. However, Ling Bi'er thought that it only

natural when the same words came out of Jiang Chen's mouth. She let out a quiet sigh on the inside when she saw the confidence that Jiang Chen brimmed with. Coldly aloof and proud as she was, for a time she'd actually felt inferior to him.

She could still remember when Jiang Chen had first entered the Regal Pill Palace, only at first level origin realm. In just four short years, he had leaped an entire realm to become a sage realm cultivator. Yet, she still stood at the peak of the origin realm. She had never been able to take that most important last step. In just the four years since his admission, Jiang Chen had accomplished a great deal in his cultivation, but she hadn't even managed to surmount a single, small step.

Ling Bi'er was seldom impressed by anyone, but Jiang Chen had won her over entirely. He had challenged the limits of her beliefs again and again with his astounding achievements. Be it his talent in pill dao or his talent in martial dao, Jiang Chen was like a deep, vast sea whose limits of potential were eternally unfathomable.

Although Ling Bi'er had long since thought of Jiang Chen as the one in her heart, her icy cool temperament was fated to warm slowly. She had so many things she wanted to say to Jiang Chen, but when the words reached her tongue, she had no idea which to say first. The sight caused a slight ripple in Huang'er's heart, but it quickly faded away into nothing. She was the wise, unmarried daughter of a noble house. While her behavior was easygoing and calm, she also possessed a pride that no one could truly understand.

Even when love was involved, even when knowing that Ling Bi'er was a powerful rival, she did not feel even a shred of jealousy. I like what I like. Why should I care for others?...

Chapter 647: Jiang Chen Confers Knowledge in Sword Dao

Wang Han, across the way, gritted his teeth in rage when he saw Jiang Chen apparently having a grand time laughing and chatting with Ling Bi'er, the beauty sitting by his side. "I'll let you strut around just a little while longer, you little shit! If you run into any Sacred Sword Palace disciples in the martial competition, I swear I'm not human if I don't carve you into ten segments!"

It was a good thing that the first rounds soon drew to a close. The results of the draw for the second round were also quickly announced. Jiang Chen's opponent for the second round was a seventh level origin realm genius from a fifth rank sect. His name was Feng Pao, and he was a genius who used the sword.

Jiang Chen had watched his performance in the first round and could sum up his opponent's performance with one word, "speed". Of all the martial methods under the heavens, only speed was something that could never be broken. Many sword dao masters wouldn't even practice more than three sword techniques over the course of their lives, but they would continuously dig deeper and deeper into them, simulating more developments, upgrading and breaking through to higher levels. They would constantly seek to ascend to greater realms of speed. As long as any martial art mystery is trained to its utmost in a certain area, that would become the hallmark of great perfection and one that was sufficient for this life.

“Speed” was the ultimate goal of many sword wielding geniuses, and it was apparent that Feng Pao was one of its loyal constituents.

“Feng Pao of the Extreme Wind Sect. Please demonstrate your learning.” Feng Pao was decisive and to the point. He didn’t waste a single word after setting foot on the stage and raising his hands in a cupped fist salute to Jiang Chen. The sword intent in his hand wavered in and out of materialization, fighting intent bursting forth with every movement.

Jiang Chen nodded slightly. “Mu Gaoqi of the Regal Pill Palace. After you.”

Feng Pao nodded lightly in return and spoke low voice, “The blade is blind; be careful.” As he spoke, the blade in his hand flashed as it drew a three foot arc of blue light, which exploded across the sky and intersected with the sunlight in the air. Numerous ripples started to form in the air around the ring.

If it wasn’t for Jiang Chen masquerading as Mu Gaoqi, he could’ve instantly killed an opponent at mere seventh level origin realm. However, he didn’t do so out of the consideration that he had no grudge with his opponent, and this Feng Pao seemed an honest fellow. Although each stroke was drenched in fighting intent, there was no killing intent to be found. Jiang Chen also knew that as a genius of a fifth rank sect, his opponent was still conscious of ‘Mu Gaoqi’s’ identity and was purposely avoiding fatal blows as they sparred. Since Feng Pao wasn’t a cruel sort, Jiang Chen naturally wanted to leave some space for his opponent.

Jiang Chen dodged and weaved, imitating a rabbit as he evaded all the ripples of sword light.

“Nice moves, again!” His opponent had become one with the sword before he’d even finished speaking, roiling towards him like a tornado. The meaning behind his technique suddenly changed into enormous waves, each one bigger than the last that cascaded down upon Jiang Chen.

And yet, one could not say that the strength of a fifth rank sect genius surpassed that of a fourth rank sect genius. Jiang Chen had once sparred with Shen Qinghong’s subordinate, Rong Zifeng, in the Regal Pill Palace. Unfortunately, Rong Zifeng was much fiercer than Feng Pao. Although Feng Pao’s comprehension of sword dao wasn’t bad, the foundations and resources of a fifth rank sect made it so that the level of his sword dao was still a bit inferior. Although he had touched the threshold of the true meaning of sword dao, he had yet to truly walk into its halls. But the fact that he was a sword fanatic was irrevocable. One could see from the meaning behind his sword that although Feng Pao had yet to really attain the truest meaning of sword dao, he still had the unstoppable momentum of moving forward.

Fast, furious, and without care for anything else.

It was obvious that this was a sword user who put his heart and soul to wield his sword. He seemed to be willing to pour his life into every stroke, just so that he would be able to give his opponent a fatal blow. Such loyalty to the sword made Jiang Chen gravely respect his opponent. Feng Pao wasn’t strong, by no means. But he was worthy of respect because his passion for sword dao had already surpassed his passion for his own life.

