

Three Realms 651

Chapter 651: Stunning All Sides

Forget the Sacred Sword Palace, even the Regal Pill Palace suddenly found Mu Gaoqi to be completely unfathomable. While outsiders might not know anything of Mu Gaoqi, the Regal Pill Palace disciples had lived under the same roof as him. How could they possibly not understand him? Was this the same cautious and slightly timid Mu Gaoqi they knew? Not only had Mu Gaoqi talked easily and fearlessly in face of Wang Jianyu's questions and threats, he'd even retorted with supreme indifference. Was this the Mu Gaoqi whose temperament had been known as one as docile as rabbit?

Truth be told, it would've been palatable if it was just a change in temperament. But since when had Mu Gaoqi become so mysteriously strong? Now that they thought of it, Mu Gaoqi had already participated in two battles. In the first battle, Mu Gaoqi had fought fiercely against Feng Pao, a fifth rank sect's seventh level origin realm expert. The battle had looked incredibly intense, and he'd given the impression that he was just a bit better than Feng Pao. However, an attentive person would've realized that Mu Gaoqi had only been using a wilted branch as his weapon from beginning to end. He hadn't executed any moves of his own.

Logically speaking, the second round should've been a difficult battle for Mu Gaoqi. But again, he hadn't used any of his own moves from beginning to end. In the beginning, everyone had thought that Mu Gaoqi had used a powerful defense talisman to protect himself from Wang Jing's whale king qi currents. It was a barely plausible explanation of that clash. However, could a defense talisman aid Mu Gaoqi in shattering all of Wang Jing's dharmas with a single snap of his fingers? Obviously impossible!

However, how many profound martial arts techniques could a simple finger snap contain? There were plenty of martial dao heavyweights present, but none of them had seen through what had happened. They reviewed the moves Mu Gaoqi had used to tear apart the qi currents that had locked down the area in the ring. Those restrictive currents had been torn apart like paper, without any discernable power to speak of. He had displayed nothing but crude and simplistic moves again, and so the audience still couldn't figure out just what stunning move Mu Gaoqi had discreetly employed. In fact, the final kick onto Wang Jing had literally been a move that would be seen during a brawl between commoners. There had been absolutely no technique to speak of.

The battle had been all too preposterous! It was so ludicrous that the assumption that Wang Jing had cooperated with Mu Gaoqi to put on a show sounded more plausible.

Yes, the whole battle had looked so incredibly fake that the people couldn't help but want to inspect Wang Jing's injuries and check if they were actually real. However, the sounds of Wang Jing's broken bones couldn't be fake, that mouthful of blood couldn't be fake, and Wang Jianyu's anger at the destruction of Wang Jing's dantian couldn't be fake either!

In that case, Wang Jing hadn't actually cooperated with Mu Gaoqi to put on a show. After all, who in their right mind would risk the destruction of their dantian to work together with their sworn enemy and put on this tragic act? If this was all true, then this Mu Gaoqi was just too frightening.

Before he'd taken the stage, everyone had thought that Regal Pill Palace had chosen unwisely. They all thought that the decision to send a pill dao genius to duel a martial arts genius was no better than sending a moth into the flames. But now, it would seem that everyone had underestimated Mu Gaoqi!

The victory in the third round meant that he had secured a spot in the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon rankings.

"Congratulations, junior brother Mu." Shen Qinghong calmly walked up to Jiang Chen and stretched out his hand.

Seeing that Shen Qinghong was actually sincere with the gesture, Jiang Chen nodded and slapped hands with Shen Qinghong, "Thank you, senior brother Shen."

Jun Mobai also walked over and smiled, saying, "You've hidden your strength well, junior brother. That kick was definitely to everyone's satisfaction!"

Ling Bi'er and Nie Chong had both beaten their respective opponents and cleared the third round. However, Ling Bi'er had gone through a rather difficult battle before she managed to secure her victory.

Nie Chong was also feeling extremely conflicted as he watched Mu Gaoqi walking down the stage. He'd mocked Mu Gaoqi earlier, saying that Rong Zifeng might as well have taken the former's place since Mu Gaoqi had struggled so hard during the second battle... Now that he looked back on Mu Gaoqi's performance, Nie Chong could only feel a burning sensation on his face. He suddenly felt like finding a crack on the ground and hiding inside it. n))☉--∇(-e(.I))b/-l--n

Yes, that was how he felt.

He had watched the second half of the match, and if he were to conjecture bluntly, he himself only had a 50% chance at victory if he couldn't suppress Wang Jing from the beginning and had allowed him the time and opening to unleash his trump card. As for imitating Mu Gaoqi's fighting style, defeating his opponent easily and sending him flying with a kick while chatting and laughing? Simply impossible.

"Junior brother Mu, I have misjudged you. I apologize." While Nie Chong wasn't one to hesitate flaunting his strength, he also knew that he really wasn't qualified to put on airs when even Shen Qinghong himself treated Mu Gaoqi with politeness and courtesy. Therefore, he voiced his apology and gave himself an exit.

Jiang Chen was indifferent in this regard. He shared no relations with Nie Chong, so he naturally wouldn't take his words to heart at all. He nodded once with a faint smile on his face, "It's fine."

Ling Bi'er stood at the back of the group. She looked a bit tired after a difficult battle. Thankfully, the day would end after three rounds of battle. The next round would happen on the morrow.

"Congratulations on your advancement, junior brother." Ling Bi'er nodded slightly at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen gave her a small smile and said, "It seems like you've had a bountiful battle as well. You've caught a hint of inspiration to break through to the sage realm?"

Ling Bi'er was absolutely astonished, "You can tell?"

Jiang Chen's consciousness was immeasurably powerful, so naturally he noticed the slight change in Ling Bi'er. In reality, Ling Bi'er's talent wasn't any weaker than Shen Qinghong's. In fact, her potential was even stronger than his. However, her advancement on martial dao had been negatively affected due to her father's sickness and her concentration on pill dao. Otherwise, her martial arts potential would have allowed her to break through to the sage realm two years ago.

Now that her father's sickness was cured, the heavy stone in her heart had finally been lifted. Her anxiety was gone and the world had suddenly opened up to her. Naturally, her understanding of martial arts would continuously improve. A difficult battle in the third round had rewarded her plentifully. As a result, the comprehension of martial dao she had accumulated for many years seemed to spring forth like a fountain.

Innumerable martial dao inspirations surged into her mind all at once. Although she couldn't be sure that it was a sign that she was about to break through to sage realm, at the very least it meant that she had accumulated so much understanding in martial dao that it couldn't help but show her a path forward. Now that Jiang Chen had pointed it out to Ling Bi'er, she grew even more certain that she had a chance to break through to the sage realm.

If the breakthrough took time, then it would be around three to five months. But if it was quick, then she could break through to sage realm in three or five days' time.

Dan Chi and Elder Lian Cheng all glanced sideways at Ling Bi'er when they heard Jiang Chen's words. They had actually been neglecting Ling Bi'er because they had been closely observing Jiang Chen's battle all this time. Now that they focused on her, they discovered that Ling Bi'er's origin realm spirit sea was extremely active. Be it inside or outside her body, the signs of breakthrough were incredibly obvious.

"Good! I didn't think that we Regal Pill Palace will be welcoming the birth of yet another sage realm genius. This is truly an occasion for celebration!" Palace Head Dan Chi laughed to his heart's content. After casting a rather meaningful glance at Jiang Chen, Dan Chi had to admit that Regal Pill Palace's younger generation had been provoked into ever astounding improvement since Jiang Chen had shown up. It was obvious that a man of great fortune like Jiang Chen was affecting the young geniuses with his every word and movement.

There were many kinds of geniuses. Some were powerful beyond ken, but they often trod a lonely path all the way to the end. Yet, there were also geniuses who were beloved by fate, and brought luck and fortune to their sect in all sorts of ways.

Jiang Chen was one such example.

He hadn't entered Regal Pill Palace for more than three or four years, but the wind of change he had brought to Regal Pill Palace was absolutely astounding. Shen Qinghong, a genius of the youth generation, had turned over a completely new leaf. Ling Bi'er's greatest worry and obstacle in martial dao had been permanently assuaged. Mu Gaoqi's talent had been unearthed, and as a result, his strength had grown tremendously. In all of these cases, Jiang Chen's merits couldn't go unacknowledged. As for the rest of the disciples, while they had not received any personal positive influences from Jiang Chen, he had injected Rosy Valley with an all new temperament with his actions. It was a fire these Regal Pill Palace geniuses hadn't possessed before.

Moreover, the resources and good fortune Jiang Chen brought to the sect were tangible. Sky rank spirit herbs, earth rank spirit herbs, countless stalks of Sage Fledgling Grass and the recipe of the Longevity Pill...

His merits were literally innumerable if Dan Chi were to list them all properly. Naturally, with his level of intelligence, Dan Chi understood that this was Jiang Chen's blessing on the Regal Pill Palace.

That night, all the sects settled down where they were and set up camp around the arena. Cultivators didn't necessarily need to sleep at night. It was just that battles at night were inconvenient. Plus, all living beings went to sleep at night. Cultivators themselves could use the opportunity to reserve and hone their strength.

However, the martial arts competition of the Grand Ceremony was a momentous event that was held once per thirty years. Naturally, it was impossible for most youngsters to calm down and rest. This was especially true for those cultivators who had already been eliminated. They gathered in groups of twos or threes as they discussed the extraordinary things that had happened during the day.

The first two rounds of the battles had passed by blandly, but the third round had much in the way of exciting battles. Of course, the most interesting battles weren't the battles of the sage realm experts. After all, those battles were all completely one-sided and thus produced only a limited amount of entertainment.

When one spoke of entertainment, the most entertaining match of them all was the conflict between the two sworn enemies, the Regal Pill Palace and the Sacred Sword Palace. On one side was the powerful and high-profile Wang Jing, and on the other, the honest and low-key Mu Gaoqi.

Before the battle had started, almost everyone thought that this battle was going to be a one-sided victory for Sacred Sword Palace. However, the outcome had exceeded everyone's expectations. To almost universal surprise, Mu Gaoqi had countered and defeated Wang Jing with an almost monstrous level of ability!

That battle was an absolute classic, and it also qualified to be recorded in the history of Myriad Grand Ceremony. As a result, the battle was discussed the most overnight. The clamor raised around Mu Gaoqi's mysterious abilities was even greater. In fact, plenty of people suspected that Mu Gaoqi was feigning a lack of ability was most likely a sage realm cultivator already.

Apart from Mu Gaoqi's counterattack against Wang Jing, Ling Bi'er's even match against a Walkabout Sect's genius was just as classic. She'd won after a pitched battle, and it was even rumored that she attained great understanding from the battle and showed signs of ascending to sage realm. Naturally, this too became the focus of many discussions.

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On that dark night, at a shadow covered spot five kilometers away from the arena. A ghostly black figure landed inside the forest, materializing like black lightning. "Venerated Envoy Wei, the Nethersun Manor's main army had already been mobilized. They will be crossing the borders in three days time."

"Good." An indifferent voice rang deeply from amidst darkness, "How goes the situation at the Great Scarlet Mid Region?"

“According to the report of our spies in the Great Scarlet Mid Region, the fourth rank sects in the Great Scarlet Mid Region have begun to mobilize. They will be arriving in three to five days time as well. All the fourth rank sects in the Great Scarlet Mid Region have mobilized this time, and made very targeted deployments. It would seem that they are planning to utterly destroy all the sects in Myriad Domain.” The intel brought back by this spy was incredibly detailed.

Chapter 652: The Fires of Battle Continue

This Envoy Wei was naturally Wei Zikua, who’d traveled to the Tristar Sect last time. Cao Jin had travelled with him had left the Myriad Domain first last time and returned to the Sky Sect, collecting Wu Heng and Shi Zhen to venture into Mt. Rippling Mirage and then perished there. In contrast, Wei Zikua hadn’t left the Myriad Domain. He’d stayed to make his preparations and wait for the arrival of the Myriad Grand Ceremony. The rumors of the so-called Imperial Jade Seal and Guardian Dragon Seal had been his work.

The appearance of these two matters had triggered the ambitions and impulses of the various Myriad Domain sects as well as provoked the Great Scarlet Mid Region, giving them another reason to invade the Myriad Domain again. This was all to give the Sky Sect a reason to intervene in the Myriad Domain. After Great Scarlet made their moves and clashed terrifyingly with the Myriad Domain sects, the Sky Sect would then appear with great fanfare when the two sides were injured and hoist high the banner of mediation. The Sky Sect would be able to do as they wished then.

The Sky Sect had raised the Tristar Sect after so many years in the Myriad Domain, so they’d naturally supported some other powers as well. They’d even arranged for pawns in each of the fourth rank sects. The pawns were just hidden very deeply, and there was no need to use them at non critical junctures. They were all puppets that would be used to control the Myriad Domain. Countless years had gone by as the Sky Sect had set all this up.

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Jiang Chen had already opened his eyes from his meditation when the first rays of dawn shone onto the ground. The new day had come.

After a night of rest, the young geniuses had recovered their energy to peak form and was full of anticipation for the day ahead. The geniuses who yet remained were guaranteed spots on the rankings, but geniuses would fight to the very end for any spot on the rankings.

“How is everyone feeling?” Dan Chi walked over and smiled at the youngsters of the Regal Pill Palace.

“Greetings to the palace head.” The youngsters all greeted him in return.

Dan Chi waved his hand, “No need to stand on ceremony. The fights today will be even more heated up. There will be another three rounds today, with four groups formed at the end of them. Those eliminated in the first round will be in the fourth group, eliminated in the second round will be in the third group, the third round will be the second group, and the ones who emerge victorious in the third round will be the first group. Are you all clear on this?”

