

Three Realms 701

Chapter 701: Bounty, Pursuit

When they charged into the core area, the crowd's footsteps abruptly came to a stop. Everyone's expression turned extremely dark and stiff in an instant. They couldn't stop their hearts from spasming. A few cowardly fighters couldn't help but look at the sky. They were afraid that Gong Wuji, high up in the sky, would suddenly go berserk and slaughter them all.

Indeed, they'd seen Gong Qi.

More accurately speaking, they saw a partial Gong Qi.

Gong Qi was hung on a tree and swaying slightly in midair. He was barely alive, and his back was engraved with words that had been made by a sharp weapon. "Gong Wuji, this is but the start of my revenge for the destruction of my sect. Neither the Eternal Celestial Capital nor the Great Scarlet Mid Region will escape Jiang Chen's wrath!"

These bloody words appeared incredibly sinister as they were engraved directly into Gong Qi's back. To add onto that, his arms had been completely hacked off, and his meridians and dantian completely shattered as well. Even if he were to survive, he would just be trash. In any case, he was dead for sure with those kinds of injuries. Gong Wuji's bitter screams rained down from the sky. He immediately landed beside Gong Qi and held his grandson in his arms. The burning fury in his eyes looked like they could reduce the entire Myriad Domain to ashes. "Jiang Chen!!"

Gong Wuji threw his head back and howled, his unbridled anger and killing intent sweeping through the entire area and causing passing birds and land animals to explode into masses of bloody gore. The landscape in a two kilometer radius around him were completely decimated. Gong Qi's two bodyguards were also absolutely terrified by this revelation. They were Gong Qi's bodyguards, but they had failed to protect him and allowed him to fall into Jiang Chen's hands, even if it had been a consequence that Gong Qi had brought unto himself. It was undeniable that they had neglected their duties as Gong Qi's bodyguards. Therefore, they were infinitely afraid that Gong Wuji would sacrifice them as an offering to Gong Qi.

Gong Wuji finally lifted his head once more a long time later. His entire being felt so sharp like a blade that the people around him couldn't help but pull away from him.

"Come over, you two," Gong Wuji beckoned the bodyguards. "Take Qi'er's body away and bury it properly. One of the Gong family cannot be exposed like this," Gong Wuji's tone was heavy and dark.

He absolutely wouldn't mind slaughtering everyone here in exchange for his grandson's life, if that could've revived him. But he also knew that venting his anger on others by killing them would only make him an even greater laughingstock than he already was in the eyes of those present. Right now, the most important thing to do was to hunt down Jiang Chen. Now that Gong Qi was gone, they no longer needed to fear for his safety. They would be able to chase and hunt down Jiang Chen without any concerns.

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Jiang Chen had kept his promise. He had left plenty of Divine Befuddlement Miasma antidotes around the borders of Myriad Domain. If that Zhang Ole Third could leave the Myriad Domain alive and reach the borders, it was entirely possible for him to find the antidotes. Once he was done with all this, Jiang Chen took a deep look back at the Myriad Domain before exchanging a glance with Huang'er, "Let's go."

The two figures drew extremely long shadows beneath the sunset before they gradually vanished along an ancient path. Although Jiang Chen was racked with worry after learning that Gou Yu and the others had been sold to the Veluriyam Capital, he was at least comforted by the knowledge that their lives weren't at risk. Even though he had figured out their rough locations, Jiang Chen had decided to visit the Great Scarlet Mid Region first. He had no doubts that the news he learned was genuine. He was just afraid that not everyone had been traded to the Veluriyam Capital, and that someone might have been left behind.

After all, the Regal Pill Palace were not lacking in geniuses. Mu Gaoqi was one such example. There was also Elder Yun Nie. He might not be a pill king, but his talent in pills was absolutely deserving of a seat in Great Scarlet Mid Region. At the same time, he was hoping to test his luck and see if he could find the missing sect head Dan Chi, Ling Bi'er and more.

The road to the Great Scarlet Mid Region didn't really count as a detour. If someone wanted to make their way to the Veluriyam Capital from the Myriad Domain, passing through the Great Scarlet Mid Region was a must. One would also have to go through another two lower regions and one middle more region after crossing through the Great Scarlet Mid Region, before they could enter Upper Eight Regions territory.

They would also have to pass through the territory of quite a number of factions after entering Upper Eight Regions territory before they could finally enter the Veluriyam Capital. Even if they were to encounter no obstacles whatsoever along the way, the trip would still take a minimum of several months time. Plus, he didn't doubt for a second that they would encounter countless hardships and obstacles on their way to the Veluriyam Capital.

There were countless wandering cultivators in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Both Huang'er and Jiang Chen had disguised themselves as such, and although they encountered countless roadblocks and were questioned many times along the way, they had unique methods that could suppress the ripples of their internal energy. This kept any outsider from figuring out their true strength. And so, they calmly entered into the capital of Great Scarlet Mid Region as earth origin realm cultivators.

The Great Scarlet Mid Region was absolutely bustling with activity. Even the old Myriad Empire couldn't compare to the current Great Scarlet Mid Region. Except, Jiang Chen couldn't appreciate the Great Scarlet Mid Region's prosperity at all. If saving his sect members from the Veluriyam Capital wasn't top priority, he would've caused rivers of blood to flow in the streets from the slaughter of these citizens. However, his rationality warned him that this was not the best time to take revenge. The Great Scarlet Mid Region royal household alone contained an unknown number of experts.

After entering the capital, the duo frequented many taverns and tea shops. These were the easiest places to learn about the latest news. On this day, the duo appeared at the empire's most reputable tavern, the Dragon & Phoenix. Of course, they couldn't just book a private room outright with their current disguises. It so happened that there were many southern guests making a trip to the north

gathered in the lobby, and so Jiang Chen requested a table that was close to the edge of the room and ordered some dishes.

The great hall was noisy and bustling with activity. He extended his consciousness a little and continuously gathered information from the surrounding tables. But although some of these people were talking about Myriad Domain, the content of their discussion were rather unimportant as it was of lower importance. Jiang Chen didn't rush things. He continued to extend his consciousness slowly. Suddenly, he locked his consciousness onto a particular table. There were four of them, and they were all dressed like sect disciples.

"Hehe, the commotion is quite big this time. Thank goodness we haven't been sent to the Regal Pill Palace, or it would've been a great misfortune."

"I know, right? Everyone thought at first that the Regal Pill Palace was rich and easy pickings. They were all lamenting their bad luck for not getting a chance to tag along. Now it would seem that it was a deadly task, hahaha."

Jiang Chen had figured out that these four people were probably part of a sect that had assigned to attack Myriad Domain. It was just that their target hadn't been the Regal Pill Palace.