“Who would’ve thought that such a sword fanatic existed in the fifth rank sects. If one so loyal to his dao can meet with a fortuitous opportunity on his path, he would certainly surpass his peers. Feng Pao is one who can be molded.” Jiang Chen suddenly had the feeling of wanting to treasure this talent.

He bounced back on his toes and grabbed a shriveled branch with a smile. "Let's spar in sword dao."

Feng Pao had never underestimated nor feared any opponent. Before taking the stage, he'd known that Mu Gaoqi's reputation in pill dao was far beyond his accomplishments in martial dao. However, he didn't relax his guard because of this information. A simple exchange had been more than enough for him to immediately realize that this was an opponent whose depths he couldn't plumb. To those beneath the stage, it seemed that Feng Pao was in great spirits and had a dominating momentum as he continuously attacked his way to certain victory. "Mu Gaoqi", on the other hand, kept dodging and evading, with no ability to counter attack at all.

But in reality, Feng Pao was well aware that his opponent was completely at ease on stage. This opponent didn't use any dazzling moves or cheat with strong treasures. He only shuffled his feet around, comfortable in the charade of an intelligent man pretending to be the fool. In reality, his opponent was evading Feng Pao's powerful attacks with apparent ease.

To someone unversed in sword dao, Jiang Chen was coming off very worse for the wear in the exchange and to be honest, quite bedraggled. However, to Feng Pao, in the midst of it all, the more he fought, the more stunned he became and the more cold sweat poured down his body. No matter how savagely the sword intent sliced and slashed, no matter how much momentum he brimmed with, the other seemed to be able to peer through everything and avoid all of his attacks with a single step. How would he be doing so so easily if 'Mu Gaoqi' hadn't seen through the meaning of his sword dao?

If it'd been anyone else, their confidence would've been melted when faced with such a situation. But when Feng Pao discerned this, he wasn't discouraged, but rather spurred onto greater efforts instead. He became even more motivated as he called upon his sword arts and continuously fused them into different iterations, displaying everything that he'd learned and practiced in his life.

One had to say, he was very knowledgeable in sword dao and was able to create countless variations of sword techniques and intent. And yet, all of them were still tied tightly to the essence of "speed". Half an hour had already gone by as the two circled each other, locked in combat. The victor had already been determined in the other rings, and it looked like Jiang Chen had sunk into a difficult fight.

"Haha, senior brother Wang, I thought that kid actually had some skill to him to be able to talk thus! But he can't even take down a mere seventh level origin realm disciple of a fifth rank sect! He's all talk and no skills alright!" A Sacred Sword Palace decided to fawn upon Wang Han.

Wang Han stared at the ring, deep in thought, and suddenly responded, "All of you, listen up. No matter who gets that kid next, you need to use all your strength, even if you look like a lion taking down a rabbit. If you don't kill him, the very least you need to do is take off his limbs. And then pull out that tongue of his at the end!" Unmistakable wrath radiated from Wang Han's tone.

"Understood, senior brother Wang!"

"Senior brother Wang, I don't think this kid will even make it past this round. It'd be difficult for us to take care of him if he's eliminated so early!"

Wang Han snorted coldly, not bothering to reply as his eyes remained fixed on the ring.

“Perhaps this kid is afraid that senior brother Wang will personally take him out, and so he’s purposefully conceding this match!”

Everyone beneath the stage laughed uproariously. On the stage, Feng Pao was absolutely stunned. His comprehension ability was high, and he’d found it odd that he hadn’t been able to defeat his opponent yet. From the very beginning, his opponent had always held back from a strong counterattack. With nothing more than a shriveled branch in Jiang Chen’s hand, it looked like Feng Pao held the clear advantage, but Feng Pao was well aware that he had been long entrapped in the other’s tempo. This opponent was striking only after he did, but still landed his blows faster than him! He also only used the same three techniques from beginning to end, but they kept shifting and morphing each time. Each time Feng Pao felt that he’d seen through his opponent, he would realize that he was still a small step away from grasping his opponent’s intent.

There were many instances in the battle where he had the feeling that Mu Gaoqi had been on the verge of defeating him, but hadn’t landed that final blow. As Feng Pao looked at the wise half smile on his opponent’s face, a completely ridiculous thought suddenly struck him. Taking advantage of a brief pause in the match, he turned his attention to contemplating that thought. He’s guiding me so that I follow in his rhythm! Feng Pao had an even more ludicrous thought pop into his mind all of a sudden. Is Mu Gaoqi teaching me aspects of sword dao? Like a virus, he couldn’t stop that thought from spreading through his mind. Feng Pao bent his mind to the fight again, but as every clash grew ever more intense, he grew ever more certain of that thought.

Indeed, Jiang Chen was conferring sword dao to his opponent. Or to be more precise, he was teaching Feng Pao aspects of sword intent and the true meaning of sword dao. Feng Pao was able to easily grasp the concepts and once he understood Jiang Chen’s intent, he swiftly sunk into Jiang Chen’s tempo, feeling enormous enlightenment hovering at the edges of his fingertips. A couple of clashes later, Jiang Chen smiled slightly and tapped Feng Pao’s sword aside, easily bringing the branch up to rest at the base of the latter’s throat.

Feng Pao was exhausted and covered in sweat by now, but he was utterly delighted inside. He couldn’t care less about the Myriad Hidden Dragon Trials at this moment; what ranking? His mind was filled with the boundless inspiration he’d received from this battle. The inspiration seemed to be as if the stars in the vast sky, leading him further and farther into the doors of sword dao. The inspiration and gains he’d made from this match alone surpassed the total accumulation his two decades of practice. As that realization flooded through him, Feng Pao bowed deeply, “I concede.”