Everyone nodded in response.

“Qinghong and Mobai, you two are first seed opponents. The sage realm geniuses still will not meet each other in the battles today. Therefore, those who can make it into the first group after today’s battles are mostly sage realm geniuses.”

Everyone was quite aware of these rules. At the end of the day, they were to protect the sage realm geniuses, to prevent the top geniuses from clashing against each other prematurely.”

“However, there are 16 spots open in group one. There are 13 sage realm geniuses amongst the younger generation of the Myriad Domain, which means that there will be three spots going to non sage realm geniuses. There is hope for all of you.”

There had originally been no spots left for those beneath sage realm, but the betrayal of the Tristar Sect had decreased the competition at the Myriad Grand Ceremony and left some quota for others.

Dan Chi smiled, “Everyone, just do your best. No matter what your rank is, I will not fail you as long as you have exerted yourself to your utmost.”

Dan Chi was quite openminded and didn’t purposefully give them any additional pressure. He knew that the Regal Pill Palace had no advantage at all in the ceremony. His eye was set on a goal far in the distance. It would be good to obtain a good ranking, but he wouldn’t overly criticize them if they didn’t. After all, momentary success was inconsequential given the current perilous situation of the Myriad Domain. But of course, it’d be good if the young geniuses performed above their usual level and achieved a heaven defying result.

However, as the palace head, Dan Chi still had a general understanding of the abilities of the Regal Pill Palace geniuses. Apart from Ling Bi’er surprising him with her impending breakthrough to the sage realm, he knew full well how much potential Shen Qinghong and Nie Chong possessed. It was rather Jun Mobai that he felt possessed an extra depth of mysteriousness when compared to Shen Qinghong.

Of course, when it came to the only unknown factor of the Regal Pill Palace, that was Jiang Chen. If Dan Chi had to identify what he was most looking forward to this ceremony, that was Jiang Chen. He was well aware that only Jiang Chen had the ability to soar to the top with one amazing move, that Jiang Chen was a genius with heaven defying future. He also wanted to use this ceremony to plumb the depths of Jiang Chen’s potentials. Jiang Chen hadn’t disappointed with yesterday’s competition, but he’d retained his aura of mystery as he hadn’t used any trump cards at all. This had made Dan Chi completely unable to estimate Jiang Chen’s martial dao potential.

As he watched the five youngsters from the Regal Pill Palace walk to the ring in high spirits, Dan Chi suddenly had a flashback to when he’d participated in the Myriad Grand Ceremony in his youth. He’d emerged from the mass as the dark horse in that year’s ceremony, taking the championship and entering the Paramount Realm to further strengthen his dao. He’d gained much from that trip, but he hadn’t run into the type of fortuitous occurrence that would chance his life.

This had disappointed him to a certain degree, as he’d felt that there should’ve been more to the mysteries of the Paramount Realm. Time had been too short and perhaps he hadn’t possessed enough fortune to run into that streak of heaven defying luck. As for the two Grand Ceremonies afterwards, the Regal Pill Palace never again produced another genius on the level of Dan Chi. If there was a dark horse to emerge from them this time, it would only be Jiang Chen and never Shen Qinghong.

The matches on the second day were vastly different from the first day. Ability had been uneven on the first day, and the gaps between the strong and weak had been enormous. They were noticeably smaller today, and apart from the sage realm geniuses far in the lead, there were no more absolute advantages any more.

“Everyone, those of you on the stage today are the top hundred geniuses of the Myriad Domain. There are places for you on the rankings of the Myriad Hidden Dragon Trials.

“Of the three rounds today, fifty will emerge from the first to advance to the next. We will select fortune from the fifty who lose to ascend as well, making for 64 in the second round. You will pair off and fight until the final rankings are determined.”

It made for odd numbers if only fifty advanced from the first round. With sixty four total, they could cut down the numbers from sixty four to thirty two, thirty two to sixteen, sixteen to eight, eight to four, four to two, and the champion determined from the finalists. This also made it easier to arrange for the matches.

“Some of you may have questions on how we might select the fourteen? It’s simple, we’ll base it on cultivation level from those who lose, and if the levels are the same, we’ll base it on their opponents. For instance, if two candidates are eighth level origin realm, whoever faces off with a stronger opponent in the first round will be selected. Fourteen will be selected in this manner.”

The additional list of fourteen was a jolt of security for many, enabling them to relieve the weight on their shoulders. It was obvious that everyone was a bit worried they’d be unlucky and eliminated in the first round if matched against a sage realm genius. However, with the additional list, even the unluckiest had the chance to make it through as long as they were strong enough. This mitigated to a certain degree the unfairness resulting from weaker geniuses being defeated by sage realm geniuses.

“This additional list makes sense.” Although Jiang Chen didn’t fear any sage realm genius, it would be unfair if someone at peak ninth level origin realm, such as Ling Bi’er, ran into a sage realm genius in her first round. After all, apart from the sage realm geniuses being guaranteed not to run into each other today, there were no other such rules. This meant that those at the peak ninth level origin realm wouldn’t be protected during the draw and could also encounter a sage realm genius. With Ling Bi’er’s strength, there was still a difference between her and a sage realm genius.

Entering the sage realm meant that one had truly set foot into the higher levels of martial dao. Those realms beneath sage realm could only count as a foundational level.

“Alright! Let’s begin the draw.”

Apart from the sage realm geniuses being coolly composed, the other cultivators were all feeling very solemn. Although there was an additional list for the losers, no one wanted to end up on it. It wasn’t the most glorious way to ascend. And what if the sage realm genius lost their mind and actually hurt them? How would they fight when injured? Therefore, it was best to not run into a sage realm genius if possible.

Jiang Chen was very composed. He had his ways even if he ran into the top genius, Xiang Qin, of the Great Cathedral. It’d just take him a bit more effort, was all.

“Mu Gaoqi of the Regal Pill Palace versus Li Xin of the Great Cathedral Sacred Wolf family.”

Li Xin, the third ranked genius in the Sacred Lion family, ninth level origin realm, and at least top 40 out of the hundred here. This opponent was much stronger than the Wang Jing before.

“Jin Feng of the Sacred Sword Palace versus Nie Chong of the Regal Pill Palace!”

Nie Chong’s expression immediately changed when he heard this. The second genius of the Sacred Sword Palace whose strength was second to only Wang Han, also a sage realm genius. He’d entered the sage realm before the Pill Battles, a feat even earlier than Shen Qinghong! Nie Chong was naturally quite depressed to be facing such an opponent.

Chapter 653: Voluntary Forfeit

In comparison, Ling Bi’er’s rather average draw luck had improved considerably. She actually drew an eighth level origin realm genius from a fifth rank sect as her opponent. It was a rare opportunity for Ling Bi’er to readjust her mentality.

Generally speaking, it was impossible for an eighth level origin realm genius from a fifth rank sect to compete against a peak ninth level origin realm genius from a fourth rank sect. Moreover, Ling Bi’er was currently in a state where she was on the verge of breaking through to sage realm. She was brimming with qi, without a doubt a great boost to her power. Ling Bi’er would be much stronger than usual in this situation.

Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai were both sage realm geniuses. They were protected, and thus it was impossible for them to encounter another sage realm opponent. As long as their opponents stayed beneath sage realm, then it was all the same to them no matter who they drew. Shen Qinghong walked up to Nie Chong. “Do what you can and don’t force yourself. We can afford to win just as we can afford to lose. There is no need to struggle pointlessly out of pride.”

Nie Chong might be at the peak of ninth level origin realm, but he was obviously incomparable to the peak of first level sage realm Jin Feng. If his opponent was any other sage realm genius, they would’ve taken care not to go overboard and ruin a weaker opponent just because they were stronger. They wouldn’t do so unless that weaker opponent purposefully taunted them.

However, the sage realm genius he’d drawn was from the Sacred Sword Palace. That was a problem. The Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace were sworn enemies. Their battles were incredibly intense every time they fought each other. Take Wang Jing and Jiang Chen’s match for example. The stance Wang Jing had assumed from the beginning wasn’t one suitable for an exchange of martial arts. Jiang Chen’s counterattack had also obviously gone overboard.

Nie Chong inhaled deeply and nodded with a darkened expression, “I will be careful.”

He was a man who preferred baring his fangs over hiding them. He couldn’t accept forfeiting the moment he went up stage.

“All participants, please head for your rings.”

On the Regal Pill Palace’s side, Jun Mobai walked next to Nie Chong and patted him on the shoulder. However, he said nothing to him.

Ling Bi'er said faintly, "Be careful."

Jiang Chen walked over and stretched out his hand, "Good luck."

Nie Chong understood that there was no way that peers wouldn't take joy in the misfortune of someone in their own sect. He accepted their feelings, and strode into the ring with no more hesitation.

When Jiang Chen finally walked up the stage, his opponent had already been waiting for him for a while.

"Mu Gaoqi?" The Sacred Wolf family's Li Xin had truly underwhelming looks. He had a sharp chin, a common pair of triangular eyes, and thin cheeks. His countenance gave off an incredibly sinister feeling, and his voice carried within it a strange, metallic quality that numbed a listener's skull.

Jiang Chen nodded but said nothing. This was a martial arts competition. They had neither grudges nor bonds with each other, so there was nothing to talk about. He would let his strength speak for itself.

Li Xin's mouth curled into a weird, eerie smile, "Mu Gaoqi, I have heard of you. You are born with an upper rank innate wood constitution, and a future pill king."

Jiang Chen cast a glance at this Li Xin expressionlessly. He wasn't sure what this guy was trying to say.

"I don't wish to hurt you. How about this: I'll let you have ten moves and then allow you to persevere for an hour's time in the ring. Then, I'll send you off stage with your dignity intact. What do you think?"

When Jiang Chen heard this, he couldn't help his annoyance and his amusement. "Why?" Jiang Chen was curious about his reasons.

"I don't wish to offend a future pill king. Is that good enough?" Li Xin appeared to be very confident in himself. He didn't seem to care about Wang Jing's defeat yesterday.

"Are you so absolutely confident that you can beat me?" Jiang Chen asked indifferently.

Li Xin was caught off guard by the question. He felt that his opponent was now spouting nonsense. I am a genius from the Great Cathedral, and you are just a seventh level origin realm Regal Pill Palace disciple. Isn't it normal that I will defeat you?

As for Wang Jing's defeat, what the hell does it have to do with me? Li Xin was at the ninth level origin realm, and a member of the Great Cathedral. The only people he paid attention to were sage realm cultivators like Wang Han. That peak eighth level origin realm cultivator Wang Jing? Li Xin had never paid him a whit of attention. He was completely unconcerned with Wang Jing's victory or defeat.

Those of the Great Cathedral wielded absolute confidence in the Myriad Domain. In fact, they were almost blindly confident in their power. Therefore, Li Xin couldn't help but laugh out loud at Jiang Chen's question. He calmly replied Jiang Chen's question with a question of his own, "You can't be thinking that you stand a chance against me, hmm?"

Jiang Chen let out a soft sigh. Why were the Myriad Domain's geniuses always so blindly confident in themselves? He'd fought against the geniuses of the first rank sect Ninesuns Sky Sect several times, but hadn't found this kind of blind confidence in them at all. Be it Cao Jin or that fatty Wu Heng, they'd never displayed such blind haughtiness. The geniuses of Ninesuns Sky Sect might be confident in themselves, but that didn't mean that they lacked prudence. They acted within boundaries, and was

calm in the face of most surprising situations. They were neither blindly confident nor unduly humble. Although they were enemies, Jiang Chen had to admit that both the strength and the temperament of a first rank sect genius far exceeded those possessed by a Myriad Domain genius.

“Stop wasting your breath already. Come at me,” Jiang Chen frowned.

Li Xin sneered, “Are you sure you want me to act first? You may not have the chance to act if I do so. I will give you one last chance: Ten moves, and an opportunity to descend this stage with dignity.”

“No, thank you.” Jiang Chen said indifferently.

“So you’re saying that you want to refuse a toast and be forced to drink a forfeit?” Li Xin’s voice turned chilly. He wasn’t someone who normally had a good temper. The only reason he’d given Jiang Chen an option was because he didn’t wish to offend a future pill king. After all, what if he had a favor to ask of the pill king in the future?

“This is a martial arts competition, not an invitation to a meal, so cut that toast and forfeit crap. If you’re afraid to attack me, I can throw you a few punches instead.” Jiang Chen really didn’t wish to waste his breath with this fellow any longer.

He took a few steps forwards, clenching his hand into a fist and abruptly dashed towards Li Xin like a beam of light. It was just the simple clench of a fist, but the crisp roar of a tiger and the howl of an ape accompanied it. The entire arena seemed to shake, as if an entire army was running across its surface. The battlecry of this illusory, yet incredibly powerful army seemed almost ceaseless.

In that moment, an illusion descended onto Li Xin’s consciousness. It was as if he’d been thrown into an ancient slaughter ground. He couldn’t believe that this one simple preparatory move for a punch could conjure so many profound illusions. His eyes, ears, skin, and every sensory organ he had was combining forces to assault his mind.

“Not good!” Yet, Li Xin was a Great Cathedral genius after all. That animalistic battle instinct he possessed wasn’t for show. He slapped his head fiercely and repeatedly with both hands in attempt to chase out the attack on his consciousness. Then, he opened both his hands and transformed great waves of qi into ten sharp blades.

Swoosh swoosh swoosh!

The ten sharp swords conjured numerous phantom edges that resembled wolf fangs. Those full and crisscrossing blades of power actually transformed into shields of aura made of wolf fangs.