"That's why they say risk and return are two sides of the same coin. If the Regal Pill Palace didn't have an unknown factor like Jiang Chen, they would've been a rich mark to rob. Did you see what we got from the Walkabout Sect? They had nothing but a bunch of poisonous stuff."

"Hehe, speaking of the Walkabout Sect, I heard that the poison Jiang Chen used to ambush the Thunder Note Hall and the Great Roc Sect was none other than the Walkabout Sect's Spirit Restraint Powder."

"Yeah, I heard about that too. How weird, I thought Jiang Chen is a Regal Pill Palace disciple, so how did he know how to use Walkabout Sect poison?"

"Who knows? C'mon, drink up!"

Jiang Chen sneered inwardly. He wasn't lacking in Spirit Restraint Powders alright. He'd picked up quite a bit of this poison back when he killed the Walkabout Sect's elder Wei Wudao and confiscated his space ring, and had obtained even more from killing Wei Qing. He'd used up most of it after he had set up the traps and attacked the Thunder Note Hall and the Great Roc Sect in that offensive barrage. However, Jiang Chen could easily mass produce more given enough time when it came to poison.

"The Thunder Note Hall and the Great Roc Sect is so out of luck this time. I heard that a holy king's grandson of the Eternal Celestial Capital died, alarming even our Great Scarlet Emperor himself. This definitely is one hell of an incident."

"Yeah. But weird, how did the Eternal Celestial Capital get involved?"

Jiang Chen was first surprised by this dialogue, then realized immediately after that the Eternal Celestial Capital had kept its involvement hidden in the beginning, but the truth had gradually spilled out into the open as their clash against the Ninesuns Sky Sect had gradually escalated. It would appear that the Eternal Celestial Capital had fully emerged into the open now.

"I guess the situation of the Divine Abyss Continent is just so mysterious. Sigh, in the end a fourth rank sect like us is just too weak."

"Yeah, we're nothing in front of a first rank sect."

"I heard that the Great Scarlet Mid Region's bounty is about to come out today. I'm so curious! What kind of bounty do you think the empire will give out this time?"

Bounty? Jiang Chen immediately understood that the bounty must be directed at him.

"Hehe, everyone, I heard that this Jiang Chen may very well come to our empire in an attempt to save his sect members. Who knows, maybe we could use this chance to rise to the top!"

"Stop dreaming already! Just us alone? Jiang Chen killed even Ding Rong of the Thunder Note Hall!"

"Even a holy king of the Eternal Celestial Capital was played like a fool, much less Ding Rong! There's no way people like us could deal with that Jiang Chen."

"Ssh! Be quiet. Do you want to die, talking about a holy king of the Eternal Celestial Capital like that?"

The group of people immediately fell silent and drowned themselves in alcohol. They obviously all thought that their conversation had gone a little overboard and decided not to gossip any further.

It was at this moment a couple of energetic-looking cultivators rushed into the restaurant. The leader of the group yelled loudly, "Boss, bring us a couple of jugs of alcohol, quickly!"

"Haha, boss, the empire is definitely sparing no effort to capture Jiang Chen. Any person who manages to capture that guy would be granted the title of duke, a thousand acres of land, and awarded the Great Scarlet Patriot Order. They would also gain five million sage spirit stones, three thousand Heroic Sage Pills, one sky rank spirit herb and the chance to found a sect and be ruler of his own territory in the Great Scarlet Mid Region."

"Boss, this is our chance as the Ghost Cave Five!"

These noisy wandering cultivators were actually quite powerful. One of them was actually at earth sage realm while the remaining four were all at mortal sage realm. The leader of the group was a one-eyed man. He gripped his wine cup and said slowly, "I didn't think that we would encounter such a great opportunity travelling to the Great Scarlet Mid Region this time. Considering all the years we've spent wandering around the lands, it is probably time to find a good place to settle. Are you guys sure you want to do this?" The one-eyed boss looked at his brothers and asked for their opinions with a serious expression on his face. *nOre/13(In*

"Let's do it!"

"Of course we're doing it, the one who freaking thinks otherwise is a coward!"

"This is a rare opportunity for wandering cultivators like us. We must make this gamble no matter what!"

Wandering cultivators had always been more rough and direct type. When the table of sect disciples heard of their discussion, they all walked over and asked, "Hey brothers, has the bounty came out already?"

Chapter 702: New Journey, Veluriyam Capital

These wandering cultivators were all fierce people. They instinctively wanted to yell at the newcomers who'd butted in on their conversation. However, when they noticed that the strangers' attire seemed to identify them as sect disciples from the Great Scarlet Mid Region, they forcefully swallowed the abuses that had formed on the tip of their tongues. The one-eyed man cast the strangers a glance, then nodded indifferently. "It just did. That's what everyone outside is talking about at the moment. Haven't you heard?"

The sect disciples weren't as strong as the wandering cultivators, nor did they have any wish to cause unnecessary trouble. As such, they quickly stepped outside to check the bounty notice for themselves. Jiang Chen wasn't surprised to learn about the bounty on his head. After so many conflicts, he and the Great Scarlet Mid Region were at complete odds with one another. It was only natural that the Great Scarlet Empire had issued a bounty for his head.

The crowd that was checking out the bounty notice was enormous. Thankfully, the empire had stuck similar notices in several different places. As he was just one of the many people checking out the bounty notice, Jiang Chen didn't stand out at all. He sneered inwardly as he stared at the bounty notice. A bounty on my head, eh? He wasn't afraid of this sort of thing in the slightest. It was true that a bounty such as this would draw many desperate cultivators like hungry wolves. However, despite this, Jiang Chen wouldn't be afraid of trash like them, no matter how many of them there were.

Jiang Chen returned to the Dragon & Phoenix once he'd checked out the bounty notice on him. He'd only just returned when he noticed a group of people walking down from the second floor. A young man dressed in oriental clothing stood in the center of the group, while bodyguards stood closeby both in front of and behind him. The bodyguards were obviously on high alert as they eyed their surroundings with hawk-like eyes. Besides the young man's group, there was also another group of people, who were obviously of high status as well. The head of that group was actually a first level emperor realm cultivator.

"I'm really sorry, Elder Gui. I would've saved him for you if you'd notified me earlier. It's this prince's fault for not noticing that he possessed an innate wood constitution of high order." The young man in oriental clothing had called himself a 'prince'. Could it be that he was a prince of the Great Scarlet Empire?

The person next to him seemed to be called 'Elder Gui'. He had an average build, and was dressed in light blue clothing. He didn't look special at all. However, his first level emperor realm cultivation caused an aura of natural dignity and power to radiate off of him.

"Forget it. There's no point in talking about this any further since you've already sold it. It's simply unfortunate that we missed out on that innate wood constitution; it was already too late when I heard the news." Elder Gui sighed softly and looked incredibly regretful.