Jiang Chen nodded slightly. “All great daos are actually very simple. To be too greedy in sword dao is to be unable to digest all your gains properly. One gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, and three gives birth to all living beings. My moves just now shifted from one to two, two to three, and then from three to boundless forms of sword intent. But at the heart of it all, it was just a simple one, two, three.”

He sent these words silently, but they struck Feng Pao’s consciousness like a thunderclap, filling his mind. The lightning that accompanied such thunder instantly illuminated his future on the path of sword dao. He bowed deeply once again, “Many thanks for your tutelage.”

Jiang Chen nodded and didn’t say anything else. He’d only been momentarily caught up in Feng Pao’s passionate resolution for sword dao just now, and hence had used a more face-saving method to convey

some true comprehension of sword dao to Feng Pao. As for how far Feng Pao could travel along his path, that was up to him.

“Mu Gaoqi triumphs and advances to the third round!” *nOve-LB-1n*

When he saw that Mu Gaoqi had won, not only was Wang Han not displeased, but a trace of happiness even flashed through his sinister eyes. He wasn't afraid of Mu Gaoqi ascending, but rather worried that Mu Gaoqi would be so incompetent that he wouldn't be able to move on. How would Wang Han exact his revenge then?

“Junior brother, why did you use a withered branch against your foe just now?” Ling Bi'er looked thoughtful as she asked. She knew full well that with Jiang Chen's strength, he had the ability to instantly defeat his enemy. Jiang Chen smiled and didn't explain anything.

The four kings of the Regal Pill Palace had advanced easily, making his match appear all the more difficult in comparison. This made Nie Chong off on the side mutter under his breath, “We should've had junior brother Rong Zifeng come. Look at how difficult his second round was. Junior brother Zifeng is at least almost at ninth level origin realm.”

Shen Qinghong flicked a glance at Nie Chong, “Junior brother Nie, the palace head must have his reasons for this arrangement. You and I don't need to comment further on it.”

It was rather Jun Mobai who remained coolly self composed off on the side. He had a meaningful little curve to his lips, as if he had something to say... but didn't.

Chapter 648: Encountering a Genius of the Sacred Sword Palace

For some reason, Jiang Chen suddenly felt a little ripple run through him when he saw Jun Mobai's expression. “Could it be that this Jun Mobai noticed that I'm not really Mu Gaoqi?”

Jiang Chen was slightly puzzled. If Shen Qinghong himself hadn't noticed anything amiss, then was it really possible for Jun Mobai, a cultivator who was himself a bit weaker than Shen Qinghong, to see through his disguise? That didn't seem too likely.

Jiang Chen decided not to express anything even though he noticed Jun Mobai's unusual behavior. This Jun Mobai had once attempted to recruit Jiang Chen back at Rosy Valley. However, Jiang Chen had never really been interested in his offer or Jun Mobai himself. After all, Jiang Chen couldn't shake the feeling that this seemingly elegant and honest gentleman might not necessarily be as he appeared. As the second round of competition ended, the draw for the third round began.

After the second round was over, the majority of qualified participants were now geniuses from fourth rank sects. Those geniuses who were not part of a fourth rank sect only managed to take a quarter of the seats. The third round was a critical round. Winning the third round meant securing a spot in the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon rankings. However, after two rounds of ruthless elimination, the weaker cultivators had all been eliminated. All those who remained were the true geniuses. Therefore, the third round was fated to be a most devastating clash. The first seeds aside, everyone had an equal chance to face each other.

Right now, almost all the candidates were praying quietly to avoid a first seed during this critical round. If they did, then the door to advancement would be firmly closed right then and there. The difference between a sage realm cultivator and an origin realm cultivator was just too great. It simply wasn't a match on the same level.

If there was one exception to the rule though, it would be Jiang Chen. His heart was as calm as a glacial pond, paying no attention to whom his next opponent might be. The first seeds didn't need to draw lots. Their names were automatically listed from the beginning. The first lot was to confirm their opponents.

All of the geniuses whose names were called during this lot wore a gloomy look on their faces. They were all patently unlucky; their next opponent was a sage realm genius. They were all extremely despondent knowing that their hopes had been completely dashed. Once the first seeds were listed, and their opponents chosen at random, the rest of the participants would have their names shuffled and selected in pairs.

On the Regal Pill Palace side's, the first person to be picked from the lot was Ling Bi'er. Her opponent was actually also a ninth level origin realm second seed from the Walkabout Sect. This battle would no doubt be desperate.

Jiang Chen's name was next to be selected. Surprisingly, his opponent was a Sacred Sword Palace genius. His name was Wang Jing, a disciple at the peak of eighth level origin realm. The Sacred Sword Palace cheered loudly when the result of the draw was revealed. Mu Gaoqi versus Wang Jing!

"Haha, junior brother Wang Jing, it's all up to you now," a ninth level origin realm Sacred Sword Palace disciple slapped Wang Jing's shoulders heavily.

Wang Jing was a tall and muscular man who exuded a shocking amount of killing intent. "Senior brother Wang Han, should I kill him, or ruin him? Your wish is my command."

Wang Han leered sinisterly, flinging Jiang Chen a treacherous glance. The other Sacred Sword Palace disciples were also wearing odd smiles on their faces. When they looked at Mu Gaoqi, it was with a mocking look they usually reserved for prey. "Ruin him. Wouldn't it be a pity if we gave him a quick death?" Wang Han's tone was cold. "Junior brother Wang Jing, I've heard that your Whale King Sword Aura is extremely potent. Can it invade the inner manor and attack one's qi sea? The best method would be to break every meridian in this kid's body and then destroy his qi sea with your technique. This way, he will literally become useless trash!"