“Gale Wolf Shield!” The engraved runes in the wolf shield vibrated intensely as it emitted rays of dark light that lent it a deep and abstruse air. The wolf shield formed from the fangs had obviously undergone a special rune treatment. Its defensive power was not to be underestimated.

Jiang Chen’s fist slammed into the shield.

Bang!

The pressure from the fist caused the shield to emit a sharp crack! The wolf fangs that made up the wolf shield actually began to fragment, and the engraved runes vanished like shoed flies.

“What?” Li Xin was completely flabbergasted by this. He knew very well just how tough his Gale Wolf Shield was. Forget an seventh level origin realm cultivator, not even a peak ninth level origin realm cultivator could break it with just their boxing aura. In fact, even immensely treasured weapons would be hard pressed to break through his Gale Wolf Shield.

Instinct took over in the absence of thought. Li Xin’s hands blurred through hand gestures as he hastily buffed himself with a defensive glyph. At the same time, his body twisted like a wolf in an attempt to dodge his opponent’s fist.

However, while Jiang Chen’s boxing technique appeared to be common, it obviously contained incredibly profound mysteries within it. Obviously, this punch wasn’t as simple as a one-two punch. Jiang Chen took one step forwards, drawing back his fists before unleashing a quick two strike combo on his opponent.

Crack crack crack!

Li Xin might be quick, but he wasn’t faster than Jiang Chen’s fists. The defensive barrier created by his glyph was mercilessly shattered into pieces by Jiang Chen while he desperately dodged. Jiang Chen’s fists seemed to be akin to indestructible divine weapons that prevented Li Xin from escaping his dire predicament, no matter how hard he tried to evade or defend. By now, as confident as Li Xin was, even he knew that he had drastically underestimated his opponent.

He could barely defend himself against his enemy’s fist, much less counterattack his opponent and go on the offensive. For a moment, Li Xin was filled with bitterness and regret. He was known for his outstanding offensive power. His defensive ability was passable, but they were ultimately incomparable to his stunningly powerful offensive power. However, he had been denied any opportunity to attack even once in this battle.

Defend, defend, and defend once more.

Jiang Chen obviously didn’t plan to waste too much time on this battle. He wanted to end this match as soon as possible. His technique changed slightly, and the powerful force of metal was added to his boxing aura. It was as if hundreds and thousands of swords was imbued into his fists to shatter seas and mountains.

Once again, he threw out a perfectly normal punch.

Wham!

Every defense Li Xin possessed shattered into pieces in that instant, and the punch continued to strike his chest. Just before Jiang Chen’s boxing aura entered Li Xin’s body, Jiang Chen pulled back his fist slightly and withdrew ninety percent of his strength.

Bam!

The remaining ten percent of power rammed into Li Xin’s chest. Blood spurted out of Li Xin’s mouth as he was launched sharply backwards. He was lucky Jiang Chen had been merciful. As Li Xin careened through the air, he slammed his hand into the ground, digging a trench into the arena as he tried to stop himself. After expending every ounce of his strength, he managed to reach a stop at the very edge of the arena. Another step, and he would’ve fallen off the ring. He spat out another mouthful of blood.

Li Xin stood dumbstruck at the edge of the arena with a gloomy look on his face. He was unable to immediately accept that he had just been defeated. However, when the mountain winds brushed by and caused Li Xin to shudder, he ultimately understood that his opponent had shown him mercy. If his opponent hadn't withdrawn a large portion of the strength behind the punch after it broke through his defenses, he would likely be a corpse on the floor already.

When his thoughts reached that point, Li Xin lost all courage to stay in the ring any longer. He gave Jiang Chen a deep, meaningful glance before clasping his hands and sighing, "Thank you for your mercy. I concede."

What?

Gasps of astonishment rang from beneath the stage. Was this really a member of the Great Cathedral's Sacred Wolf family? The Sacred Wolves was known to be the most warlike and competitive among the Great Cathedral's four great families! Had Li Xin truly just surrendered after being punched twice?

Chapter 654: Jiang Chen Muddies The Waters

Those watching beneath the stage thought that they had heard wrongly at first. Li Xin might not be the top genius in the Great Cathedral, but he was still a second-rate genius. He wasn't entirely subpar even compared to the first-rate geniuses of other sects. Plus, the Sacred Wolf family was famed for their ferocity. Would someone from the Sacred Wolf family really voluntarily surrender after a mere two punches from the enemy?

Most of the rounds of the various matches of this year's Grand Ceremony had been quite normal, so why did every battle involving Mu Gaoqi appear so out of the ordinary? During Mu Gaoqi's first round, the fifth rank sect disciple Feng Pao he'd gone up against had only been at the seventh level origin realm. However, Mu Gaoqi had struggled against him and looked drenched in sweat by the end of the battle.

His second round opponent, the Sacred Sword Palace's Wang Jing, was without a doubt several times stronger than Feng Pao, and the offensive power he displayed could only be described as incredibly destructive. However, when he displayed that terrifyingly strong offensive power on Jiang Chen, it seemed like a gentle breeze floating past the latter. In the end, Wang Jing was the one who'd been kicked out of the arena instead.

The third round had been even more bizarre. Li Xin was much, much stronger than Wang Jing, but this time, he didn't even have the chance to execute a move. After enduring several simple punches from Jiang Chen, Li Xin had vomited blood and surrendered voluntarily.

What on earth was going on? It was as if every opponent Mu Gaoqi fought was acting with a script.

"Do you guys understand what's going on? Why did that Li Xin surrender all of a sudden?"

"I wasn't able to get a clear look. I think it was probably because Mu Gaoqi's punches were pretty strong?"

"Who knows? I personally couldn't see what's so strong about his punches."

It was true that Jiang Chen's punches had appeared much too ordinary. It looked like a move that any true qi cultivator could execute. It didn't even look like it contained any profound mysteries behind it, much less pleasing aesthetics.

Jiang Chen ignored the gazes of astonishment from beneath the ring and slowly made his way down. He'd actually become the fastest person to move onto the next round this time. He'd taken out his opponent faster than even the sage realm geniuses. That being said, it didn't take long before the sage realm geniuses also finished their battles and walked down from their rings in a relaxed fashion.

Jiang Chen scanned the participants briefly and discovered that Myriad Domain's sects had indeed sent out all of their elites this time. The number of young sage realm geniuses he glimpsed were far greater than during the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles. "I see that some of the martial dao geniuses thought little of the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles." Jiang Chen looked on briefly as the sage realm geniuses slowly made their way down the stage. In particular, the Great Cathedral alone had sent four sage realm geniuses. They were also the four most outstanding cultivators of the Great Cathedral's four great families.

The Sacred Sword Palace was represented by three sage realm cultivators. The Dark North Sect, Walkabout Sect and Regal Pill Palace had two sage realm cultivators each.

If the Tristar Sect hadn't wallowed in degeneration, then the top sixteen spots and leading echelon of the martial competition would have been fully monopolized by sage realm geniuses. It would've been impossible for someone not of sage realm to obtain a spot. Besides the sage realm geniuses, some of the one-sided battles also began ending in succession.

Ling Bi'er for example, had been quite lucky this time. She'd managed to draw a non-fourth rank sect opponent and easily won her round. In the end, four of the Regal Pill Palace disciples easily won their matches and proceeded to the next round. However, the last Regal Pill Palace disciple, Nie Chong, was in a miserable predicament.

His opponent was the Sacred Sword Palace's number two genius, Jin Feng. This person was at peak first level sage realm, and perhaps not even Shen Qinghong would have been able to beat him in terms of pure combat power. Although Nie Chong had gone all out from the start and used all of his trump cards, he still instantly fell into a disadvantageous situation.

Jin Feng obviously had no plans to hold back either. Although he was a little wary of Nie Chong using all of his strength from the start, Nie Chong wasn't so strong that he could force Jin Feng into a fluster. As the number two genius in Sacred Sword Palace, his strength and his trump cards were all a tier better than Nie Chong's.

It was true that everyone had advised Nie Chong to forfeit if he couldn't win. But even forfeiting required an opportunity, especially when the combatant had fallen into his enemy's rhythm. Jin Feng clearly didn't plan on giving Nie Chong any such opportunity at all. He went at him with full force, obviously planning to destroy Nie Chong in one go.

Everyone on the Regal Pill Palace's side was wearing solemn looks on their faces. However, no one could interfere with an arena battle. They could only sit and watch anxiously from beneath the stage.

“Honored Master, do you have any way to protect Nie Chong?” Shen Qinghong couldn’t help but ask Elder Lian Cheng.

Elder Lian Cheng smiled wryly, “This is the martial competition of the Grand Ceremony, and there are rules in place that we must obey. If we interfere with this battle, then everyone from the sect will be disqualified from the competition. Plus, even if we ignore the consequences, the Sacred Sword Palace isn’t here just for show. They will not idly sit by.”

Shen Qinghong cast a glance at the Sacred Sword Palace’s direction. It was obvious that those of the Sacred Sword Palace were eying them. They were clearly on guard against any movement, and doing their best to nonverbally provoke them into action.

Dan Chi said in a heavy tone, “Those who are willing to bet must pay their due.”

Jiang Chen raised his head to watch the unfolding battle. He knew that Nie Chong would either die or be destroyed if this situation were to continue any further. To be frank, he wasn’t responsible for Nie Chong’s current predicament. Even if he hadn’t destroyed Wang Jing earlier, the Sacred Sword Palace still wouldn’t have shown mercy to a Regal Pill Palace disciple. At worst, his action of destroying Wang Jing had only worsened an already bad situation.

Jiang Chen cast a glance up the ring. Nie Chong was already surrounded by peril, and looked liable to falter at any moment.

While Nie Chong was extremely impulsive, he was ultimately a Regal Pill Palace disciple as well. If anything happened to him, Palace Head Dan Chi would be humiliated too.

Jiang Chen immediately sent a silent message to Long Xiaoxuan, “Brother Long, can you please help my peer over there? You don’t need to show yourself. Just interrupt that battle for a bit so he has a chance to surrender.”

Long Xiaoxuan was a true blooded dragon, and he was truly reluctant to do something as trivial as this. However, he had to admit that he had been getting along quite well with Jiang Chen recently, and Jiang Chen hadn’t summoned him much at all. Therefore, he didn’t turn down Jiang Chen’s request despite his reluctance. He simply voiced his complaints, “I’m not your nanny. I can’t believe you called me over for something like this.”

“Brother Long, I don’t have your ability to conceal yourself, do I? It is exactly because you are so capable that I ask for your help.” Jiang Chen knew Long Xiaoxuan very well. He knew that this little dragon was amenable to coaxing but not coercion. If someone were to flatter him, coax him, and praise him to the heavens, then nothing would be a problem.

As expected, Long Xiaoxuan immediately grew motivated the moment he heard Jiang Chen’s praise. The dragon race was very adept at invisibility and concealment. They could instantly transform into the size of a mustard seed and conceal themselves from the naked eye.

Of course, even without the ability to transform into the size of a mustard seed, a dragon could enfold itself within space and pass unseen.

Long Xiaoxuan shrank himself to the size of a mustard seed and flew up over the ring. It casually used a bit of strength and pushed down lightly on the middle of the ring.

Wham!

The two men who'd been caught up in a pitched battle were suddenly sent skidding backwards by an unknown power. They staggered to a halt at the edges of the arena, nearly falling off because of how off balance they were.

Nie Chong had been at the end of his rope to begin with. His valor had been the only thing that kept him going. Not only did he feel no anger at being pushed out of the battle, he even felt like a drowning person who'd suddenly risen above the water's surface.

Salvation!

As proud as Nie Chong was, he knew that this battle couldn't continue any longer. It was only a matter of time before he was destroyed by Jin Feng.

"I surrender." When Nie Chong uttered these two words, the Sacred Sword Palace disciples beneath the arena immediately started to boo and jeer.

"What the hell, how can he surrender without even putting up a fight?!"

"Is the Regal Pill Palace made up of cowards who escape from battle?"

"What trash! People like him have no right to be a part of the Grand Myriad Ceremony!"

Even Wang Han could not help but swear inwardly. He was obviously surprised by this outcome as well. He couldn't deny that Jin Feng likely wasn't strong enough to ravage Shen Qinghong, but how had he given Nie Chong, a character below the sage realm, the chance to surrender? For a moment, Wang Han almost suspected that Jin Feng was purposely butting heads with him. Yet, Jin Feng himself was also completely bewildered by this outcome.

He had completely dominated the battle just now, and was literally seconds away from destroying Nie Chong. However, a strange power that he wasn't able to resist at all had appeared out of nowhere and thrown him involuntarily to the edge of the ring. This shocking turn of events left him standing still in shock for a while before he finally came back to himself.

"Objection!" Jin Feng stared at the Regal Pill Palace beneath the stage with a furious look on his face, "Someone interfered with the battle just now!"

There were at least several hundred pairs of eyes who were watching the battle between Jin Feng and Nie Chong just now. It did look like a kind of force had pushed the duo apart while they were locked in battle earlier.

There was just one problem. All several hundred pairs of eyes had clearly seen no one interfering with the battle.

Had the Regal Pill Palace interrupted the battle?

Even if the Sacred Sword Palace hadn't been keeping a hungry eye on them, the Regal Pill Palace was still quite a distance away from the ring. Just how difficult would it be to interfere with the battle from that distance? Therefore, the referees wasn't sure how to deal with Jin Feng's objection.

Wang Jianyu was absolutely furious. His face darkened as he walked forward, “Dan Chi, the honest person does nothing underhand. If your Regal Pill Palace couldn’t bear losing, then just admit it openly. Aren’t you ashamed of interfering with a battle?”

“Right! The Sacred Sword Palace requests an investigation into the Regal Pill Palace’s interference with a battle. According to the rules, they should all be disqualified!” A Sacred Sword Palace elder hooted.