Even though the duo had conversed in hushed tones, Jiang Chen's consciousness was extremely powerful. He'd heard every word of what they said. An innate wood constitution of high order? Could it be that they're talking about Mu Gaoqi?

“Indeed. I might not have agreed to sell all of those people to them so quickly if they weren’t from the Veluriyam Capital. Even this prince can’t afford to offend the Veluriyam Capital, not to mention the fact that we’ve more than likely already forced all of the information out of them that we could,” The third prince explained.

Elder Gui nodded, then casually asked, “I’ve heard that you’ve obtained the recipe for a pill called the Longevity Pill. The Great Scarlet Empire is planning to gift it to the Eternal Celestial Capital, is it not?”

Eternal Celestial Capital? Jiang Chen immediately understood who this Elder Gui belonged to when he heard this. As he’d guessed earlier, the elder was a member of the Eternal Celestial Capital. It was no wonder that even the imperial prince had to speak so cautiously in front of him.

“Well... my father is in fact preparing to gift the recipe for the Longevity Pill to the Eternal Celestial Capital. However... the empire’s finances have been a little tight in recent years. As such... it would be wonderful if Elder Gui could put in a good word for us so that we can share in the Longevity Pill’s profits as well.”

Elder Gui smiled calmly and replied, “The sect master has already declared that the empire shall receive twenty percent of the total profits. Don’t worry, the higher-ups of the Eternal Celestial Capital aren’t unreasonable.”

The third prince murmured in agreement, but internally felt quite skeptical. The Great Scarlet Empire was the one who would obtain the recipe for the Longevity Pill, yet not only was the Eternal Celestial Capital taking it for free, they were also only doling out twenty percent of the total profits. How could this be anything but unreasonable? Yet despite this, he could only complain about this silently.

Meanwhile, Jiang Chen had rage had grown to towering heights as he sat at his table. The Longevity Pill was his exclusive recipe, yet these bastards were going to divide the proceeds amongst themselves! How dare these bastards talk about dividing their ill-gotten gains so openly and shamelessly in public! However, it wasn’t like it was entirely bad news. Judging from this third prince’s tone, everyone in the Regal Pill Palace had likely been sold to the Veluriyam Capital.

Jiang Chen had originally planned to inquire about details of the trade, but after a moment of careful consideration, he decided that it would be easy enough to find such a large group of people when he entered the Veluriyam Capital. He immediately withdrew his consciousness from the group and moved his gaze away from them. Now that he’d confirmed that there weren’t any Regal Pill Palace members left in the Great Scarlet Empire, he no longer had any need to eavesdrop on their conversation. On the off chance that his enemies discovered him eavesdropping, he’d simply be putting himself in danger instead.

This was the capital of the Great Scarlet Empire; if his identity were to be exposed, his movements would be greatly obstructed. Jiang Chen and Huang’er departed from the capital the next day, and headed for the Veluriyam Capital. However, he felt slightly depressed at the fact that he hadn’t been able to wreak absolute havoc and bloodshed in the capital. At the same time, the divulgence of the Longevity Pill recipe, the wood spirit spring falling into Gong Wuji’s hands, and the fact that so many of his sect members were sold to Veluriyam Capital were all simultaneously clouding his mood. Only Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie were privy to the recipe. As such, the Longevity Pill’s recipe must’ve been forced out of Elder Yun Nie. This revelation caused Jiang Chen to feel quite dejected, as he hadn’t

thought that of Elder Yun Nie as a cravenly person. Huang'er consoled him when she saw that Jiang Chen was feeling a little down, "Sir Jiang, everything will turn out alright in the end. It's better that they were sold to the Veluriyam Capital than falling into the Eternal Celestial Capital's hands."

This was also true. Since they'd been sold to the Veluriyam Capital, he still at least had some leeway to rescue them. If they'd fallen into the Eternal Celestial Capital or the Great Scarlet Mid Region's hands, then he wouldn't have had any leeway. Jiang Chen had originally wanted to exchange Gong Qi for his sect members, but unfortunately... he'd been a step too late.

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Meanwhile, Gong Wuji and his men had just returned to the capital of the Great Scarlet Empire. Almost all of the important figures in the Great Scarlet Mid Region were present for this meeting. Amongst them were three third-rank sect heads and even some important royalty from the Great Scarlet Empire. While it was undeniable that these third-rank sect heads were at least equal to or stronger than Gong Wuji, they didn't dare to act rudely in front of him. Even though Gong Wuji was only at the fourth level emperor realm, he held a prominent level of status as the holy king of the Eternal Celestial Capital; he represented the Eternal Celestial Capital itself! As such, even the emperor of the Great Scarlet Mid Region had to show him some respect. **noVe/lB**.In

"Holy King Gong, we're also much aggrieved by this news. No one could've imagined that a mere Regal Pill Palace could produce such an irregular cultivator. However, we've already issued bounty notices for him throughout the region. We'll capture him even if he grows wings," The Great Scarlet emperor spoke with a heavy tone.

Gong Wuji nodded indifferently. "I appreciate your kindness. However, while it's true that the bounty notice can draw the public's passion, I doubt that they'll actually be able to hunt Jiang Chen down. That bastard is as cunning as a fox; he was able to slip through my grasp even when I'd laid down flawless plans."

"He can run for now, but he can't run forever. Someone will definitely keep an eye on him the moment he appears, and when that happens, the news will quickly pass from one person to the next. It will be extremely difficult for him to escape when that happens."

Gong Wuji nodded noncommittally, then spread open a map. His gaze swivelled back and forth between the Myriad Domain and the Veluriyam Capital. "This kid must be heading towards the Veluriyam Capital. How many routes are there between the Myriad Domain and the Veluriyam Capital?"

Everyone started looking when they heard his question. In the end, several main routes were identified.

"Here, here, and here," Gong Wuji noted and circled several important places on the map. "If Jiang Chen plans to escape, he'll eventually consume whatever resources he has on him. Once he's used up all of his resources, he'll have to resupply somewhere, not to mention the fact that items such as high rank escape talismans can't be reused. Furthermore, the Regal Pill Palace doesn't have the ability to create high rank escape talismans. As such, he'll have to go to one of these places if he wants to buy more. That's why we must pay close attention to these few important points."

Gong Wuji's analysis was quite logical. Everyone nodded in agreement with his assessment. Suddenly, a person stood up and smiled. "Master Gong, this prince has a plan in mind. May I offer my thoughts?"

This man was none other than the third prince of the Great Scarlet Empire that Jiang Chen had seen earlier at the Dragon & Phoenix. “Hehe, please allow me to introduce myself first: My name is Yan Wanyu,” The third prince hastily introduced himself when he saw the doubt and evaluative look that had appeared in Gong Wuji’s eyes.