Wang Jing nodded. He now knew what he needed to do. He cast Jiang Chen a savage glance. How dare you contradict senior brother Wang Han, brat! You will pay a hefty price for your insolence! When the draw wrapped up, every participant began to focus their mind on the upcoming match. Other than those people who were doomed to lose the moment the lot was drawn, everyone else was eager to get started and rise above their opponents in this third round. If they could do so, they would be able to leave their names on the rankings for this year's Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Trials! The fifth rank sect geniuses were especially eager. To them, this was a rare opportunity to spread their name throughout the lands. *nOve-LB-1n*

Generally, the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Trials ranking would be monopolized by the disciples of the fourth rank sects. No more than five slots would be left to anyone not of a fourth rank sect.

However, this year's Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Trials was different. Since the Tristar Sect had suddenly vanished from the ranks of the six great sects of the Myriad Domain, their empty slots were now up for grabs. These empty slots left behind by the Tristar Sect were equivalent to additional opportunities for these sects. Therefore, this year's Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Trials really was a rare opportunity for the other sects.

This was especially true for the stronger fifth rank sects with even greater ambitions. They all wished that their geniuses could overperform and fully display the strength of their sect. If they performed well, then their sect's reputation would skyrocket. Perhaps they would even be in a place to replace the void left behind by the Tristar Sect. After all, every fifth rank sect wished to improve further and become a fourth rank sect. The slots had been full in the past, but now that the Tristar Sect had betrayed the Myriad Domain and left behind a fourth rank sect sized void waiting to be filled, it was only natural that these fifth rank sects would do their best to slash through their enemies and open up the path to become a fourth rank sect.

Wang Jing? A Sacred Sword Palace disciple? Jiang Chen's eyebrows lifted slightly. He naturally didn't overlook the taunting stares that were being thrown his way from the Sacred Sword Palace. He also knew that these people saw him as nothing more than a fish on the chopping block, ready to be sliced and diced at any moment. While wearing a faint smile on his face, Jiang Chen shook his head and slowly made his way up to the ring.

However, what was strange was that no one - be it Palace Head Dan Chi or Mu Gaoqi's subordinate - seemed to have given him any advice at all. They were all watching Mu Gaoqi walking calmly towards the arena, apparently without even a shred of worry at all. This bizarre sight surprised Wang Han just a little. Logically speaking, Mu Gaoqi was the apple of the Regal Pill Palace's eye. A martial arts competition like this, it would be completely natural for them to be worried about his safety. So why did they look rather unconcerned for Mu Gaoqi?

This didn't quite make sense no matter how one looked at it.

Wang Han might not understand what was going on, but he wasn't about to let his guard down. He turned to Wang Jing, "Junior brother Wang Jing, this Mu Gaoqi may be a little more eccentric than we first imagined. You must not underestimate him."

Wang Jing smiled easily and said, "Don't worry, senior brother Wang. The Regal Pill Palace is our sworn enemy, and thus I have kept on top of their intelligence. I am absolutely certain that I can destroy anyone in Regal Pill Palace other than the four kings of Rosy Valley!"

The four kings of Rosy Valley referred to the four most outstanding cultivators in the Regal Pill Palace; Ling Bi'er, Nie Chong, Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai. Ling Bi'er and Nie Chong were at peak ninth level origin realm, whereas Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai had broken through to the sage realm. As confident as Wang Jing was in himself, he knew that he didn't have the ability to go up against these four people. However, he was absolutely confident in his ability to destroy anyone else in Regal Pill Palace.

After all, Wang Jing's Whale King Sword Aura often had an advantage against normal ninth level origin realm cultivators, even though he was only at the peak of eighth level origin realm at the moment. Confidence was extremely important in a duel of martial arts.

Although Wang Han wanted to give Wang Jing a few more words of advice, he was also afraid that he might adversely affect Wang Jing's dao heart. It would be counterproductive if he accidentally said too much and disturbed Wang Jing's mindset. He patted Wang Jing's shoulders and said, "Be neither arrogant nor impatient, and perform to your best. Watch out for the enemy's dirty tricks."

"Mm." Wang Jing was in high spirits as his tall and sturdy frame took off at a dead run towards the arena. Although this guy wasn't as ridiculously built as Tang Hong, he wasn't too far behind. His footsteps caused the floor to rumble each time they impacted the ground, seeming very much to be able to shake the earth and topple mountains. When Wang Han saw this, he waved a hand and said, "Now, let's all attend to our respective matches."

Over at Regal Pill Palace's side, some of the elders from the Hall of Might still somewhat disapproved of Mu Gaoqi's participation. While they couldn't claim that there were countless young cultivators who were stronger than Mu Gaoqi in the Regal Pill Palace, there were still ten to twenty or so disciples who were better than him. However, none of them had been chosen for the competition because Mu Gaoqi had seemingly slid in the back door to be included. This made Elder Lian Cheng feel as disgusted as one would if they'd eaten a fly.

At first, Elder Lian Cheng thought that Palace Head Dan Chi lauding the Hall of Might as the first hall of the Regal Pill Palace since rising to power was a sign of the palace head's high regard for him. Now, it would seem that it was just an illusion. The palace head had been growing closer and closer with Herbal Hall's Elder Yun Nie as of late, and they looked very much like they were conspiring to shunt him off to the side. He was especially fed up with Mu Gaoqi's participation in the Myriad Grand Ceremony. The fact that Palace Head Dan Chi had allowed such a flagrant act of nepotism just went to show exactly how much Palace Head Dan Chi was biased towards Elder Yun Nie.

"Palace Head, is this Mu Gaoqi really... capable?" Elder Lian Cheng cast a glance at Palace Head Dan Chi, and he couldn't help but voice his thoughts, "If he's not, then maybe self preservation may be the better choice. Wouldn't it be a pity if his talent in pill dao is destroyed at the hands of a Sacred Sword Palace genius?"