“Yes, investigate them!” Everyone else in Sacred Sword Palace began to clamor as well.

Dan Chi himself hadn’t interfered with the battle. He also knew that no one on the Regal Pill Palace’s side had interfered with the battle. So he faced the Sacred Sword Palace’s overbearing attitude fearlessly and showered them with a disdainful smile. “What did you just say, Wang Jianyu? Did you think everyone present here is blind, or is your Sacred Sword Palace simply made up of a bunch of pigs? You were all watching us with extreme prejudice. If we’d truly interfered with the battle, do you think no one here would notice? Would you have let us interfere without jumping in as well?”

Dan Chi had a clear conscience, so naturally his words were bold and confident. There were also plenty of Great Cathedral members who were dissatisfied with Sacred Sword Palace’s complaints too. This was because the Sacred Sword Palace’s claims that anyone who surrendered were cowards had stepped onto their toes too. After all, their Li Xin had just surrendered voluntarily just now.

The elder of Great Cathedral’s Sacred Wolf family had naturally questioned Li Xin about his battle earlier and knew of Mu Gaoqi showing mercy. This was why the Sacred Wolf family felt a bit of gratitude towards the Regal Pill Palace. When they heard the Sacred Sword Palace claim that those who surrendered were cowards, they couldn’t help but feel even more unhappy.

They felt gratitude for one side and disgust at the other. An elder of the Sacred Wolf Clan slammed his hands down on the table and surged to his feet. “Does the Sacred Sword Palace only know how to cause trouble without good reason? There are countless eyes who are watching this battle, and you claim that the Regal Pill Palace had interfered? I say instead it’s you putting on the act and seeking to disqualify an entire sect!”

The slander caused the aggrieved Sacred Sword Palace to feel like they’d just run headfirst into a wall.

However, upon careful thought, the elder’s statements weren’t invalid either. There were plenty of people who were present during the battle. How could nobody have noticed if the Regal Pill Palace really did interfere with the battle? This was slander from the Sacred Sword Palace!

Nine

Chapter 655: Jiang Chen Takes the Field

Wang Jianyu had always been rude and overbearing. He was the kind of person who would always make something up to justify his own wants, never mind whether he was in the right. This time, anyone who wasn’t blind could see that someone had interfered with the arena battle, and they hadn’t even bothered to hide the fact that they had. Otherwise, why would Jin Feng and Nie Chong suddenly retreat to the edges of the arena for no reason?

Thus, Wang Jianyu had proper reason to be angry this time. However, it was just as obvious that no one from the Regal Pill Palace had interfered with the arena battle. Everyone present for the battle could

bear witness to this. There were only so many people that the Regal Pill Palace had brought this time, and the cultivators who were powerful enough to interfere with the arena battle could literally be counted on one hand. They were Dan Chi, Elder Lian Cheng, and the sage realm elders. However, the fact that these people could interfere with the battle didn't mean that they could do so without being noticed. It was absolutely impossible that anyone from Regal Pill Palace could've done it. In fact, even the strongest cultivator in the Myriad Domain, Xiang Wentian, might not have been able to interfere with this arena battle without being detected.

In other words, unless a cultivator possessed the ability to create a double and send it off to a different location, as well as conceal its physical body and all signs of its presence, it was impossible that anyone could've interfered without being detected at all. Following this line of thought, there just wasn't a cultivator in the Myriad Domain who possessed such an ability.

Naturally, the Dark North Sect and especially Honored Master Tian Ming, stood on the Regal Pill Palace's side. The latter had just obtained the Longevity Pill from Regal Pill Palace after all, and was even more supportive of the Regal Pill Palace than usual.

"Ole brother Wang, the Regal Pill Palace really can't be blamed for this. How could the Regal Pill Palace possibly interfere with the battle while everyone was watching? In my opinion, we should just forget about this and move on."

The Great Cathedral had voiced their opinion. The Dark North Sect had also voiced their opinion. Obviously, the remaining Walkabout Sect wanted no part of this. The Sacred Sword Palace suddenly experienced a lonely, miserable feeling. No one seemed willing to listen to them.

Nie Chong had escaped death with inches to spare, so he was drenched in sweat from his back all the way down to the bottom of his feet. His legs were weak as he walked off the ring. Although he had fought in the ring with the determination to fight to the death, he understood that his best efforts would at best have caused Jin Feng a miniscule amount of injury. There was absolutely no way he could've taken his enemy down with him. That was why Nie Chong felt extremely relieved and fortunate to be able to withdraw from the arena intact.

When he returned to Regal Pill Palace, Shen Qinghong came over to console Nie Chong a little and give him a pat on the shoulder. But he said nothing to Nie Chong. In the same vein, Jiang Chen would naturally say nothing to Nie Chong. He had rescued Nie Chong purely for the Regal Pill Palace's sake. He wasn't trying to show goodwill towards Nie Chong.

Nie Chong might have surrendered this round, but it wouldn't be difficult for him to enter the next round. He was already at the highest possible level beneath the sage realm, and had been taken out by a sage realm expert. Therefore, even if he lost the match, he could still enter the next round as a substitute, no questions asked.

Although the bizarre scene on the arena remained a mystery, the Sacred Sword Palace still couldn't recover from their frustration. "Hear this, Regal Pill Palace! If you guys cower like a turtle for the rest of the competition, we'll wrench open those turtle shells the second we run into you on the arena!"

"Pussies! Bunch of cowards!" The Sacred Sword Palace's youngsters mocked, ridiculed and hooted at Regal Pill Palace without pause.

Shen Qinghong's face was livid. As the number one cultivator among the younger generation of Regal Pill Palace, there was no doubt that these words humiliated him greatly. On the other hand, Jun Mobai turned a deaf ear towards Sacred Sword Palace's hoots. It was as if their swearing and abuse were completely unrelated to him. Nie Chong was gritting his teeth in anger, but he was the cause of all this abuse. What could he say against them?

Ling Bi'er was a woman. Naturally, there was no way she would lower herself to trade insults against the Sacred Sword Palace's pigs. However, Jiang Chen noticed that Ling Bi'er was looking at him when he looked towards her. Jiang Chen scratched his head and flashed a rueful smile. He had to admit that it would be an immense blow to the Regal Pill Palace if he didn't say a little something in return despite being provoked by the Sacred Sword Palace like this.

He took a few slow steps forward and swept his gaze unhurriedly across the Sacred Sword Palace crowd, on their feet and hurling abuse at them. He suddenly revealed a strange smile and said, "Do you guys think we're weak just because we ignored you? Also, cut that petty act of yours and stop instigating a bunch of small fries to do your work, Wang Han. By the way, I heard that you're the number one genius in Sacred Sword Palace? I wonder if your lackeys would stop yapping if I take you out?"

Everyone's faces changed the second Jiang Chen's voice rang out. What did he mean by that? Was he openly challenging Wang Han? The other sects' interest was instantly piqued. Right now, Mu Gaoqi was the most mysterious person from the Regal Pill Palace. He was even more mysterious than Shen Qinghong. This mysterious Mu Gaoqi had actually stood up to issue an open challenge to Wang Han. Didn't this mean that a good show was brewing right around the corner?

Wang Han obviously hadn't expected this to happen either. He raised an eyebrow, his reply chilly, "What do you mean, boy? Are you trying to make a name for yourself or what?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "What if I am?" His expression and tone implied just what he thought of the number one genius of Sacred Sword Palace.

He's playing the blind man. Everyone was dumbfounded by this conversation. There was no longer any doubt that he was clashing head on against Wang Han, and 'Mu Gaoqi' was unwilling to give even an inch of ground to his opponent.

Wang Han shivered inwardly in excitement, but his curiosity was actually piqued by Jiang Chen's defiance. He stared closely at Jiang Chen and tried to figure out exactly why his opponent was so confident. Was he just pretending, or was he actually confident in his chances? Unfortunately, Wang Han didn't notice anything from Jiang Chen's face despite staring at him for a long time.

"Is there something on my face? Am I that handsome?" Jiang Chen's mouth twitched.

Shen Qinghong walked over to Jiang Chen and spoke in a soft voice, "Junior brother Mu, this Wang Han is powerful and at peak second level sage realm. Do not fall for his tricks."

Jiang Chen nodded and said, "I know what I'm doing."

A frosty look crept over Wang Han's face. He said in a low tone, "So, you want to challenge me?"

Jiang Chen laughed heartily before saying, "Challenge you? You thought too much. I simply thought it easier to cut the bullcrap with a single match, that's all."

A single match?

Everyone was stunned by this. Was Mu Gaoqi truly looking to duel Wang Han?

This was enormous news. Mu Gaoqi, a mere seventh level origin realm cultivator was trying to challenge Wang Han, a peak second level sage realm cultivator in a duel? No matter how one looked at it, this was plain suicide. Was Mu Gaoqi overconfident, or was he actually certain of his chances?

Wang Han was so angry that his expression gave way to a vicious grin. Suddenly, he lowered his voice and muttered a few words into Wang Jianyu's ears. Wang Jianyu's expression was heavy, and he observed Jiang Chen closely for a short period of time. When Jiang Chen had fought Wang Jing, he'd already thought that this Mu Gaoqi of the Regal Pill Palace wasn't ordinary. Now, the feeling that this kid was rather queer had grown even stronger.

However, Wang Han's strength was undeniable. It was simply impossible for a mere seventh level origin realm cultivator to bridge the gap between the origin and sage realm and threaten a peak second level sage realm expert. Wang Jianyu had researched every young genius in the Regal Pill Palace. Even if Mu Gaoqi was incredibly talented in pill dao, his foundation couldn't be changed. Although he seemed to have improved tremendously during these past two years, it was still impossible for him to achieve the necessary height of power required to win in such a short time. No matter how he played out the duel in his mind, Wang Han simply couldn't imagine any other outcome but his absolute victory.

After a moment's thought, Wang Jianyu nodded and immediately informed the referees of every sect, "Everyone, I am sure that you are all privy to the grievances between our two sects. Since the Regal Pill Palace is so full of hope, why don't we fulfill them by taking out their names from the lot and grouping them together as a pair? The winner of the duel can proceed to the next round. I request the referees to permit this!"

The next round would determine the top thirty two participants of the competition. It would be a bit of a shame if Mu Gaoqi was disqualified during this round. With the level of strength he had displayed so far, it was entirely possible for him to become a top thirty two contender. Meanwhile, as a sage realm genius, Wang Han was destined to become a top sixteen contender. It would be an enormous loss to either party if they were to be matched up during the second round and disqualified.

The referee committee cast a glance at the Regal Pill Palace. It was obvious that they were asking the Regal Pill Palace's intentions. If both parties were fine with this arrangement, then of course they could make an exception for this case.

Palace Head Dan Chi gave Jiang Chen a meaningful look. Then, he smiled suddenly, "If the young man himself is confident of his chances, then naturally I have no objections."

What?

Dan Chi is fine with this? Everyone almost doubted their own hearing. Wasn't this Mu Gaoqi born a high rank innate wood constitution? So why was Regal Pill Palace so indifferent about him to the point where it seemed that he was born from a stepmother? Why did they do nothing to stop him from committing suicide?

Was Dan Chi really a sect master?

There were plenty of people who actually started to pity Mu Gaoqi. In fact, they wondered if Dan Chi was intentionally throwing Mu Gaoqi under the bus. After all, Mu Gaoqi versus Wang Han, a peak second level sage realm expert, looked like suicide for Mu Gaoqi no matter how they craned their necks to look at it. It was smashing an egg against a rock.

It was true that Mu Gaoqi had performed well earlier, beating Wang Jing and forcing Li Xin to forfeit. However, those cultivators were all third rate opponents. They couldn't even be counted as second rate. At minimum, a second rate genius had to be a peak ninth level origin realm expert. none/Lb(In

Li Xin was only at the ninth level origin realm. Wang Jing was even worse at the eighth level origin realm. While a ninth level origin realm and second level sage realm seemed quite close to each other, there was in fact a huge gap between the two realms. The difference of strength was no different than that of heaven and earth.

Back then, had Shen Qinghong not risen to Wang Han's provocations when he was still at peak ninth level origin realm? He understood that that he had no right to challenge Wang Han until he reached the sage realm. If he had accepted the challenge back then, then he would've become the architect of his own death.

But now, seventh level origin realm Mu Gaoqi had actually stood up to challenge Wang Han instead of Shen Qinghong. It was impossible for the crowd not to be taken aback.

Yet, by this time, everyone had a guess that Mu Gaoqi had most likely hidden his true strength, given that he hadn't used any trump cards, or even finishing blows in his previous battles. However, despite their suspicions, no one could truly discern how powerful he was. Even someone as powerful as Wang Jiangyu wasn't able to decipher Mu Gaoqi's true level of cultivation. He was thwarted every time he attempted to peer through the veil. Mu Gaoqi had done very well to hide his true strength. On the surface, he looked just like a seventh level origin realm cultivator.

The Sacred Sword Palace was fine with the arrangement. The Regal Pill Palace was also fine with the arrangement. Naturally, no one else had any objections to this fight. After all, the point of the Grand Ceremony was to spar in martial dao. Whatever the format of the exchange might be, no one would voice an objection unless it departed from this spirit. Besides, who wouldn't want to watch a good show like this?

"Mu Gaoqi, I have to admit that I'm a little impressed by your courage. However, I have to ask, was your head caught in a door when you were a child?" Wang Han didn't bother to conceal his ridicule for Mu Gaoqi at all.

"The state of your head is far more dangerous than mine, I would think. I haven't seen anyone place the bar this high when it comes to cheapness. I slapped you once, I slapped you twice, and you're still sticking your face over for a third and fourth time. How cheap are you, really?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. He had already made up his mind to settle all the various matters with this one battle.