The Great Scarlet Emperor hastily added, “Holy King Gong, this is one of the princes of the Great Scarlet Empire, and is our third son. He’s always been resourceful, and is the one who was responsible for the interrogation of the Regal Pill Palace’s captives.”

Gong Wuji couldn’t help but feel a bit of discomfort when he heard about the captives, even though it had been a while. If the Great Scarlet Empire hadn’t sold the captives to the Veluriyam Capital, his grandson Gong Qi might yet still be alive. Of course, hypothetical situations like these held no meaning whatsoever, but the knot in his heart couldn’t be resolved that easily. That was why his expression had become a lot frostier when he heard that Yan Wanyu was the person responsible for the captives. In fact, Yan Wanyu had stood up to present his plan exactly because he knew about the entire situation and was worried that Gong Wuji might hold a grudge towards him; he was trying to make up for this mistake.

Seeing Gong Wuji’s noncommittal response, Yan Wanyu continued brazenly, “Considering how much Jiang Chen values the relationships of his sect, I believe that we can use this to target his weakness. Didn’t we fail to capture the Regal Pill Palace’s sect head, Dan Chi? We could absolutely pretend that we’ve captured Dan Chi at one of the strongholds, then lure Jiang Chen into a trap. According to the intelligence I’ve acquired, Jiang Chen owes a debt of gratitude to this Dan Chi. There’s no way that he wouldn’t come and save his sect head when he hears that Dan Chi is in captivity.”

This suggestion caused everyone’s eyes to light up. It was true that they might not necessarily be able to capture Jiang Chen if they simply tried to track him. It would be akin to searching for a needle in a haystack. As such, it would be far easier to make him come to them.

This was both a covert and an overt scheme. This scheme was doable so long as Jiang Chen and Dan Chi hadn’t met each other yet. The only flaw in the plan was that they had no idea if Jiang Chen and Dan Chi had met up yet. Regardless of this, it was still worth a shot. Logically speaking, Jiang Chen and Dan Chi shouldn’t have run into each other yet. Considering their current circumstances, it wouldn’t be easy for them to meet up since they’d split up. With everywhere being under strict lockdown, it wasn’t too likely that they’d coincidentally met up either. A message glyph could only work within a certain range, and only if they both knew each other’s locations. If they were located at two different corners of the world, it would be impossible for them to communicate with each other.

Shout out to Killer Nights, a supernatural filled novel of a guy trying to figure out what’s going on in the city’s prostitution quarters!

Chapter 703: Dan Chi Captured?

Jiang Cheng and Huang’er were far away from the Great Scarlet Mid Region half a year later. But because of the bounty notice issued by the Great Scarlet Empire, there were fanatic bounty hunters hunting for them everywhere they went, even though they were a long distance away from the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Therefore, Jiang Chen and Huang’er weren’t able to make their way to the

Veluriyam Capital at top speed. That being said, since they were dressed as origin realm wandering cultivators, they weren't suspected even though they were questioned a few of times along the way.

Since he had a sufficient amount of Heroic Sage Pills, Jiang Chen achieved a breakthrough once more during this time. He'd successfully ascended to the third level sage realm. Since Jiang Chen didn't wish to attract any attention while he was undergoing his ascension, he activated a formation and completed the ascension inside of it. Huang'er watched over Jiang Chen outside the formation. The entire process thankfully progressed without a hitch.

After associating with each other for half a year, the duo quite enjoyed journeying in each other's company. In fact, their joint flute and zither performance of the 'Ethereal Soothing Melody' had practically reached perfection. Compared to the time she'd spent at the Regal Pill Palace, Huang'er found that she didn't dislike this kind of wandering life at all. In fact, she reveled in it. Talking with Jiang Chen had also given her a better understanding of this mysterious young man. Thanks to the unparalleled memories he possessed from his past life, he spoke and acted with superior knowledge and manner, even though he didn't try to show it off on purpose. Huang'er had to hide her surprise many times because of it.

The duo arrived at a small city today. Jiang Chen's bounty notice was hung on the city gates, and Jiang Chen had long since become numb to this fact. Their plan had originally been to avoid densely populated cities as much as they could. They couldn't skip this small city, however. If they did, they would be forced to make even more wandering detours, not to mention that they wanted to enter a densely populated area and receive word of the latest news. After entering the city, they'd just found a tavern to sit down at when they heard a group of wandering cultivators chatting with each other with great gusto.

"Have you heard? The Regal Pill Palace's palace head, Dan Chi was caught not long ago!"

"Pfft, that's old news already. It's been seven to eight days since then, hasn't it been?"

"Hehe, the Myriad Domain's fate is truly tragic. I wonder how they'd offended a first rank sect in the first place. This was literally an annihilation."

"What do you mean tragic? In the world of martial dao, the laws of the jungle apply. A first rank sect is powerful, and the Myriad Domain is weak. It's only natural that they are devoured by the powerful."

"You're right, but as wandering cultivators we may be even worse off than the Myriad Domain if we somehow provoked the ire of a powerful force too."

Jiang Chen was shocked when he heard the news. Palace Head Dan Chi was captured? The shocking news struck Jiang Chen so hard that his mind almost went completely blank. Out of everyone in the Regal Pill Palace, the person he respected the most was Palace Head Dan Chi. Whether the news of his capture was real or not, Jiang Chen still couldn't help but be worried about it.

Huang'er hurriedly sent him a silent message, "Sir Jiang, rumors are just rumors. They cannot be believed until they're proven to be the truth."

Huang'er's voice sounded ever so soothing and warm like the sun in March. Jiang Chen fought back his anxiety and continued to listen in on the conversation.

“What’s the point of capturing Palace Head Dan Chi? I hear that the Eternal Celestial Capital and Great Scarlet Mid Region fear Jiang Chen the most, not Dan Chi.”

“Yeah, I heard that Jiang Chen killed a lot of Great Scarlet Mid Region people. In fact, he even killed off the grandson of a holy king in the Eternal Celestial Capital. This Jiang Chen is truly monstrous. I can’t believe that an insignificant fourth rank sect disciple in Myriad Domain can be this insane! If this person was picked up and nurtured by another first rank sect, then it is only a matter of time before he becomes a huge threat.”

“Forget it all. All this has nothing to do with us. Let’s not bother ourselves with those things and drink instead.”

What annoyed Jiang Chen was that they’d stopped talking about the subject at this point. The pause caused his heart to itch restlessly. An idea came to his mind as he lifted his cup and walked up to the group of wandering cultivators, “Good day, fellow brothers.”

Jiang Chen was dressed like a wandering cultivator, and his apparent strength was lesser than the rest of them. This was why those cultivators didn’t look guarded or wary when he approached them.