Elder Lian Cheng's words were both half truths and half lies. It was undeniable that his concerns was a little insincere, but his wish to protect Mu Gaoqi's innate wood constitution was real. After all, a talent like that had the potential to bring the sect hundreds of years of fortune. It might even lead the sect towards a glorious new age. In Elder Lian Cheng's opinion, a cultivator with great talent in pill dao should just focus on pill dao. Why bother getting involved in the battle of martial arts?

Palace Head Dan Chi simply smiled and said, "We'll see. If he isn't, he'll know when to back off."

Elder Lian Cheng didn't bother remonstrating further, he didn't need to invite anymore snubs. Palace Head Dan Chi clearly had no intentions of explaining further. Nevertheless, he was extremely disapproving of this on the inside. Know when to back off? So what if Mu Gaoqi knows when to back off? The Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace are sworn enemies. If the enemy does not know 'when to back off' and seeks to land a killing blow, can you guarantee that Mu Gaoqi will be able to retreat in time? What if the enemy turns berserk and destroys his dantian and qi sea? His innate wood constitution would be completely destroyed.

That being said, if the palace head himself wasn't worried for Mu Gaoqi, naturally Elder Liang Cheng wouldn't raise an objection. Now that he thought about it, it wasn't a bad thing to watch Elder Yun Nie's disciple suffer a setback. It would all be because Palace Head Dan Chi had been obstinate in sending out Mu Gaoqi to battle anyway. If any accidents occurred, the only person on the hook for an explanation was Palace Head Dan Chi.

Suddenly, Elder Lian Cheng's grudges transformed into anticipation. It would be nice if a little accident happened to Mu Gaoqi. As the thought settled into his mind, Elder Lian Cheng immediately began to stare closely at Jiang Chen with a look of feigned seriousness. He couldn't even be bothered to care about his direct disciple, Shen Qinghong's match.

Chapter 649: A Bizarre Match

"Wang Jing of the Sacred Sword Palace versus Mu Gaoqi of the Regal Pill Palace!" The match officially began with the referee's announcement.

"Kid, are you going to kneel down politely and accept death, or do you want Master Jing to torture you to death?" Wang Jing took large strides forward as his qi of peak eighth level origin realm radiated out like a whale king. Akin to tremendous waves smashing onto the coast, the aura was pure domination given form, crashing down on Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen couldn't help but laugh. Are those of the Sacred Sword Palace always so naive? They're always so self righteous when bullying others.

If it'd truly been Mu Gaoqi standing here today, he'd have been in for a rough time. Sadly, it was not; it was Jiang Chen. He stood with both hands clasped behind his back, proudly upright in the face of the surging wind. One didn't know if his posture came from being scared out of his wits due to the stunning whale king qi current, or whether it came from his deep confidence in his skills. Those watching beneath the stage were all immensely startled by the situation. They'd all heard of Mu Gaoqi's reputation, but only of his potential in pill dao. No one thought much of his potential in martial dao. Yet here he was, standing with such posture!

"Sect Head, has Mu Gaoqi been scared witless?" A Sacred Sword Palace elder asked under his breath beside Wang Jianyu.

Wang Jianyu wasn't some sort of mediocre flop. His vision was exceedingly sharp and a frown creased his face as he spoke, "This match won't be easy. Everyone's underestimated Mu Gaoqi."

"Oh?"

"Let's watch the match, there's no need for further speculation." Wang Jianyu waved his hands.

Wang Jing was a proud man, and when he saw how Mu Gaoqi stood there, unmoving in front of him, as he just accepted the whale king qi current wash over him, Wang Jing felt deeply offended. "Kid, your bravery comes from your complete lack of sense. Let's see if I don't knock some into you today!" Wang Jing rubbed his hands together as he worked himself up into a towering rage.

Multiple air currents coalesced around him to form ghastly corporeal white waves and roiled through the ring, as if an enormous whale weaving powerfully through the ocean. White capped waves churned as if whipped by a storm, instantly drowning the ring and swallowing Jiang Chen's figure.

"Ai!" A crowd of sighs emanated from beneath the stage. When they'd seen 'Mu Gaoqi' stand there with such composed leisure, they'd thought he would have some stunning move. But to think that he would actually stand there like a wooden dummy, swallowed whole by the whale king qi current without even attempting to dodge! No matter how great his potential might be, what the heck could he do now that he'd been devoured by the whale king qi current and thoroughly trapped by the other's tempo?

Rumble, rumble!

The momentum from the enormous waves of whale king qi was as if the rivers of heaven cascading down into the deep abyss below, as if muffled thunder rolling over the sky on a clear day, each wave stronger than the one before and all churning towards that central area! Each wave was tremendously heavy and backed with great strength. Wang Jing had sent out at least five hundred waves with his furious move, if not a thousand. The destructive force of five hundred layered waves and the crushing force they formed would crush even a mountain, much less a body of flesh and blood.

Judging from Mu Gaoqi's strength, he was at most seventh level origin realm. Under such strong momentum from the waves, he would snap all his bones and tendons, if not pounded into meat paste. His organs might also be completely crushed, and his dantian and qi sea in tattered fragments.

"Sigh, this is so sad!"

"What a pity! I heard that Mu Gaoqi was an innate wood constitution!"

"The Regal Pill Palace really made a misstep this time. What's a pill dao genius doing here?"

"Right, it's always been said that Palace Head Dan Chi's wisdom has no failings. He's truly made a mistake this time. How would he not know that the Sacred Sword Palace and their Regal Pill Palace are sworn enemies? They would have even more of a reason to destroy a genius of the Regal Pill Palace!"