Jiang Chen's grievances with the Sacred Sword Palace had begun with the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles, and after so many encounters he was well and truly tired of Wang Han. Seeing that the Sacred Sword Palace was so dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, Jiang Chen thought that he might as well stand up and make an example out of Wang Han. He would destroy Wang Han and shut up the Sacred Sword Palace once and for all.

Having entered the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's forbidden area, Jiang Chen's understanding of the Divine Abyss Continent and his improvement in martial dao had exceeded beyond the paradigm of the Myriad Domain. He wasn't much interested in the Myriad Grand Ceremony itself. He was actually more curious about the Paramount Realm that came after. Therefore, it didn't matter who he faced in battle. They were all the same to him. In that case, he might as well settle all his grievances with the Sacred Sword Palace and utterly extinguish their annoying arrogance. This could also be considered as his repayment for Palace Head Dan Chi's patronage.

As expected, Jiang Chen's words caused Wang Han's face to distort greatly. He knew that this fellow had a glib tongue, but he still couldn't help the fury that erupted in his heart. "Boy, I'd like to see how much bite is behind that smelly bark of yours!"

An indifferent smile tugged on the corner of Jiang Chen's lips as he said nothing in return.

It was obvious that Wang Han was truly furious this time. He yelled, "Boy, weapons are blind in the heat of battle. Do you dare agree to a life or death match?!"

"Oh?" Jiang Chen's eyes twitched slightly, "How will that work?"

"We'll bet on the battle and be responsible for our own lives. Dare you accept this?" Wang Han tried to goad Jiang Chen into accepting his proposal.

Jiang Chen smiled leisurely, "Isn't that how it's supposed to be in the first place?"

"Hmph, the only thing I'm afraid of is you sore losers crying to us after losing the fight." Wang Han was secretly pleased to see that he'd been somewhat successfully in goading his opponent. After being ridiculed repeatedly by 'Mu Gaoqi', Wang Han's hatred for this 'Mu Gaoqi' had surpassed his hatred for Jiang Chen. This arena was the his best opportunity to grind this annoying opponent to pieces and vent his anger. Wang Han naturally didn't wish to let it slip by. He had brought up the idea of a life and death battle so that he could kill Mu Gaoqi with every justification. He wouldn't give the Regal Pill Palace anything to complain about later.

Jiang Chen was unruffled by this poorly disguised scheme. He smiled and said, "Since you're so fearless and in such a hurry to gift your life to me, what reason do I have to turn down such an opportunity?"

Those who were clueless might've been fooled by Jiang Chen's calm attitude and cool words to think that he had already ascended to sage realm. The disciples of every sect started whispering amongst themselves beneath the ring.

"What on earth is wrong with this Mu Gaoqi? I don't think he'd been this unbridled in the past, was he?"

"I know, right? I heard that he was as cowardly as a mouse in the past. Could it be that his confidence really has been boosted by his abilities?"

“Bolstered by his abilities? How high do you think his cultivation level is? Anyone can see that his cultivation is weaker than Wang Han’s. The Great Cathedral’s Xiang Qin might be the only younger generation cultivator in the entire Myriad Domain who is assuredly stronger than Wang Han. I doubt that anyone else can beat him.”

“You’re right. Just what is this Mu Gaoqi’s background? Why can’t I figure him out? This is a life and death battle. He can’t actually be a cat with nine lives, can he?”

“Eh, who knows? Let’s just watch the show. At the point, death might be the only thing that can settle the grievances between those two sects.”

While the audience was heatedly discussing things, Wang Han was staring at Regal Pill Palace’s side in an aggressive and imposing manner, “Palace Head Dan Chi, what does the Regal Pill Palace say about this duel?”

Dan Chi smiled faintly and responded, “I’m only afraid that the Sacred Sword Palace won’t take the loss gracefully.”

What? He’s afraid that Sacred Sword Palace might act like sore losers? The crowd couldn’t help but click their tongues. Palace Head Dan Chi sure knows how to catch people off guard. He can’t really be thinking that Mu Gaoqi would beat Wang Han, can he?

Does he really think that Sacred Sword Palace’s sword dao legacy is just for show?

Dan Chi didn’t care about the audience’s reaction. Instead, he cast an indifferent glance over at Wang Jianyu and said, “Wang Jianyu, if you think you can endure this loss, then do whatever you want.”

His casual words were met with a sneer from Wang Jianyu, “Dan Chi, do you actually think that your pathetic taunts can intimidate me? A life and death battle it shall be, as long as you can afford the loss!”

Dan Chi said indifferently, “Then we’re decided.”

Wang Jianyu’s heart couldn’t help but skip a beat when he saw how calm Dan Chi was. Could Regal Pill Palace really be as confident as they appeared?

The whole matter was too bizarre. Wang Jianyu couldn’t help but feel like he’d been played. However, it was impossible to turn back now that harsh words had already been traded. He wouldn’t just be making a fool out of himself, but would also humiliate the Sacred Sword Palace as well. Plus, he didn’t really think that Wang Han could lose to a cultivator who wasn’t famed for his martial dao. It was true that a high grade innate wood constitution was impressive, but that was only in terms of pill dao. Unless this talent was coupled with a unique wood based martial dao inheritance, it possessed no special advantages to speak of.

“Palace head, junior brother Mu...” Shen Qinghong looked like he wanted to say something.

Dan Chi smiled calmly, “Don’t worry, he knows his limits.”

Elder Lian Cheng hadn’t said anything for the longest time, but he was already sneering on the inside. He knows his limits? I wonder how amusing it’ll be when this show-off Mu Gaoqi is taken out by Wang Han with one strike. But of course, he kept those thoughts strictly in his mind, not revealing even a flicker on

his face. Meanwhile, Jun Mobai stared at the arena and examined Jiang Chen from afar, a thoughtful look in his eyes.

Nie Chong himself was completely puzzled by this turn of events. He had no idea where Mu Gaoqi had found the courage to agree to a life and death battle. What was the difference between this and committing suicide? But no matter how much Nie Chong looked down on Mu Gaoqi usually, he couldn't help but be impressed by him right now. An odd emotion suddenly filled his heart. Hope, hope that Mu Gaoqi would safely return from the ring.

Ling Bi'er was also staring at the arena with unblinking eyes. However, she was the only one amongst the younger generation who knew the truth. Since she knew of Jiang Chen's true strength, there was naturally nothing for her to be worried about. In fact, she was somewhat looking forward to Jiang Chen stunning everyone in the martial arts competition in one go. Wang Han was without a doubt the best stepping stone to achieve that effect!

Since both sect masters had agreed to the duel, the bet to life and death was so decided.

"Senior brother Wang, do your best! I wager that you'll take out this kid in three moves!"

"Three moves? Are you still dreaming? Crush him in one move, senior brother Wang!"

"Brat, if I were you I'd surrender right now and die a slightly better death. If you wait until senior brother Wang crushes you later, there won't even be an intact corpse left!" The Sacred Sword Palace's people hooted like a rowdy crowd, like they were about to eat someone alive.

Jiang Chen suddenly laughed loudly, "Wang Han, if you're afraid you can just tell them to join you on the stage. Aren't you embarrassed to have them cheer you on like that?"

What?

Join him on the stage? This taunt was like a pail of oil dumped into a large fire. It instantly ignited the anger of the Sacred Sword Palace disciples.

"Are you trying to die, brat?!"

"Arrogant bastard! Senior brother Wang, definitely torture this brat to death!"

"Is this crazy bastard complaining that he's lived too long?"

"Destroy him, senior brother Wang!"

Wang Han sneered as he stared darkly at Jiang Chen, "Do you hear that, boy? Are you prepared to face the Sacred Sword Palace's judgment?"

"This bullshit just doesn't end, does it? Start the fight already. I'll give you three moves." Jiang Chen frowned and crossed his arms in front of his chest, throwing an indifferent glance at Wang Han.

This action instantly re-ignited Wang Han's anger. "How dare you act so impudent even in death!" Killing intent burst out of him in waves. Since ascending into the sage realm, the frosty sword aura that Wang Han cultivated could now freeze and crack the very earth, becoming so potent as to shatter the mountains themselves. An overbearing and powerful sage aura erupted into existence, and transformed

the entire arena into a vast world of snow and ice. This powerful and unfathomable coldness was not only chilling, but also seemed capable of freezing a human's soul and consciousness.

A white mist of ice coiled around and enveloped the entire arena. No matter how powerful one's vision was, it still couldn't penetrate the delicate mist. The audience could only hear the howl and roar of the frigid wind as a bone chilling aura seeped into the surroundings. The weaker origin realm geniuses who happened to be close to the arena couldn't help but back away. It was obvious that they couldn't resist the chill that spilled over from the arena.

The frigid atmosphere was already quite shocking beyond the ring itself. No one there could help the sudden doubt that sprang up in their hearts. How could the seventh level origin realm Mu Gaoqi withstand this boundless chill?

Suddenly...

A beam of white light shot towards the sky. It seemed to connect with the nine heavens themselves, summoning the frost of the heavens. Snowflakes the size of goose feathers started to drift through the arena. Crystalline in shape and color, each snowflake was a work of art in and of itself, comparable to the most beautiful flower in the world. It was as if they could wipe away all the dirt and filth in the world.

"Mu Gaoqi, make sure you get a good taste of how weak you truly are!" Wang Han's proud laughter rang out from all corners of the ring. The domain of ice and snow suddenly blossomed, as if revealing the fangs that had been hidden in this wintry world. As the snowflakes fell, crisscrossing sword auras and countless icy sword qi lights arced madly through the air. The entire arena was filled with the flurry of snowflakes. Before long, every snowflake contained a sharp and cold sword light. The drifting snow started to whip through the air, as a true snowstorm descended upon the arena.

As the sword light continued to cut through the arena, they grew in number and speed under Wang Han's control. Soon, they formed an enormous web of sword aura that shaved away at Jiang Chen's space. Wang Han gestured, triggering a sword incantation. Upon activation, the web of sword auras contracted, sending out many silken sword threads towards Jiang Chen.

"Sword aura like silk thread that can cut through the soul and corrode bones!" This thread-like sword aura might have appeared thin, but it was in fact scarier than any thick or enormous sword aura. Not only could this sword aura cut through flesh and blood, it could also slice through a person's soul. If Jiang Chen's body was invaded by the threads, then his only future would be a pool of meat paste. His soul would be crushed into bits as well.

One had to say that a casual attack by a sage realm genius was far, far stronger than anything Wang Jing and Li Xin could bring to bear. However, the current Jiang Chen was not the Jiang Chen who had found the Sage Fledgling Grass back at Mt. Rippling Mirage. Back then, Jiang Chen had no choice but to escape into the ground when Wang Han had interfered. His fifth level origin realm abilities would not have let him win without harming the Sage Fledgling Grass.

But now? Even if Jiang Chen were to go up against Wang Jianyu himself, there was no reason for him to dodge out of the way, much less Wang Han. The instant the sword auras reached within ten meters of him, Jiang Chen abruptly exploded with golden light. The ten meters wide of golden light from the Transformation of Demons and Gods instantly burst forth from his body.

This golden light was a strong defensive wall, around fifteen meters wide at full range. Jiang Chen had only summoned 70 to 80% of its defensive power at the moment. But even then, the golden light had been combined with magnetic and metal power. Its defensive power was so strong that even Wang Jianyu himself might not be able to break through it.

Wham!

The countless streaks of sword aura that resembled like silver needles sank into the golden light.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft! Much like countless lit candles that had suddenly been hurled into water, the golden light was rife with ripples and shrill explosive noises. Yet, in the end, Jiang Chen's golden light rippled, crushed and devoured all of the needle-like sword auras instantly.

Chapter 657: Light from the Eyes Breaks Through Mystical Ice

Wang Han wouldn't have been this surprised if Jiang Chen had utilized a strong defensive talisman to devour and dispel his sword aura of silver needles. After all, all fourth rank sects had some kind of reserve of heaven defying talismans. Wang Han would never believe that Mu Gaoqi didn't have any of those in hand, since he'd dared to stand in a ring against the former. But Mu Gaoqi had used the defensive golden light from his own body to destroy Wang Han's silver needles? Wang Han found this rather difficult to accept.

His sword qi had been devious and wily, and would have penetrated even the smallest deficiency in the strongest defensive talisman. Once it seeped in like an insidious breath of air, it would drill into his opponent's body like a flesh eating bug, devouring through his opponent's flesh, blood, tendons, meridians, organs, and even consciousness! Although this move didn't count as Wang Han's great trump card, there was scarcely anyone in the younger generation of the entire Myriad Domain that could take this blow and still remain standing.

But now, an ant at seventh level origin realm had broken through his sword qi of silver needles with his own abilities? The match between Mu Gaoqi and Wang Jing suddenly flashed through Wang Han's mind. Wang Jing's surging sword qi and frothing whale king qi currents had also been easily negated by the other's defenses. Wang Han had an odd feeling in that moment. He started to truly suspect that Mu Gaoqi had some sort of treasure that defended against sharply honed attacks, resulting in his complete lack of fear when facing them.

However, Wang Han had many techniques up his sleeves. One technique's failure was far from enough to make him shrink back. On the contrary, his rage had only grown and his battle intent stoked to a higher intensity!

"Mu Gaoqi, I admit that I've underestimated you. However, you've also successfully enraged me. I'll let you understand today what a true sage realm genius is!" Wang Han advanced on his opponent. His approach embodied the very essence of a gaunt and ice gripped mountain. He seemed the source of all the wintry air in the world, causing the temperature around the arena to take a steep plunge. The snowstorm raged even more fiercely as it transformed into a true blizzard. Crystalline snow fell in biting sheets as the ring vanished from view. The cruel and endless world of snow and ice expanded to become a glacial kingdom in an instant.