“Mm? What do you want?” the wandering cultivators looked at him and asked.

“Oh, I accidentally overheard you talking about the Regal Pill Palace. Dan Chi being caught is an excellent opportunity, don’t you think?” Jiang Chen purposely spoke with an exaggerated tone.

“What opportunity? Go scam somewhere else and stop bothering us from drinking!” a wandering cultivator said impatiently.

“Look, if Dan Chi is captured, then Jiang Chen will definitely come out to rescue him, right? If he shows up, and we work together to take down that Jiang Chen... the bounty is amazing, you know! The mere thought makes me itch with anticipation,” Jiang Chen said with a rapt look on his face.

“Pfft!” A cultivator immediately spat out the mouthful of alcohol in his mouth when he heard Jiang Chen’s words.

“Hahaha!” The rest of the cultivators also laughed loudly after they were stunned for an instant after hearing Jiang Chen’s words. One of them was even slapping his thighs repeatedly while laughing, looking he had just heard the funniest joke in the world.

“What are you laughing at, brothers?” Jiang Chen scratched his head like a simple-minded fool.

It took a long while before these people finally managed to restrain their laughter and stare at Jiang Chen with a teasing look on their faces. “Look, younger brother, I’m not trying to insult you, but do you think that you’re more capable than the Eternal Celestial Capital? Do you think that you’re more capable than those sects in the Great Scarlet Mid Region? These are people who’ve failed to capture Jiang Chen. What makes you think that you’ll succeed?”

Jiang Chen chuckled and said, “What if we get lucky?”

“Alright, if you think that your luck is so good, why don’t you go give it a try instead of bothering us? You’re a pretty funny guy though, so here’s a toast for making us laugh,” The wandering cultivator raised

his cup casually. He obviously wasn't trying to raise a toast to Jiang Chen. He was just mocking the younger man.

"So, erm... may I know where that Dan Chi is being held, brothers?" This was the information Jiang Chen was really trying to fish for.

"He's at Tai-ah City, Swordland Mid Region. Dan Chi will be executed publicly in a month. Alright, go now. I hope that your lucky stars explode for you and help you catch Jiang Chen in one go!" The man's reply was completely perfunctory. It appeared to be a blessing, but the thick sarcasm behind the words couldn't be ignored.

Tai-ah City, the Swordland Mid Region. Jiang Chen wasn't unfamiliar with this place because they had to pass through the city on their way to the Veluriyam Capital. Plus, it wasn't too far away from where they were right now.

Jiang Chen chuckled and said, "Tai-ah City? That isn't too far away from here. Is it really there? I guess I'll have to go there and test my luck then. Even if I failed, it would be nice to watch from sidelines."

"Alright go away now, I've already told you all you need to know. Now scram and stop pulling me away from my drink."

Jiang Chen continued to radiate with delight when he returned to his seat, but the rock in his chest only grew heavier and heavier. The wandering cultivator's explanation was right and proper, and as the saying went, there is no smoke without fire. It was very likely that this rumor was not unfounded. Jiang Chen and Huang'er drank gloomily for a while before they finally left.

"Sir Jiang, Tai-ah City is not really far away here. If we are quick, then we will reach there in half a month's time. We can head over there and take a look."

He absolutely had to make a trip. He owed Palace Head Dan Chi his patronage, and his life had been greatly influenced thanks to the palace head taking him away from that miniscule sixteen kingdoms alliance to the Regal Pill Palace. Jiang Chen hadn't been able to do anything when the Regal Pill Palace collapsed. He was already feeling a lot of regret about this matter already, so it was literally impossible for him to ignore even the rumor that Palace Head Dan Chi might be in trouble.

"We must check out whether or not it's the truth." Jiang Chen nodded, "However, the Eternal Celestial Capital has always been good at plotting. This rumor may not necessarily be real. If I have to guess, it might be a trap to lure me to them." Jiang Chen didn't have a one track mind. He quickly deduced many possible scenarios of what might have truly happened.

Huang'er had actually thought of this too. It was just that she knew just how much Jiang Chen respected Palace Head Dan Chi. While Dan Chi might not be Jiang Chen's master, the duo shared a relationship that was akin to a master-disciple or even friends. She had no reason to object to Jiang Chen's desires in this matter.

"If it's fake, then it must be a trap. They know about your relationship with Palace Head Dan Chi, and that you'll show up because you're unwilling to bet on the off chance they do have him in captivity."

"Mm. Tai-ah City will be very interesting when the time comes. However, I don't mind teaching them a lesson again if this really is just bait."

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Jiang Chen and Huang'er entered Tai-ah City twenty days later. The duo acted with great caution, and decided to split up and enter Tai-ah City separately before meeting up later inside the city. This way, they would be less likely to make a mistake when questioned at the city gates.

Seeing that Jiang Chen was alone and a wandering cultivator, the guards didn't question him too closely before letting him in. However, Jiang Chen also knew that Tai-ah City only looked calm on the surface. He was sure that many undercurrents were running deep inside it. Entering Tai-ah City was easy, but exiting it would be an entirely different matter.

Jiang Chen had just walked through the city gates when a few groups of people suddenly emerged from the roadside and blocked his path completely. Jiang Chen's heart sank as he stood still and extended his consciousness.

"Relax, brother, relax!"

"Brother, I see that you're alone on your journey. Would you like to join us?"

"Brother, ignore what he says and join our team instead. We have three sage realm cultivators in our team!"

"Blech, what's the use of just three sage realm cultivators? My boss is an earth sage realm cultivator, brother. I think you should join us instead."

"Don't listen to them and join us! Our team is evenly split in strength so no rewards will be monopolized by a sage realm cultivator even if we do catch Jiang Chen."

Jiang Chen relaxed when he'd listened up to this point. He wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry on the inside. As it turned out, these people were the groups of wandering cultivators who were chasing after him. A simple sweep of his consciousness revealed that there were at least seven to eight teams of cultivators among these people. In fact, there were a lot more teams further ahead. It was just that those teams consisted of stronger members who thought little of his 'earth origin realm' level strength.

He'd never thought that someone would want him even though he had disguised himself as an earth origin realm expert. It would seem that this bounty truly was the latest fad amongst wandering cultivators right now.

"Everyone, I am weak and of average combat ability. I'm afraid that I would only drag you all down if I join your team," Jiang Chen made up a random excuse. However, he had obviously underestimated these people's passion.

"Come on, aren't most of us at origin realm too? We wandering cultivators are different from those big sects in that we rely on our numbers! United we stand, I say!"

"Yeah, even ants can kill an elephant if there are enough of them, plus it's not like Jiang Chen has three heads and six arms. If five aren't enough, then twenty should be enough, right? If twenty aren't enough, then 30, 50 or even 100 people should do the job, right?"