"Right, Mu Gaoqi even offended Wang Han with his words earlier, so the disciples of the Sacred Sword Palace will have even less of a reason to let him off easily."

"This was a moth to the flames, suicide!"

"Tsk tsk, I heard that Mu Gaoqi was already being hailed as the future pill king in the Regal Pill Palace, they were tooting their horn much too early, hmm?"

Out of the mass of sighs beneath the stage, some were delighting in the misery of others, some were feeling deeply regretful, and yet others didn't care at all. Even Elder Lian Cheng couldn't help but sneak a peek at Palace Head Dan Chi. He really wanted to see what expression that confident palace head would have on his face now. However, Elder Lian Cheng was disappointed to see that Dan Chi had an unconcerned expression on his face. There was even a hint of a meaningful smile playing on his lips, quite baffling Elder Lian Cheng. He almost couldn't help but suspect that Palace Head Dan Chi had purposefully sent Mu Gaoqi off to his death! Although this suspicion was ludicrous, it appeared to be the most reasonable when everything was viewed holistically, and was the most apt explanation for the matters at hand.

The matches in the other rings had already ended by this time, and almost all sage realm geniuses had instantly defeated their opponents. Wang Han of the Sacred Sword Palace had already returned to Wang Jianyu's side and was watching the frothing whale king qi current on stage with unspeakable glee. If it wasn't for a matter of appearances, he almost wanted to crow to the sky.

"This kid is all talk. His true colors have come out once he's set foot in the ring." Wang Han flung a frosty look at Shen Qinghong as he snorted coldly. He was obviously telling Shen Qinghong that Mu Gaoqi's current predicament was Shen Qinghong's future.

Shen Qinghong snorted dismissively and looked at the ring with mixed emotions. He hadn't liked Mu Gaoqi much before, but he'd suddenly understood after the trip to Mt. Rippling Mirage just how important unity was in a sect! It was such a pity for Mu Gaoqi to be destroyed in the ring with all his pill dao potential.

Bam, bam, bam, bam!

The sounds from the waves of whale king true qi slowly dissipated. They were powered by origin energy after all, so if their source of energy slowly vanished, so would the waves. All eyes were on the stage. Everyone wanted to see just how tragic Mu Gaoqi would be after this devastation. Some even suspected that he was likely a puddle of gory meat at this point in time. But, all their expressions froze in the next second.

When the overwhelming layers of waves disappeared and the scene on the stage cleared, a figure suddenly appeared in the center. It was standing there lazily and stretched even more indolently.

Mu Gaoqi!

At this moment, surprised flashed through even a heavyweight such as Wang Jianyu. Mu Gaoqi was actually standing in place and stretching lazily. He looked like he'd just had a good dream and still wanted to linger in it. How was this the demeanor of someone who'd just been crushed by waves of whale king qi?

Everyone watching the match was filled with baffled confusion. This completely upended everyone's understanding of martial dao. Some even wondered if Wang Jiang had purposefully gone easy on his opponent, that he'd only looked domineering, but hadn't used any true origin power at all? Otherwise, how could Mu Gaoqi be standing there so lazily, so at ease? How had he been subjected to a fatal attack at all? He looked like he'd just woken up!

"How can this be?" The previously strutting Wang Han was now slack jawed, his mouth open so wide that an entire bun could fit inside. He wouldn't have been surprised at all if the other had been reduced to meat paste. He would've accepted it if the other's bones and tendons had all been broken, and he was crawling on the ground. And yet, Mu Gaoqi stood there completely unharmed. That lazy stretch had been a crisp slap to the Sacred Sword Palace, and one that caught everyone in the sect completely off guard!

The step seemed to echo around the entire arena, everyone seemed to be able to hear it. Shen Qinghong's originally tense nerves suddenly relaxed. This immense rise and fall had also greatly affected his mindset as well. He couldn't understand it at all, how could junior brother Mu Gaoqi have become so

heaven defying all of a sudden? His thoughts were different from others as he felt that there was no way anyone from the Sacred Sword Palace would show mercy to the Regal Pill Palace. There must be something going on here that he didn't know!

Equally baffled was Shen Qinghong's martial dao master, Elder Lian Cheng. Contrary to Shen Qinghong, Elder Lian Cheng felt a hint of something else in addition to his stunned astonishment. He couldn't help but sneak another glance at Dan Chi, and saw that that unconcerned smile still clung on Dan Chi's face. However, that meaningful lilt to his lips was even more obvious now. Could it be that Palace Head Dan Chi had long since anticipated this scene?

Those of the other sects were even more taken aback. It was obvious that the immense rises and falls of this unexpected scene had caused everyone's emotions to soar and plummet accordingly. They were unable to calm themselves after a long while.

"This is crazy! How strong is Mu Gaoqi, or did Wang Jing go easy?"

"Even a sage realm genius wouldn't be completely unharmed after such a strong impact, right?"

"Isn't Mu Gaoqi a pill dao genius? When was he so accomplished in terms of martial dao?"

"Tsk tsk, it looks like the Regal Pill Palace is still superior in the end!"

"Who knows, perhaps Mu Gaoqi had some special treasure that just so happened to counter the whale king qi currents? There is always a counter for something in the world of martial dao, this isn't outside the realm of possibilities."

"Ah, right. It's not impossible that Mu Gaoqi's used some strong defense talisman to block this blow!"

Those who were watching concluded that this must be the case, whereas Wang Jing was staring with eyes as wide as copper coins, staring fixedly at Jiang Chen and unable to return to his previous state of mind. He'd thought of many possible outcomes, but not this one!"