The ring had already been covered by this snowy world, and as Wang Han continued to release his frost energy, his control over this icy land suddenly exploded. He seemed capable of freezing the very air in one's lungs, trapping all living beings in coffins of their own frozen flesh.

Whoosh!

A stark silver light burst into the skies behind him, streaking through the sky...

Then another...

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

The silver lights crossed in mid air, coalescing to become enormously thick white chains that enclosed the arena. *no ve-13/1n*

"This move again?" Jiang Chen scoffed inwardly, but noticed upon closer inspection that the movement of these silver air currents was still different from the space slicing method that Wang Jing had deployed. At the very least, the nature of the air current was different, and it seemed that Wang Han's ice currents were several levels stronger. However, Jiang Chen's ascension to the sage realm had exponentially increased his strength. Even air currents twice or threefold stronger than these wouldn't be enough to hold him. Wang Han's frosted air currents were far from sufficient.

"Mu Gaoqi, let's see how you struggle out of my locks of mystical ice!" These interlocking air currents of mystical ice was the strongest sage realm technique that Wang Han could call upon. Not only were they frighteningly cold, they were also terrifyingly flexible. The power of extreme cold would decrease an opponent's speed and freeze their body's operations, even their very consciousness! This was one of Wang Han's trump cards.

Wang Han's gaze was cold as he inspected the layers of intersecting mystical ice. When he concluded that he hadn't left any dead corners at all, his confidence immediately exploded, certain in the knowledge that his opponent was a fish in a barrel. His opponent was now prey that he could tear into as much as he pleased. He gave a long whistle and grasped the air. A longsword materialized between his hands. Overflowing with the power of frost, it seemed like a blade of mystical ice that pulled out of a mountain of ice. It glowed with a mysterious white light, as solemnly dignified as the embodiment of the frozen wind that blows from the depths of a glacial hell.

He lifted the blade into the air and an awe-inspiring figure of an ancient demon-god coalesced above it. Its arms were raised high as it became one with the sword of mystical ice, hovering atop Jiang Chen's head.

"Tell me, kid, do you want to be sliced... or diced?" Wang Han's laugh and tone betrayed his mindset, certain in his superiority and about to toy with his food.

Yet, Jiang Chen smiled as a hint of pity flashed through his eyes. He suddenly felt that Wang Han was rather pathetic. Even though he'd cultivated to second level sage realm, his only way of displaying his abilities was to trample the geniuses around him. Yet, such a genius was nothing more than a frog at the bottom of the well known as the Myriad Domain. No matter how he hopped, he would never be able to hop out of the well. As his thoughts reached that point, Jiang Chen spoke up, his tone cool and indifferent. "Wang Han, if all the so-called top geniuses of the Myriad Domain only know how to preen

themselves like you, then you all will become the tragedy of the Myriad Domain. Since your arrogance seems to know no bounds, let me show that delusional confidence of yours what reality looks like!”

Jiang Chen’s eyes widened, as his eyes burst forth with golden light. God’s Eye was like a bright sun behind his eyes, lighting up the entire ring. Two fountains formed within his eyes as he activated the Evil Golden Eye as well, adding metallic power to it. The golden light obliterated the silver restraints in the air, exuding a terrifying killing intent. Like the unstoppable tide of a cavalry charge, the golden light tore through everything in its path.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft!

The skies, full of currents of extreme cold, shrieked as each and every air current was ripped to shreds by the golden light. It shone forth like a conquering army, shredding the blizzard that had raged in the arena. The ring once again appeared from beneath the snow. All this, from just his eyes!

What?

Wang Han was struck dumb, as was everyone watching from beneath the ring. The ring had been obscured by the descent of a icy world, and everyone had imagined various grisly scenarios as flashes of silver light danced inside. They couldn’t help but feel nervous for Mu Gaoqi as their imaginations conjured up increasingly morbid scenes under Wang Han’s savage blows.

But they’d never imagined—

They hadn’t even the time to finish taking in a breath when the golden light had exploded out from the ring, and annihilate the ice-sealed world of snow. ‘Mu Gaoqi’ stood as he had from the beginning, his arms crossed in front of him, not having changed an iota from beginning to end. The audience hadn’t even seen how he’d made his move. All they’d seen was the golden light suppressing the white light, destroying the world of snow in an instant.

“Everyone look! His eyes...”

“Right, right, there seems to be golden flecks in his eyes!”

Jiang Chen hadn’t completely retracted his eye technique yet, a detail that made the audience abruptly understand what had happened.

“It’s an eye art!”

“What a frightening art! To think Mu Gaoqi hid himself so deeply!”

It wasn’t rare to train in eye arts in the world of martial dao, and it wasn’t enough to suspect Mu Gaoqi’s true identity. After all, Jiang Chen hadn’t fought with many people in the Myriad Domain with his eye arts, so there weren’t that many people who knew of his skill in them. Apart from Palace Head Dan Chi knowing of the Evil Golden Eye, no one else had been able to glean any hints from it.

Wang Han’s power of mystical ice could numb his opponent’s nerves, slow them, freeze their circulation and eventually even their consciousness. Jiang Chen’s Evil Golden Eye could do the same thing, except Wang Han froze his opponents, and Jiang Chen turned his into metal. It was a good thing that Wang Han had swift reflexes. When the Evil Golden Eye swept through him, his consciousness suddenly trembled

and he hastily closed his eyes. He leaped back, evading the quick intrusion from Jiang Chen's Evil Golden Eye.

"This kid moves fast." Jiang Chen laughed softly inside.

Having two of his major moves thwarted, Wang Han was now quite dejected. He raised his longsword again and began to coalesce the figure once more. Without a word, he slashed down angrily with the momentum of splitting apart Mt. Hua [1].

The very air trembled as he brought his sword down, as both sides of the blade froze the air around it. Two walls of mystical ice six meters wide also came hurtling towards Jiang Chen. They sealed off his escape routes to either side as the light from the longsword hurtled down from above. It was well thought out, trapping him in place. Even underground was no longer safe as the sword would hew open the earth to get to him.

Everyone sucked in a breath when they saw this stunning strike. This blow encompassed the strongest profound mysteries of the blade that Wang Han possessed. It was a guaranteed, fatal blow that didn't allow Jiang Chen a millimeter of distance to dodge.

It was at this moment that Jiang Chen made his move. He lifted his arm slightly as he focused his energy to a small ball of light on his right index finger, one that sparkled with the deep hue of the galaxy.

"Slash!" Jiang Chen suddenly cut the air with his index finger, his speed so fast it was as if he was a ghost. The fourth technique of the Supernova Point—Galaxy Slash!

Even Cao Jin had been wary of the strength behind this multitude of slashes, much less a mere Wang Han!

Suddenly—

Crackcrackcrackcrack. Cracks spiderwebbed across the walls of ice as the walls groaned in protest.

An explosive bang rang out in the next instant as they collapsed into fragments of ice. However, the entire process had taken too long; Wang Han's fatal blow had already arrived directly above Jiang Chen's head

"Die, kid!" Wang Han leered. He'd given up on his mindset of toying with Jiang Chen. Multiple trump cards of his had been destroyed almost effortlessly. His only mission now was to kill Jiang Chen, by any means he could.

The blade cleaved through the air, the earth, through space itself. The audience gasped beneath the stage. They all knew that Mu Gaoqi had the golden light to protect himself with, but the blade was mere moments away from bisecting him. There was no time for the light to activate!

It was at this time that Mu Gaoqi up on the stage did something that no one would've imagined in a thousand years. One hand lifted into the air, fingers splayed out wide; it was almost like... he'd raised it to catch the sword!

"What?! He's going to use his hand to block the sword?"

"Oh no, Mu Gaoqi was overconfident in the end!"

“I’m afraid this blow will cut him into two!”

Many sighed; they’d felt that Mu Gaoqi had already demonstrated the raw ability to contend with Wang Han after successfully breaking through two of his moves in a row. But who would’ve thought that he would be so brash this time as to wish to catch Wang Han’s blade with his bare hand? Wasn’t this just asking for death?

The westernmost mountain of the Five Great Mountains of China and has a long history of religious significance.

Chapter 658: We All Have Trump Cards, But I’m Still Stronger Than You

The same thing done by different people would obviously result in different outcomes. Not even Xiang Qin, the most outstanding cultivator amongst the younger generation of the Myriad Domain, would dare try to grasp this sword barehanded. However, the only exception in the Myriad Domain was Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen extended a hand as the golden light around his palm abruptly brightened.

Plonk!

The body of the longsword of mystical ice landed solidly in his palm. A dull bang echoed around the arena, and Jiang Chen’s palm remained perfectly unharmed from the strike. Wang Han’s expression, on the other hand, abruptly changed as he drew upon his strength repeatedly in an attempt to pull his sword free from Jiang Chen’s grasp.

However, no matter how hard he tried, his sword didn’t move an inch. “How... how is this possible?” Even if his opponent’s was made out of metal and stone, there would still be some sparks, right? So what on earth was Mu Gaoqi’s palm made of?

“Isn’t this Mu Gaoqi a little too overpowered?”

“He caught the sword with his bare hand. Not even Xiang Qin would be able to do such a thing, would he?”

“The most unbelievable part is that he didn’t look hurt in the least. In fact, Wang Han’s the one who’s trying to pull away.”

Over on the Regal Pill Palace’s side, Palace Head Dan Chi was the only one who looked perfectly cool and collected in face of this outcome. Even Elder Lian Cheng’s well-built form trembled as he blurted out disbelievingly, “P-Palace Head... what on earth is going on?”

Shen Qinghong was even more surprised. Since when had the honest and introverted Mu Gaoqi that he knew of become this powerful? Not only had he tried to capture Wang Han’s sword with his bare hand, he’d actually succeeded in the attempt!

Nie Chong’s face was more or less the same as Shen Qinghong’s, filled with astonishment. Even the eyes of a cool beauty like Ling Bi’er were sparkling like stars. She looked overjoyed at this turn of events. She knew that Jiang Chen had improved tremendously, but she hadn’t expected him to be this powerful. Jun

Mobai was observing the battle happening in the ring with an unfathomable expression, his eyes carefully evaluating the scene. However, he too was absolutely shocked by Jiang Chen's power.

Dan Chi smiled calmly and said, "It is exactly because the world of martial dao is full of miracles that it is so attractive to all of us."

He sounded a bit like a show-off, but no one could deny the truth of his words right now. Mu Gaoqi's performance was, in every sense of the word, a miracle. In fact, it was the kind of miracle that no one'd had the audacity to imagine.

In complete contrast to the Regal Pill Palace's completely delighted mood, the Sacred Sword Palace was utterly stunned by this. Wang Jianyu's eyes betrayed his deep shock and bewilderment. Nevertheless, he had enough presence of mind to remind, "Wang Han, do not underestimate your opponent."

Wang Jianyu was a formidable man. He sensed a hint of danger and unrest from this battle. He hadn't expected an obscure cultivator like Mu Gaoqi to display such a ferocious level of combat power out of nowhere. He had to admit that Mu Gaoqi was absolutely capable of battling Wang Han on equal footing. In fact, the Regal Pill Palace disciple possessed enough strength to threaten Wang Han's very life! That was why he reminded Wang Han to not underestimate his opponent.

"Sect Master, this Mu Gaoqi..." Those of Sacred Sword Palace voiced their doubts.

Wang Jianyu's eyes were dark with meaning, "This boy possesses unfathomable strength. If Wang Han isn't careful, he may very well lose against Mu Gaoqi."

"What?!" Everyone in Sacred Sword Palace was absolutely flabbergasted at those words. In their eyes, their eldest senior brother was renowned throughout the Sacred Sword Palace and absolutely invincible. How could they even entertain the thought that he would lose? And to an obscure boy from the Regal Pill Palace no less? For a moment, no one in the Sacred Sword Palace could accept this statement at face value. Jin Feng couldn't help but ask, "Sect Master, just what martial dao does Mu Gaoqi practice?"

Wang Jianyu sighed, "I don't know either. In fact, I suspect that his martial arts legacy fundamentally exceeds the Regal Pill Palace's level."

"I believe in eldest senior brother!"

"Yeah, eldest senior brother still has a lot of trump cards. I believe that he'll definitely win out over the enemy."

"We support the eldest senior brother! Destroy the Regal Pill Palace, eldest senior brother!"

Above the arena, Wang Han had unsuccessfully tried thrice to yank his sword from Jiang Chen's grasp. His surprise only grew with each attempt.

"What tricks have you used, brat?" Wang Han suddenly felt like he couldn't see through his opponent, even now. A formidable eye art, a formidable finger ability, and a formidable one-handed blade blocking technique. The diverse skills that Mu Gaoqi had displayed in the ring was worlds apart from the Regal Pill Palace disciple Mu Gaoqi that Wang Han remembered.

Had he been hiding his true strength all this time, pretending to be a pig so he could eat the tiger? When Wang Han thought about this, he couldn't help but tremble in anger. You want to hide your true strength, is it? In that case I'll beat you into a real pig!

With a step, he thrust his sword forwards instead of pulling it back to himself. Jiang Chen let out a laugh and twisted the sword, slipping it from Wang Han's grip and into his hands. He smiled casually, "How nice of you to gift me this sword."

Wang Han's fury erupted. It wasn't as if he had another choice. He had thrust the sword forward in an attempt to catch his enemy unawares, but he didn't think that his opponent would be on guard against it as well. Now, it really did look like he'd simply handed the sword to his opponent's hands. His opponent's taunts made him feel even more humiliated by this failed attempt.