Jiang Chen was going to turn them down again, but in the end he recalled something and didn't turn them down completely, "Slowly, slowly. Allow me some time to think, okay?"

He suddenly thought that joining a team of wandering cultivators was an excellent way to cover up his tracks. Plus, considering how many wandering cultivators there were, he might be able to listen in on some useful intelligence from them.

Chapter 704: The Tyrannical Eternal Celestial Capital

After meeting up with Huang'er through use of the secret signal they'd established, the two were actually in no hurry to join a team. They'd realized these teams were everywhere in Tai-ah City. There were at least a couple thousand of them floating about the city in various groups.

"Money can make even ghosts turn millstones. What a true saying," Jiang Chen sighed secretly, despite knowing that these so-called wandering cultivators posed no threat to him at all. Jiang Chen couldn't help but feel some remorse after seeing a single bounty notice cause such a chaotic scene. Birds die for food while men die for wealth.

Resources were scarce in the world of martial dao, a fact particularly obvious for wandering cultivators. That's why bounty notices from major sects or empires always caused an immense stir within the Divine Abyss Continent. Things had been no exception this time.

Only ten days remained until the announced date of Dan Chi's public execution. Although Jiang Chen was nervous, he couldn't ask around carelessly. The numerous wandering cultivators each had their own opinion, and the news they offered were often hearsay at best. Jiang Chen and Huang'er joined a team later on in order to avoid drawing attention.

There were only eight people in the team before they joined. The leader was a burly middle-aged man called Ke Ding, a cultivator at the third level of the sage realm who claimed to have come from the Upper Eight Regions.

"These two brothers, you chose to join my team out of the so many out there. I'm not one for flowery speeches but I promise you this—if we do get the reward, you will not be mistreated!" This Ke Ding laughed in a forthright manner, seemingly a role model of great friendship and loyalty. Jiang Chen however, didn't take the declaration very seriously. These were people willing to sell their lives for bounty—he found it hard to believe they had any sort of bottom line.

"Boss Ke, we trust you!" the other wandering cultivators declared heatedly.

Jiang Chen also replied with a smile, "We greatly admire Boss Ke's strength. By the way, since there are so many wandering cultivator groups here, do we have a specific plan?"

"They have a point, boss. There are too many groups out there. It's an absolute mess. It'll be hard for us to get any benefits without an organized plan."

Ke Ding chuckled, "There's no way to form a plan with all this happening. Let's just play it by ear."

Clamorous noises traveled in from the outskirts as they were talking. "All wandering cultivator groups listen up! Have your leaders immediately come forth to to be interrogated!"

Interrogation?

There were tens of thousands of wandering cultivators on site, and a large number of teams as well. The entire area erupted in hisses and boos after hearing this tyrannical voice. It was evident that it was a great humiliation for them to be interrogated.

“Silence!” A thunderous voice reverberated through the air. A powerful emperor realm aura swiftly crashed down on the whole plaza.

All the wandering cultivators immediately quieted down in the face of this suppression. It was almost as if the area had been cleared out—not a sound was to be heard.

An emperor realm cultivator! From looks of this aura, it was evident that the cultivator wasn't any old initial emperor realm cultivator. He was at least mid emperor realm, anywhere between fourth and sixth level emperor realm. Row after row of uniformed sect disciples poured into seal off the plaza from all sides. It was clear that one batch was from the Eternal Celestial Capital, while many more were from the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Although this area was under the jurisdiction of the Swordland Mid Region, it was obvious that the latter was on good terms for the Eternal Celestial Capital. Not only had it not imposed restrictions on the forces from the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region, but it'd also sent a large force to assist them. **noVe/IB**.In

A weighty atmosphere suddenly descended upon the plaza. Although they were inwardly upset, the team captains all walked up to be interrogated. Jiang Chen and Huang'er remained in their group. They weren't very apprehensive despite encountering such a large scale of operations.

There were tens of thousands of wandering cultivators. It would be a difficult task to obtain any useful information by interrogating them all. Moreover, the two felt confident that they hadn't any flaws in their cover. Ke Ding returned after a while, followed by some disciples from the Eternal Celestial Capital. He addressed Jiang Chen and Huang'er, “I'm truly sorry, brothers. All cultivators who showed up in pairs are to be interrogated to the Eternal Celestial Capital. Apologies, but our group no longer needs you two.”

This Ke Ding had been brimming with loyalty and friendship just a short while ago. But now, he was falling out as readily as flipping a book. He couldn't wait to kick them out, as if they were gods of pestilence.

“Step out,” the leader of the group of disciples said while sizing them up. Jiang Chen secretly surged with killing intent, but managed to forcefully suppress it. He glanced indifferently at Ke Ding as he walked out of the group but didn't say anything. Fortunately, there were no shortage of wandering cultivators who had come in pairs. Even still, the nearly tens of thousands of cultivators had been cut down to something slightly over a thousand after calling out all the pairs. The thousand strong group was then gathered together.

“Holy King Gong, this should be all of them.” A supervisor from the Eternal Celestial Capital reported respectfully. This was Jiang Chen's first time seeing Gong Wuji in half a year—the man's killing intent had grown even denser than before. It was apparent that he hadn't gotten over Gong Qi's death.

“Take them away,” Gong Wuji said nothing else. He only gestured with his hand and issued the order.

The wandering cultivators were all indignant now.

“What gives you the right to do this?!”

“We are all wandering cultivators. What grievance do we have with your Eternal Celestial Capital? What gives you the right to take us away?”

“You’ve completely failed to recognize our goodwill. We are all here to help capture Jiang Chen! What wrong have we done?”

“That’s right! Brothers, they are willing to kill a thousand in order to capture a single person! We can’t leave with them. Only death awaits otherwise!” The thousand wandering cultivators all protested together. They weren’t idiots; it was obvious that they would definitely lose a layer of skin once they were taken prisoner, if not end up dead. Jiang Chen also played along with the crowd and protested furiously.

“Be quiet!” Gong Wuji’s expression became frosty. The surrounding temperature suddenly dropped as if countless icy mountains had descended from the sky. His ice-cold gaze swept across the thousand wandering cultivators. “The reason for detaining you is that we suspect some stragglers from the Myriad Domain are in your midst. As long as you can prove yourselves innocent, I promise everyone will return safe and unharmed.”

“Hmph, why should we trust you?”

“That’s right, empty words are meaningless. Do it here if you want to interrogate us!” These wandering cultivators were unwilling to submit readily. After all, their survival was at stake. Who even knew how they would interrogate the prisoners? If the Eternal Celestial Palace resorted to extreme methods, they’d be crippled even if they managed to survive!