"Kid, your Regal Pill Palace is rather generous huh, to give you such a strong defense talisman! But, no matter how strong it is, it will only protect you once!"

Jiang Chen lightly flicked off some dust on his sleeve and laughed softly. "What defense talisman? Don't delude yourself."

"What do you mean?" Wang Jing's tone sank.

"Do you want to blame it on your opponent using a talisman everytime you fail? Is this the logic of the Sacred Sword Palace?" Jiang Chen smiled superciliously.

Wang Jing was immensely enraged and roared out, "Still putting on an act huh!? You won't admit to what you've done?! Alright, let's see how Master Jing beats you down to your true form with my next blow!"

Whale king qi currents were just the appetizer, his technique of Whale King Sword Aura was the main course!

Chapter 650: Sent Flying With One Kick

Even when compared to the rest of the Sacred Sword Palace's younger generation, Wang Jing was shockingly powerful when his ire reached its maximum. With exception of those solidly in the sage realm, not even ninth level origin realm geniuses were willing to fight against a berserk Wang Jing. He fought like a madman when he was in a rage. And right now, he had without a doubt gone berserk.

Vast waves of whale king qi spewed into existence once more. However, their form was markedly different from before. Wang Jing seemed to have learned from his lesson and decided against multiplying waves to crush his enemy. This time, the waves spread to become rivers of iron locks and chains that sealed off the space in many tiny compartments. "Let's see how many defense talismans you have left this time, brat!"

At the heart of it all, Wang Jing believed that his enemy had broken through the lockdown of his enormous waves earlier through defensive talismans rather than their own strength. Jiang Chen was as calm as ever as he watched the enormous tidal waves lock down all space on the ring. Wang Jing's hands grabbed at the air, and a broadsword materialized between his hands. This sword flickered between a bright gold and an eerie white.

"Tsk tsk. It would seem that junior brother Wang Jing is truly furious this time!" When Wang Han saw Wang Jing's demeanor, he knew that Wang Jing had unleashed his trump card.

Using currents of whale king qi to seal off the airspace and the Whale King Sword Aura attack to strangle the opponent—Wang Jing had executed a seamless attack. There were absolutely no gaps to be found in the entire ring. Even if his opponent could break through the first layer with defensive talismans, he would not be able to break through the second and third layers. This ability to lock down space itself was achieved through Wang Jing's understanding of formations, and a hint of the profound mysteries of space. Even Wang Han wouldn't want to face such a method. Even at peak second level sage realm, he would have no choice but to try and strike out first. If he failed to mount an attack before he was locked down by Wang Jing, the only way out would be to break through this lockdown via force. When he looked down at Mu Gaoqi again, Wang Han was simultaneously angry and pleased to discover a look of fearless recklessness. He was angry because Mu Gaoqi was still cocky even though he was about to meet his doom. And yet, Wang Han was also pleased because this kid wouldn't be able to strut around for much longer.

"Mirage!" Wang Jing executed a series of hand seals, causing ripples of light to shimmer throughout his qi currents. They merged with each other at random, forming various mirages. Soon, Jiang Chen was completely surrounded by those illusions.

The moment Jiang Chen was surrounded by the rippling light mirages, the broadsword in Wang Jing's hand rose up. "Yaksha [1] Explores the Sea!" The golden sword aura shot into the sky, taking tangible form, and becoming a fearsome, fiendish Yaksha brandishing a trident. The evil spirit then stabbed fiercely down at Jiang Chen from above. From where he stood, Wang Jing's sword aura continuously conjured many tangible dharmas.

"Two Dragons Toy Pearls."

"Tiger Devours the Sky!"

“Erlang Shoots the Sun!” Wang Jing had used his understanding of the profound mysteries of space to seal off the space with his qi currents with one hand, and had concentrated the metallic attributes of his sword aura into dharma attacks on the other. This absolutely exquisite combination of both skills was without a doubt Wang Jing’s trump card.

He had challenged and defeated many ninth level origin realm experts beyond his level with this move. Even sage realm geniuses had to admit that Wang Jing’s finishing move was extremely hard to deal with.

More spectators gathered beneath the stage as the monstrous aura rose, their voices tinged with awe as they praised the technique.

“The Sacred Sword Palace’s martial heritage is truly impressive. While this Wang Jing is not yet the topmost genius of them all, his abilities can possibly even take down a genius of ninth level origin realm!”

“Mm. It is said that the Sacred Sword Palace’s martial heritage is stronger than even the Great Cathedral’s. The Great Cathedral is stronger only because it holds the advantage of merging bloodlines.”

“Considering his strength, we must be careful if we encounter Wang Jing in the future.”

“I wonder if Mu Gaoqi still has a chance? This isn’t something that can be settled with a single defense talisman.”

It was obvious that everyone thought that ‘Mu Gaoqi’ had used a powerful defense talisman to break out of his predicament earlier. However, this time they were sure that a defense talisman was nowhere close to sufficient even if he were to use them again. However, Jiang Chen’s next move was something that stunned all spectators into a jaw-dropping silence. Jiang Chen lifted his arm slightly, put his thumb and middle finger together, and snapped them once.

Snap! The snap was so crisp that it sounded like a clap of thunder.

It was the events that followed that left all others gaping. The dharmas conjured from the boundless sword aura deflated instantly, like balloons popped by a needle. Nothing but tendrils were left drifting in the air, and they too soon faded away into nothingness. All of the golden qi currents in the air suddenly arced into Jiang Chen’s hands. Jiang Chen’s open palm faced upwards as the qi currents landed in his hand and condensed into a single ball of golden light. It grew brighter and brighter like a gold candle as more and more qi currents gathered into one spot. When all of the qi currents had gathered into his palm, Jiang Chen folded his fingers and squeezed softly. The candle-like ball of golden light vanished between his fingers like a waning flame doused by water, disappearing into complete nothingness.