"Gift? You first need to be alive to accept it!" Wang Han's fury had reached new heights. He unclenched his fist, and summoned a scroll into his palm. As the scroll rolled open, three balls of snowy white light rolled off its surface. The three balls of light hit the ground and expanded into three creatures, each at least ten meters tall. When the glow died, three white-haired Giant Icebears appeared.

Howl! Howl! Howl!

The Icebears raised their arms to the sky and let out earth-shattering roars. They sounded so loud and intimidating that the world itself seemed to cower before their might. The entire arena shook along with the roars.

Dongdongdong!

All three Giant Icebears brimmed with tremendous power, all at the level of the mortal sage realm. This turn of events caused a soft murmur of shock to begin from beneath the arena. The three ferocious and cruel Icebears were thick-limbed, bloodthirsty and terrifying. Their attack stance alone would probably cause the consciousness of weaker people to collapse on the spot. It was absolutely terrifying.

"Are those... Sealed True Saint Beasts?"

"Three true saint beasts at the level of mortal sage realm. What a favored disciple!"

"Oh no, oh no. Mu Gaoqi was a rare dark horse, but it looks like he's going to be suppressed entirely from here on."

"He still has time to concede defeat."

"Yeah, no matter how powerful he might be, can he really withstand the combined attack of three true saint beasts and a Wang Han? No matter how powerful he might be, there's no way he can fight one versus four."

Everyone's opinions turned from anticipation to the depths of pessimism in an instant. But although they were in awe of Wang Han's methods, they were also slightly dissatisfied with the path he was taking. After all, this was a duel, a one-on-one fight. This had just devalued the battle from a competition of ability to a competition of wealth. Wang Han was the number one genius of Sacred Sword Palace, but rather than fighting his enemy in single combat, he had chosen to employ such an

dishonorable method instead. While summoning helpers this way didn't count as breaking the rules, it was ultimately an unfair fight.

Everyone's breathing on Regal Pill Palace's side grew rapid. Ling Bi'er especially was feeling a sudden wave of regret for encouraging Jiang Chen to stand up for the Regal Pill Palace. Earlier, the reason she had been so expectant was because she was sure that Jiang Chen had the ability to fight Wang Han. However, she never imagined that Wang Han would use a dirty trump card like this. Any one of these three Giant Icebears were as strong as Wang Han in terms of offensive ability. In fact, their defensive power might even be stronger than Wang Han. Jiang Chen's predicament immediately caused Ling Bi'er's heart to thump rapidly. She almost gave in to her impulse and asked Jiang Chen to give up the match. However, she knew that Jiang Chen would never forfeit after he entered a fight.

"What do we do, Palace Head? This Wang Han is absolutely despicable!" Shen Qinghong squeezed his words through gritted teeth.

For a moment, Palace Head Dan Chi wasn't sure what to do. He knew that Jiang Chen was strong, but he wasn't sure if Jiang Chen could withstand a trial like this. "Gaoqi, be careful! Just do what you can." Palace Head Dan Chi reminded him. He didn't say it openly, but he was in fact granting Jiang Chen the right to concede the battle. If Jiang Chen admitted defeat now, Dan Chi wouldn't blame him in the slightest. However, he had obviously underestimated Jiang Chen's determination.

Jiang Chen smiled calmly upon hearing his advice, and turned to look at Wang Han, "What do you mean by this?"

Wang Han laughed and said, "What do I mean? Do you really not understand?"

"You plan to win by numbers?" Jiang Chen frowned.

"So what if I am? Do the rules say that I can't do this?" Wang Han was extremely pleased with himself. It didn't matter what method he used as long as he could defeat his opponent. In fact, this was precisely the outcome he wished to see. The more Jiang Chen acted this way, the more he thought that Jiang Chen was afraid.

"Do the rules allow this? Is it fine to win by numbers?" Jiang Chen glanced at the audience, but didn't see any judges objecting to this state of affairs. He nodded slightly and looked back at Wang Han, who was feeling supremely proud at himself, "Let's see who has the bigger army then."

Jiang Chen's hands flickered, as one golden light after another fell from his hands.

Taptaptap.

Golden prayer beads clattered as they landed on the floor. Like golden beans, they bounced on the ring's floor. A flash of golden light later, the six beans disappeared to reveal six golden armored soldiers. They looked majestic, and they were all at the level of mortal sage realm.

The audience went crazy. Every new development seemed crazier than the previous, keeping their attention transfixed on the battle. Their hearts and emotions rose and fell again and again like a wild rollercoaster.

There had just been too many surprises in this battle. First, Mu Gaoqi had used his eye art to break through the locks of mystical ice. Then, he'd used his finger to shatter Wang Han's walls of ice. They'd barely gotten over that when he used his bare hand to catch Wang Han's sword. Finally, Wang Han summoned three Giant Icebears at the mortal sage realm level in an attempt to win by numbers and regain the initiative.

However, before he could convert this initiative into any sort of advantage at all, Mu Gaoqi had surprised everyone again and summoned six golden armored soldiers of his own. None of those soldiers were in any way weaker than the three giant bears. How could they not be entertained by these non-stop surprises?

"One of them hid beasts in his scroll, and the other scattered beans that transformed into soldiers. Amazing! This is truly amazing! They truly are the top geniuses of the Myriad Domain."

"Tsk tsk, these bean soldiers are just too incredible. What on earth has Mu Gaoqi gone through to procure such a thing?"

"I can't believe this is happening. Everyone's underestimated the Regal Pill Palace. Mu Gaoqi is obviously gunning for first place in the rankings!"

For a time, the audiences were filled with conflicted emotions. Envy, jealousy, admiration and longing roiled in a unrelenting war in their hearts...

Chapter 659: The Utter Domination of Wang Han

Even the Regal Pill Palace's Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Lian Cheng were filled with sudden emotion, to say nothing of anyone else. Palace Head Dan Chi was mainly sighing over the fact that Jiang Chen was indeed truly worthy of Elder Shun's high regard. There was no doubt that Jiang Chen was going to become a star in one brilliant stroke today. This strengthened Palace Head Dan Chi's intentions to keep Jiang Chen in the Regal Pill Palace and pursue Elder Shun's path. If Elder Shun returns in the future, I'll cast all considerations of face aside and beg him to take me as his disciple. I don't care even if I'm just a nominal disciple.

By now, Dan Chi could almost say with certainty that Elder Shun was an emperor realm expert, or even a Titled Great Emperor! Meanwhile, Elder Lian Cheng was feeling very jealous. He could never imagine that the personal disciple Elder Yun Nie cared for so greatly would possess such wondrous martial dao talent too.

Seriously, what the hell? Is my position as the hallmaster of the Hall of Might just for show? This Mu Gaoqi, if he was this strong in the first place, why did he go to Elder Yun Nie and ask to be his disciple and not mine? The more Elder Lian Cheng ruminated, the more sullen he became.

Shen Qinghong and the others were completely numb. They had been utterly shellshocked by Mu Gaoqi's almost endless pool of skills. Shen Qinghong suddenly discovered that Mu Gaoqi might very well replace Jiang Chen as the true number one genius in Regal Pill Palace. Meanwhile, for the first time in the entire Grand Ceremony, one could find disbelief in Jun Mobai's eyes. Countless questions regarding Mu Gaoqi swirled around him. Ling Bi'er trembled slightly, barely mastering her excitement.

Up in the ring, Wang Han stood, dumbfounded. How could this be? Why was this brat able to deal with any move he dished out?

“Are you cheating, Mu Gaoqi?” Wang Han gritted his teeth.

“Cheating? Isn’t winning by numbers exactly what you wished for? I’m just giving you a taste of your own medicine. It seemed only appropriate to satisfy your desires.” Jiang Chen smiled calmly. He was too lazy to bicker with Wang Han.

Wang Han couldn’t help himself anymore. A low growl turned into a full roar as madness flashed in his eyes. He snapped his fingers, and the previously still Giant Icebears burst towards Jiang Chen in a sudden charge. He was obviously trying to use their enormous bodies to crush Jiang Chen and the golden armored soldiers. However, Wang Han had obviously underestimated the combined combat strength of those soldiers. *nove(lB)1n*

Jiang Chen had summoned these golden armored soldiers from the Soldier Rosary Beads. They were refined as an imitation of human cultivators, and Jiang Chen could control these immensely strong soldiers in any way he wanted. They were completely different from the primitive Giant Icebears. Moreover, these six golden armored warriors obviously outnumbered their opponents. How would they possibly allow these giant bears to approach Jiang Chen?

The warriors paired up to pick off an Icebear. They quickly broke up the trio and gave each one a thorough beating. The Icebears might be ferocious, but they weren’t as flexible as the golden armored warriors that were built to imitate humans.

The Giant Icebears could only passively take blows as they desperately tried to hold off two soldiers each. It didn’t take long before the three giant bears were howling in pain. Wang Han’s face was livid as he watched the battle, feeling so irritated that his eyes were about to spit fire. If only he had his sword, he would’ve hacked this damnable opponent several hundred times over and minced him into meat paste.

Jiang Chen was unruffled despite the commotion. He calmly watched the lively battle. He knew that there was no way these three giant bears could hold on for long, not to mention that Jiang Chen had only summoned the six weakest units from his Soldier Rosary Beads. He could also summon the earth sage realm and sky sage realm warriors if needed.

When Wang Han saw Jiang Chen crossing his hands across his chest so leisurely, he grew even more furious. How dare you look down at me? Wang Han was so infuriated now that he threw aside any idea of holding back.

He formed a hand seal and opened his palm. Rays of cold light swirled into existence on his palm. Once they’d accumulated, he flung them into the sky where they transformed into a mountain of ice. Unsatisfied, Wang Han formed another seal, gathering more rays of cold light that he then threw into the sky. He repeated this another eight times. The rays formed another layer atop the previous layer until the mountain had a total of nine layers. Significantly taller than its first iteration, the mountain hovered imposingly between heaven and earth, and brimmed with a shocking amount of ice energy and power. It looked like it alone could hold up the sky.

Wang Han leered, "Close your eyes, Mu Gaoqi. Die content in the knowledge that you've forced me to reveal my ultimate trump card. No matter what or who, all living beings will be crushed under this nine layered ice mountain!"

Truth be told, this nine layered mountain of ice was incredibly imposing. Even those beneath the ring felt oppressed by the mountain, even they were quite far away from the battlefield. It felt like their souls were in danger of crumbling under the repeated waves. As for Wang Jianyu, he was full of smiles when he saw Wang Han summon the nine layered ice mountain.

In his mind, the outcome of the battle had been decided the instant the summon had been a success. Wang Jianyu had to admit, it was a pity that Wang Han had been forced to reveal his final trump card. He would be at a slight disadvantage when he fought for the championship at the end. But there really hadn't been any other choice. If he couldn't surpass the wall that was Mu Gaoqi, that what championship or finals was there to speak of?

Moreover, who cared if he used his trump card? Even if his main competitors saw this, they still might not necessarily be able to break through it. After all, this nine layered ice mountain was made out of the ultimate power of ice, the ultimate power of gravity and a tremendous amount of strength. Even an earth sage expert would be suppressed by this attack, much less Mu Gaoqi. Even a sky sage expert might suffer an enormous loss if they weren't careful.

"Sigh, this Wang Han is unbelievable. It's as if he has an endless amount of trump cards. This is more than a little unfair to Mu Gaoqi!"

"Yeah. There's not much glory to be earned even if he did beat Mu Gaoqi in this way!"

"Mm, he had revealed all of his trump cards. He probably doesn't stand a chance against Xiang Qin now."

"It's unfortunate that this black horse will have to retire soon. Mu Gaoqi had seriously given us too many exciting surprises."

"Don't say that. Who knows, maybe Mu Gaoqi still has a trump card? Who can say what will happen next?"

"That's true, Mu Gaoqi had given us plenty of pleasant surprises so far. Who's to say he doesn't have more beneath his sleeves?"

The audiences spiritedly discussed the battle for a time. They had even greater expectations for a continuously changing battle in the ring.

"What do we do, Palace Head? This nine layered ice mountain..."

Palace Head Dan Chi pondered and said, "This nine layered ice mountain is extraordinarily powerful. Even an earth sage expert would suffer an enormous blow if they were forced to take on an attack of that caliber. Let's just watch for now."

Right now, Dan Chi was hoping that Jiang Chen would give him another pleasant surprise. If Jiang Chen could deal with Wang Han's Giant Icebears, then he might not necessarily falter in the face of that nine layered ice mountain. As expected, Jiang Chen's eyes narrowed as he looked at Wang Han's smug face,

“Now what do we have here? Is this the grave that you’ve prepared for yourself? I have to admit that it looks pretty spectacular.”

Everyone beneath the ring felt lightheaded when they heard his words. This Mu Gaoqi sure was composed in the face of such a situation! They couldn’t believe that he could still crack a joke in this situation. Or... could it be that he still had a trump card just like the others had predicted? In that case, this battle would surely be very interesting. This battle had already risen to the level of the final match of this Grand Ceremony.

“Brat, you should rein in your tongue. I, Wang Han, guarantee that this is the last chance you’ll even have to spout nonsense! Face your doom!” Wang Han viciously brought his hand down, bringing the nine layered ice mountain to slowly descend on Jiang Chen. It was so large that as it drew closer, it looked like the sky itself was collapsing on Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, “How unfortunate. I’m afraid I’ll have to disappoint you.”

Not only did Jiang Chen not make a move to evade the enormous mountain of ice, his aura flared as his golden body grew even bigger. He grew to a twelve meter tall golden giant in an instant.