An emperor realm cultivator beside Gong Wuji snorted and jumped into the crowd. He single-handedly plucked out the protesters yelling the loudest and tossed them out one after another. He was like a lion capturing sheep; the victims had no ability to resist at all as he hurled them out.

Large flowers of blood blossomed wherever they landed as the victims splattered into a mess of blood and gore. The cruel method caused the hooting cultivators to quiet down in fear. Gong Wuji’s expression was cold and detached. “Who else doesn’t want to accept the situation?”

This bloody scene infuriated the wandering cultivators, but no one dared voice anything else. Some of the cultivators who hadn’t been detained stood out to persuade their arrested brethren, “Friends, this type of inspection takes place once every few days. Your lives will not be endangered as long as you have no relationship with the Myriad Domain.”

“Yes, just comply.”

Seeing that even the other wandering cultivators weren’t on their side, the morale of the thousand captives hit rock bottom.

“Move!” The sect disciples came to urge the detainees forward.

These ruthless disciples were more than enough to kill these wandering cultivators, not to mention an emperor realm cultivator like Gong Wuji. Although the prisoners were full of resentment, they could only adhere to the rules as they followed the group further into the city.

Jiang Chen was secretly shaken as he followed along with the group. Although he didn't know how things would turn out, he was certain that the methods used by the Eternal Celestial Capital would not be easily overcome. But, he still had the time to escape if he wanted to.

If he chose to stay, it might become more difficult to escape once they reached sect territory. The Eternal Celestial Capital could confine all of them by simply laying down a formation. But if he fled right now, what would become of Palace Head Dan Chi?

Jiang Chen was seriously suspecting at the moment whether everything was just a ruse set up by the Eternal Celestial Capital, and whether Dan Chi's execution was just a pretense.

As Jiang Chen was hesitating, a huge commotion stirred up ahead. An abrupt voice suddenly rang out from the front.

"A ferocious fight has broken out east of the city! Jiang Chen has appeared and is currently surrounded by a group of wandering cultivators!"

"Powerful, that Jiang Chen is so powerful! He instantly tied several hundred wandering cultivators with countless vines!"

"Fellow cultivators, let's go to their rescue!" Many voices rang out pell-mell after hearing the news as countless wandering cultivators charged frantically towards the east.

The group from the Eternal Celestial Capital all looked at Gong Wuji. He was also stunned. He'd been tricked by Jiang Chen so many times that he subconsciously felt this to be fake news. But after hearing about the countless vines, his heart started racing. He turned towards the emperor realm cultivators beside him, "Let's go take a look." However, he'd learnt from past mistakes. He left two emperor realm cultivators in charge and reminded them, "This group of people must not be allowed to escape. Bring them back and proceed with the interrogation."

After that, he flew swiftly toward the east with a group of elites. Tens of thousands of wandering cultivators were also madly making their way toward the eastern side of the city. Someone from the detained roared. "Brothers, Jiang Chen's appearance proves our innocence! Why should we follow them to be interrogated? If they can go to the eastern side of the city, why can't we?"

"That's right, let's go!"

"Let's go!" One person shouting was enough for the others to follow suit. The thousand-strong wandering cultivator group began to rebel. They immediately dispersed into the tens of thousands of other cultivators and very soon, the thousand detainees had vanished into the torrential crowd.

It was very much like a bowl of water being poured into the river. Who would be able to differentiate between the original bowl of water and the river after one surge of the waves? Thus, Jiang Chen and Huang'er easily merged into the crowd. They felt rather odd—how could a Jiang Chen have appeared out of nowhere towards the east of the city? Although he had no idea who was behind this disinformation, it had indeed helped him out. But who could be the one helping him? It would be difficult for even Palace Head Dan Chi to recognize him after he'd changed his appearance.

Chapter 705: Encountering Old Acquaintances

Jiang Chen recalled the voice he'd heard earlier, but felt it to be rather unfamiliar. It probably belonged to someone he didn't know. That being said, a person's voice could be changed. Although Jiang Chen looked like he was pushing his way out along with the bustling crowd as best he could, he eventually split away from the traffic and fell to the back of the crowd on purpose. Suddenly, he glimpsed a man and a woman standing at the city gates. These two figures caused him a great deal of shock.

The woman wasn't tall, and her countenance wasn't one that Jiang Chen recognized. However, the curve of her full breasts gave Jiang Chen a distinct sense of *deja vu*. He was further shocked when he swept his consciousness across the man and found out who they were. *Why are they here?*

He never would have imagined that he would encounter them in this place! No wonder the curve of that woman's breasts had seemed so familiar to him. She was none other than Ling Hui'er! Moreover, the man next to her was none other than Ling Hui'er and Ling Bi'er's father, Ling Su!

Ling Hui'er had disguised herself slightly, but her awe-inspiring breasts were still eye-catching. Jiang Chen naturally wasn't unfamiliar with them. Although he'd never observed Ling Hui'er's wonderful breasts on purpose, the woman herself had once daringly grabbed his hand and pushed it onto her own breasts. This incident had left a deep imprint in Jiang Chen's mind. That was why it was almost impossible for him to mistake Ling Hui'er's curves. Ling Su himself hadn't changed much in temperament, although he had gone to the effort of altering his appearance too. Jiang Chen naturally recognized him with a single glance.

Jiang Chen had always thought that the father and daughter duo had been killed back when the Regal Pill Palace had been destroyed. If not dead, he'd thought that they'd at least been captured and sold to the Veluriyam Capital already. How had they possibly turned up here?

For a while, Jiang Chen almost suspected that this was yet another ploy by the Eternal Celestial Capital. However, upon closer inspection, he discovered that the presence they projected was absolutely genuine. He immediately used his consciousness to send them a message, "Junior sister Hui'er, is that you? If it is you, then please head to the eastern side of the city. Don't say anything or change your expression. I'll watch over you two."

Ling Hui'er had obviously been paying attention to the exiting cultivators. She was overjoyed when she heard Jiang Chen's voice out of nowhere, but immediately calmed down after hearing the instructions that came after. She led her father Ling Su in a dead run to the eastern side of the city.

The Ling father and daughter duo stopped at a certain corner at the eastern side of the city roughly fifteen minutes later. By now, roughly one hundred thousand people had gathered at this part of the city. Jiang Chen and Huang'er took advantage of the crowd to walk up to them. It was obvious that no one was paying attention to them, and they hadn't drawn any suspicion despite now gathering as a group of four.

"Is that you, senior brother?" Ling Hui'er's eyes overflowed with expectation. She looked like a lost child who had suddenly found a relative and could hardly hold in her excitement.

"Why are you here, junior sister Hui'er? How did you escape the destruction of the Regal Pill Palace?" Jiang Chen was also curious.