“What?!” This time, even Wang Jianyu himself could barely hold onto his seat. Behind him, Wang Han staggered, almost falling to the ground. He rubbed his eyes fiercely. His first thought was that he had fallen prey to an illusion. After all, these dharmas formed from the condensed sword aura were so powerful that even Wang Han himself would not dare to treat them recklessly. In addition, the thought of destroying all of the dharmas with a single snap of his fingers and then absorbing all of the sword aura with an open palm was even more ludicrous. This wasn’t something that a seventh level origin realm cultivator could perform! In fact, not even the head of the Sacred Sword Palace, eighth level sage realm Wang Jianyu himself, could replicate this feat so easily.

“How could this be?” The elders of Sacred Sword Palace were astonished beyond words. To a man, they had all leaped to their feet upon seeing the outcome.

“Sect Head, how has this happened?”

Wang Jiangyu too frowned, but kept silent in the face of the torrent of questions. In the end, he opened his mouth, “Wang Jing’s Whale King Sword Aura is made of the crushing power of the metal attribute. Its edge is extremely sharp. Therefore, there is no way this kid could’ve broken these dharmas so easily with his own strength. If my guess is correct, he likely possesses some sort of treasure that specifically counters this type of art.”

“A treasure?” An elder sucked in a breath in shock, “And just how shockingly powerful this treasure must be!”

Wang Jianyu sighed, “It must be absolutely incredible. I doubt that even I could destroy all of those dharmas as easily as he did.”

It was true that even sage realm experts couldn’t have destroyed all of the sword aura dharmas with a snap of their fingers. Of course, they could break through them or destroy them with their fist or palm. However, ‘Mu Gaoqi’ hadn’t executed any hand gestures, martial arts or techniques. Just how perverse was his strength if he could break all of those dharmas with just a snap of his fingers? It was absolutely impossible for anyone beneath emperor realm.

Therefore, Wang Jianyu held fast to his view that it wasn’t Mu Gaoqi’s strength that had won him the exchange. It just so happened that Wang Jing’s art had been perfectly countered. Beside him, Wang Han was fuming with rage. His teeth ground against each other as he spat, “The Regal Pill Palace is a bunch of losers who are good for nothing but their luck!”

Unlike those in the Sacred Sword Palace, the rest of the audience was completely stunned by this sight. Even the proudest person had to admit that Mu Gaoqi’s move had been filled with dashing flair.

He’d destroyed thousands of dharmas with just a snap of his fingers.

Aren’t you powerful, Wang Jing? Aren’t you overbearing? Weren’t you having fun showing off all those fancy moves? Your opponent had literally stood there unmoving and destroyed all of your attacks with a single snap of his fingers. And he’d done it as easily as blowing out a candle.

What was true strength? This was true strength!

The person in question, Wang Jing, was also greatly shocked by this outcome. In fact, he had even spent some time in the battle to prepare a victory speech, before that shocking reversal. Lines to humiliate his opponent, lines to humiliate Regal Pill Palace, and lines to show off his status as the victor. The only thing he had left to do with his scripts was to use them.

However...

However, reality had stolen his innocence as his opponent used an almost humiliating method to give him and the Sacred Sword Palace an enormous slap to the face.

Wang Jing had doubted his eyes as well when he saw those dharmas shattering. And yet, the loud commotion of astonishment beneath the arena confirmed again and again that his eyes weren’t playing

tricks on him. There was no doubt anymore that the opponent he had completely looked down upon had indeed used a humiliating method to easily crush the final ace he had taken so much pride in.

While he stood there in shock, Wang Jing's face turned so pale that it was as if all the blood in his body had been drained away. Then, his pupils abruptly shrank, and a bit of fear and bewilderment in his eyes appeared in his eyes. "What... what are you doing?!"

Sadly, the white qi currents that he'd laid down as intersecting locks were as if paper as his opponent lightly swept an arm across the arena.

Rip, rip.

The white qi currents that were supposed to be as heavy and durable as manacles were torn and ripped apart like daisy chains.

Dong dong dong.

His enemy's footsteps didn't slow at all as Jiang Chen took one measured step after another towards Wang Jing. Right now, Wang Jing looked like a frightened rabbit, despite possessing a body comparable to that of a small hill. His slim and short opponent continued to exert a pressure on him that was as if he was the real giant. Wang Jing's heartbeat pounded faster with every footstep his opponent took. "Don't... don't come closer!"

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently as he looked straight at this Sacred Sword Palace disciple who was all show and no skills. Smiling disdainfully, he abruptly darted forwards like lightning and kicked Wang Jing right in the chest.

Bam!

Wang Jing's large body immediately tumbled from the stage like a kite with a broken string. Blood gushed madly out of his mouth, and the people beneath the arena could hear his bones crack while he was in midair.

With an ashen look on his face, Wang Jianyu vanished from where he stood and caught Wang Jing in his arms. Wang Jianyu's expression contorted when he examined Wang Jing's injuries. A chilly light exploded from his eyes as he glared at Jiang Chen, standing on stage, "You destroyed Wang Jing's dantian and qi sea, boy? Aren't you afraid that you will be punished by the heavens for destroying another person's dao foundation?"

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently, "No one is exempt from death in the world of martial dao. One might even say he had good karma from his past life since I only went so far as to destroy his dantian."

The words were said gently, but the youngsters in the Sacred Sword Palace all felt their hair on their neck rise because of them. Their Regal Pill Palace opponent was instantly shrouded in mystery to them.

A malevolent spirit in Buddhism