He extended a glowing hand and summoned the magnetic golden mountain. An even more majestic golden mountain appeared beneath the nine layered ice mountain.

“What is that?”

“No way! He’s practically slapping Wang Han’s face.”

“It most definitely is! Wang Han summons giant bears, he summons golden armored warriors. Wang Han summons an ice mountain, he summons a metal mountain. This is a tooth for a tooth, not giving up an inch of ground!”

“This golden mountain looks so majestic. It’s just as strong as that nine layered ice mountain!”

“Wang Han has quite met his match this time.”

“This Mu Gaoqi is truly astounding. It would seem that Regal Pill Palace is overflowing with geniuses lately.”

The audiences’ exclamations kept coming one after another. They had all been conquered by the flow of this battle. Every change in the battle’s development had taken their emotions on enormous ups and downs. As Jiang Chen’s image grew larger, just like the audience, Wang Han too nearly doubted his eyes as the magnetic golden mountain appeared. He almost thought that Jiang Chen was purposely messing with him!

Don’t tell me he has all the skills I have?

Why does this all look so ridiculous?

Wang Jianyu finally lost his cool and yelled, “Wang Han, be careful! There’s no need to keep fighting!”

Wang Jianyu was truly a sky sage realm expert. His perception of danger was extremely sensitive, and he’d immediately detected a great amount of danger from Jiang Chen. He couldn’t help but warn Wang

Han. Wang Han was not only the top genius in the Sacred Sword Palace, but also his direct grandson. If anything were to happen to Wang Han, then all of Wang Jianyu's efforts would go to waste. It was an incredibly difficult task to nurture a successor as outstanding as Wang Han.

However, Wang Han was furious when he heard Wang Jianyu's advice. Even the sect master doesn't believe I can win? Suddenly, Wang Han's irritation boiled over. He roared loudly and swung both arms down, "Die, Mu Gaoqi!"

The nine layered ice mountain crashed down fiercely on Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen didn't bat an eye as he casually waved his arm. The magnetic golden mountain turned into a beam of golden light as it shot towards the nine layered ice mountain.

The golden light broke straight through the nine layered ice mountain's first layer. Golden light flashed from within the ice mountain as it bounced around inside. The flashes continued as the ice mountain still fell through the air.

When it looked certain that Jiang Chen had no hope left, a loud rumble echoed through the air. The golden flashes winked out for a second, and abruptly exploded outward like a supernova. The nine layered mountain shattered into a million shards. Shattered ice fragments rained down on the ground, the combatants, and the stunned audience. Jiang Chen opened his palm, and the magnetic golden mountain, looking none the worse for wear, shot towards to him in a beam of golden light, gently coming to a stop in the middle of his palm.

"What other trump cards do you have, Wang Han?" Jiang Chen smiled as he stared at Wng Han. This nine layered ice mountain was Wang Han's final move. He'd never imagined that it would ever be broken by his opponent, let alone turned into fragments like an eggshell. A hint of panic finally flashed across his face.

"If you have nothing else to pull out, then I'll send you on your way!" Jiang Chen drew a slash in the air with a finger, and a terrifyingly powerful air current streaked towards Wang Han's neck. "Galaxy Slash!"

His attack was aimed at Wang Han's neck; he'd made up his mind to reap his life by beheading him.

How could Wang Jianyu possibly maintain his composure at such a moment? Without warning, he unsheathed a sword and threw it towards Jiang Chen's Galaxy Slash. At the same time, his other hand grabbed at the air, pulling Wang Han forcibly from the arena.

Chapter 660: The Sacred Sword Palace Withdraws

Although Wang Jianyu was quite a distance from the ring, he was actually capable of hauling Wang Han straight off the stage. As fast as Jiang Chen's Galaxy Slash was, he just wasn't as fast as Wang Jianyu.

As a result, Wang Han was yanked out of the way of the strike when it arrived, and the crowd erupted. Jiang Chen demonstrated immense grace and withdrew his hand seals, smiling faintly as he looked at Wang Jianyu. Without a doubt, someone would make trouble for the sect head without his prompting.

Indeed, Palace Head Dan Chi slammed his hand down on the table and rose to his feet. "What do you mean by this, Wang Jianyu? This is a battle to the life and death, how dare you interfere?!"

“Ole brother Wang, you’ve certainly gone against the rules here.” Xiang Wentian didn’t remain silent either.

Honored Master Tian Ming also shook his head, “Quite inappropriate, quite.”

Even Wei Wuying of the Walkabout Sect shook his head with a sigh, “In a fight to the death, the heavens hold our fates. Sect Head Wang, your actions were in defiance of the rules.”

Wang Jianyu was coldly irate in the face of such criticism from all sides and snorted, “I know I broke the rules; I don’t need your reminders. My Sacred Sword Palace will withdraw from the Myriad Grand Ceremony here and now. Will that do now?”

According to the rules, interfering in a battle would cause any results from that sect to be negated. Thus, it was a wise decision for Wang Jianyu to immediately withdraw from the Grand Ceremony. None of the others had anything to say after this quick and resolute decision. Wang Jianyu however, glared at Dan Chi. “Dan Chi, I’m quite curious, is this Mu Gaoqi truly a disciple of your Regal Pill Palace?”

Dan Chi smiled faintly, “What, are you trotting out that act again? Speak frankly if you can’t afford to lose; don’t waste everyone’s time.”

Wang Jianyu laughed heartily, “Are you feeling guilty? I only asked you one question; what are you so nervous for?”

Jiang Chen had also made his way off the ring by now and flicked a glance at Wang Jianyu. “Sect Head Wang, are you going to suspect me of being of the demon tribe? Do you want to test my bloodline?”

This was a tried and true ploy that the Sacred Sword Palace liked to use. Wang Jianyu snorted coldly, “Don’t get too cocky, you brat. Dare you say that your inheritance comes from the Regal Pill Palace? Pardon my ignorance, but when did the Regal Pill Palace’s heritage rise to such heights?”

“They were fortuitous occurrences I gained when adventuring outside; what about them? Do I have to report to your Sacred Sword Palace about everything I run into?”

Wang Jianyu had nothing to say to that. Jiang Chen flicked a glance at Wang Han, “Wang Han, you used up quite a bit of your luck this time. But scrabbling for your life like this today, what kind of breakthroughs do you think you’ll have anymore in martial dao? Today’s shame will haunt you forever, and you’ll wish you’d died here. At least you would’ve died with honor.”

There were always winners and losers when it came to sparring, and they wouldn’t necessarily become internal demons. But to Wang Han, today’s events were very likely to become one of his internal demons. After all, regardless of how the battle’s flow had seemingly flipped between the two, Jiang Chen had used an almost humiliating manner to trample and crush Wang Han’s confidence. This kind of internal demon was the most difficult to remove, because the opponent had already burrowed into your soul and thoroughly defeated you.

Wang Jianyu’s aura burst out when he saw Jiang Chen provoking Wang Han. He almost wanted to crush the Regal Pill Palace disciple right where he stood.

Dan Chi stepped in front of Jiang Chen, his voice turning cold, “Wang Jianyu, do you want to take the field yourself?”

The heavyweights of the two sects started to slip into battle stances.

“This is nonsense!” Xiang Wentian roared loudly. “Wang Jianyu, your Sacred Sword Palace has already been eliminated. Don’t try to stir the pot anymore, unless you fancy becoming the public enemy of the Myriad Domain!”

“Right, don’t be too extreme in your methods Ole Brother Wang. Leave some space so that we can all meet each other happily in the future.”

Wang Jianyu was livid as a look of hate crossed his face. He glared at all those in the Regal Pill Palace before huffily backing into a corner, not leaving just yet. Even if they had been eliminated, he didn’t want to leave like this. Wang Han’s defeat had left everyone in the Sacred Sword Palace hanging their heads. In particular, Jing Feng was rather dejected. As the second genius in the Sacred Sword Palace, he’d had certain expectations for this time’s Myriad Grand Ceremony. His goal had been to make it into the top five and thus be able to enter the third and final level of the Paramount Realm. But because of Wang Han and the sect head, all of the Sacred Sword Palace disciples’ efforts had been in vain. Their scores had been erased and they were kicked out of the ceremony. However, although he didn’t want to accept this state of affairs and was dejected, he didn’t dare show it. Wang Han was Wang Jianyu’s direct descendent, his grandson, after all. He would never sit by and watch Wang Han be killed.

The breathtaking battle had treated the audience to a fantastic show, and they all felt thrilled by what they’d watched. The second round had been delayed for this match, and now that it was over, the matches resumed. However, after Wang Han and Mu Gaoqi’s battle, everyone’s appetites had been enlarged and although there were many exciting fights in the second round, they just weren’t as appealing in comparison.

The various strategists of each sect however, still continuously lectured their disciples. Those disciples had all been eliminated earlier, but each match was a rare learning opportunity. All of the sect heads wished for their disciples to benefit immensely from this occasion, so they didn’t find the second round boring at all. As exciting and a good show as a classic match-up was, it wasn’t possible for every single fight to be so thrilling and stunning!

The top thirty two were determined after the day’s second round, and the list of names from the Sacred Sword Palace was erased, making room for those behind them. Thus, when the list of the top 32 came out, there were suddenly three fewer sage realm geniuses, leaving only ten. But folks naturally didn’t view Mu Gaoqi as a seventh level origin realm genius anymore. They placed him in the ranks of the sage realm geniuses.

The Regal Pill Palace’s luck still held in the second round, with all five advancing. Although Nie Chong had surrendered, he’d made it in on virtue of the now smaller list and was lucky in his second round, helping him make it into the top 32. Even with the Sacred Sword Palace out for the count in the top 32, the list was still mostly made of fourth rank sect disciples. The Great Cathedral occupied ten spots, Dark North Sect seven, Walkabout Sect five, and Regal Pill Palace five. This accounted for twenty seven spots out of the thirty two, and if it wasn’t for the Sacred Sword Palace being eliminated, none of the fifth rank sects would have had the chance to advance at all.

The third round would thin the competition from 32 to 16, and Jiang Chen had been listed as a seeded opponent this round, making for three seeds from the Regal Pill Palace. Ling Bi'er had drawn a ninth level origin realm opponent, and Nie Chong unluckily picked another sage realm cultivator, finally halting his movement upwards.

The battles were becoming fiercer and fiercer, but no further dark horses appeared. All eleven sage realm geniuses, including Jiang Chen, had advanced into the top sixteen. The remaining five spots went to two from the Great Cathedral, Ling Bi'er of the Regal Pill Palace, one from the Walkabout Sect, and one from the Dark North Sect. There was no one not from a fourth rank sect, and this result surprised no one. Making it into the top 16 was a mission that a fifth rank sect couldn't complete, unless they too had a sage realm genius.

The day was just about over after three rounds of matches, and the remainder would conclude on the third day. The spots for the Paramount Realm would also be divided up on the third day. According to the rules, all those on the rankings would be able to enter the Paramount Realm. Candidates would be able to enter different levels according to their rankings. There were nine levels to the Paramount Realm, which was the reason for the further division of candidates.

That night, Jiang Chen sat cross legged in front of Dan Chi, the two communicating with their consciousness.

"Was I too impulsive today, Palace Head?" Jiang Chen wasn't actually apologetic, but just wanted to ask this out of respect for Dan Chi.

Dan Chi was very pleased with Jiang Chen's performance as he smiled, "I like your impulsiveness. Cultivators should not hide and cower in the shadows when it's time to fight for glory. You did well today, and stamped the mark of our sect on the scene."

"As long as it doesn't impact the palace head's overall plans," Jiang Chen sighed.

"Overall plans?" Palace Head Dan Chi's voice also sank when he spoke of the greater picture. "The Myriad Domain is currently a pile of loose sand. What greater picture is there to speak of? There are only contests over pride. The Sacred Sword Palace acts like a rabid dog, constantly provoking others and inciting trouble. Jiang Chen, truth be told, I really have a forbidding feeling."

Jiang Chen also had a foreboding premonition, but no one knew what would happen in the future. They could only take one step at a time. Jiang Chen was only here for the Paramount Realm in any case, and he would make it in no matter what. When he saw that Jiang Chen wasn't speaking, Palace Head Dan Chi suddenly sighed, "Jiang Chen, if something happens in the Myriad Grand Ceremony this time and you have a way out, you should leave first. Don't pay any attention to us."

"Palace Head, why say this?"

"There's nothing for it. If such a devastating disaster really does arrive, the more you wish to save everyone, the more you might be caught up in it. I only hope that you leave with the Regal Pill Palace's spirit and maintain a wisp of hope for us. When the day comes..."

Jiang Chen hastily stopped the palace head, "No more, Palace Head. Even if something happens, I trust that we'll have a way to handle it."

Dan Chi smiled and felt his spirits lift, “Right, I believe you. You and I both aren’t the sort to live premature lives. We are both highly blessed. I believe that the foundations of the Regal Pill Palace won’t fall in my hands!”

Dan Chi was a man of great vision after all. Although he was momentarily in a lull, he quickly adjusted his emotions. “Right, Jiang Chen, I have a mission for you after you enter the Paramount Realm.”

“What mission?” Jiang Chen was curious.

“Keep an eye on Jun Mobai,” Dan Chi responded faintly.

“Keep an eye on him? Why?” Jiang Chen started.

“I suspect that he’s a spy.” Grave solemnity was apparent even in Dan Chi’s silent message.

“What? Jun Mobai, a spy?”

“Indeed. One of our elder brought him back when he was a baby, and I’ve observed him silently for a while. Although he covers it up well, there’s a seventy to eighty percent certainty that he’s an undercover agent.” Although Dan Chi’s tone wasn’t one hundred percent certain, there wasn’t much hesitation in it. This matter was practically truth in his heart.