Ling Hui'er's eyes were dim when she spoke, as if she was about to cry, "When the Regal Pill Palace was destroyed, father and I happened to be picking herbs away from the palace. We heard of the Great Scarlet Mid Region's invasion when we were outside. I wanted to go back, but father wouldn't allow me to. Wahhh, senior brother, I miss big sis so much..."

Ling Su stood beside Ling Hui'er. He knew that the person standing right in front of him was Jiang Chen, his benefactor. "Little brother Jiang, Ling Su has not had the chance to thank you for saving my life. I didn't allow Hui'er to return to the Regal Pill Palace during its plight, and I hope that you won't blame Hui'er for it. You can place the blame firmly on me..."

Jiang Chen shook his head, "Uncle Ling, you did the right thing. You couldn't have changed anything even if you had returned. There is more meaning to keeping the hopes of the Regal Pill Palace alive than heading towards certain death. I'm just wondering if the news of the Eternal Celestial Capital capturing Palace Head Dan Chi is real..."

"It's most likely false. I've also heard about this, which is why I'd come to Tai-ah City at the first sign of those rumors. I wasn't afraid of their inspections since I'm not part of the Regal Pill Palace to begin with. I've observed the situation in secret for a while, and believe that it's a trap set up by the Eternal Celestial Capital. To put it bluntly, they've set up a trap right in the open and waited to see if you would step into it," Ling Su analyzed the situation skillfully.

Jiang Chen nodded, "I too suspected that this is a trap for me. You were the one who shouted just now, right?"

Ling Su chuckled, "I saw that they were moving a large group of wandering cultivators away and worried that you might be inside that group. It would be extremely troublesome if you were taken away by them. I had the idea to announce false news so that things would become just chaotic enough for you to escape. To be honest, it was a pure gamble, but you really were part of that group!"

Jiang Chen was inwardly impressed by Ling Su's ability to adapt and deal with unexpected situations. While he wasn't a member of the Regal Pill Palace, he wasn't lacking in worldly experience in the jianghu at all.

"Oh right. Little brother Jiang,[1] you attended the Myriad Grand Ceremony too, right? How is my daughter Bi'er doing?" Ling Su was obviously worried for his other daughter.

"Senior sister Bi'er and I got split up from each other, but she'd already escaped danger when we parted ways. I'm not sure where she is either right now." Jiang Chen was sad as well when he recalled the destruction of the Regal Pill Palace, and how everyone had become separated from each other once again.

Ling Su's worries abated when he heard that Ling Bi'er had escaped danger and hadn't been captured by their enemies. "Bi'er is a lucky girl. I believe that she is fine as well," Ling Su consoled himself.

Jiang Chen nodded and asked, "Uncle Ling, you've just recovered. Why did you suddenly think of picking herbs?"

Ling Su looked a little embarrassed, "Well, I'm not afraid if you laugh at me for this. Back then, I had gotten greedy and accidentally gotten poisoned with the Divine Befuddlement Miasma, right? But this

time I have the antidote you made, which is why I thought of going back to check if the fortuitous occurrence I found back then was still around.”

A single stroke of fortune could change a person’s life forever in the martial dao world. It was common for cultivators to take risks in order to discover their fortune. Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t judge Ling Su’s desire to do so.

“Did you find anything?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“That place is far too dangerous, and there were a lot more poisonous things in there besides the Divine Befuddlement Miasma. Although I am a spirit alchemist, I was unable to go any deeper. I was going to head back and make some more preparations, but the news of the great changes happening in the Myriad Domain reached us right after we emerged from that place. That was why we didn’t dare return. We’ve been roaming around for the past half year until we heard of Palace Head Dan Chi’s capture. That’s why we came to Tai-ah City,” Ling Su sighed when he recounted this experience.

“Wait. Where is that place you mentioned earlier? Is it very close to Tai-ah City?”

“It’s not far. It’s at best a three to four day journey from here. Are you interested as well, little brother Jiang?” Ling Su asked curiously.

Jiang Chen’s response was noncommittal. He asked again, “What’s that place called? Do you have a map?”

“I do.” Ling Su took out a simple map while he said this, “This place is a valley called Infant Shriek. Eerie, strange noises that sound like howling and crying babies echo all year long. At the same time, it’s a deserted place that’s very difficult to find. Most cultivators aren’t willing to enter that place at all because of how much yin energy there is. However, this is a characteristic that actually attracts spirit alchemists. The thicker the yin energy, the more likely there are to be valuable spirit herbs.”

Jiang Chen accepted the map and looked at it for a moment before returning it to Ling Su. A valley called Infant Shriek. Jiang Chen memorized the name. He suddenly asked again, “Uncle Ling, were you poisoned by the Divine Befuddlement Miasma in the valley?”

Ling Su smiled wryly, “Indeed. As the saying goes, the goose hunter had his eyes poked out by a goose instead. I had only entered the outskirts back then, but was poisoned before I’d known it. If I had gone any deeper, I may have been lost entirely.”

“Did you notice anything amiss after you were poisoned?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“It was impossible for me to detect anything. I wouldn’t have left at all if I hadn’t hurt my leg. In fact, I didn’t even realize what was going on even after the poison took effect, much less detected that it was the Miasma. It was only after I woke up that I learned from Bi’er it was the Miasma. Speaking of which, your skills are amazing, little brother Jiang.”

Jiang Chen nodded quietly. Ling Su’s experience actually shed some light on certain things. He didn’t delve any deeper into the topic. Ling Hui’er walked up to Jiang Chen and asked, “Senior brother, can we travel together from here on out?”

Jiang Chen smiled wryly, “Junior sister Hui’er, Uncle Ling and you are already safer without anyone interrogating you. You may be in more danger if you come along with us.”

This was the truth. Jiang Chen had a bounty on his head, and who knew how many pairs eyes were watching out for him. Even the slightest mistake could trigger an endless onslaught. Ling Su and Ling Hui’er were both origin realm cultivators. They hadn’t even reached the sage realm yet. If they were to come with him, they would actually become a large burden if the group were ever to be hunted. Ling Hui’er pursed her lips and asked, “You wouldn’t have turned my sis down if she was the one asking, would you?”

Jiang Chen smiled wryly, but wasn’t sure how to answer. Ling Su took over the conversation and scolded her, “Stop making trouble, Hui’er. Little brother Jiang is right. We are both safer if we part ways.”

Ling Su had a wealth of experience and naturally understood that they would only be burden if they were to join Jiang Chen. They wouldn’t draw attention if they were to part ways. Jiang Chen didn’t remain conflicted on this matter. Instead, he took out several high rank escape talismans, “Uncle Ling, here are three high rank escape talismans. If you encounter any forces that you can’t battle, you only need to crush one to escape. I will be heading to the Veluriyam Capital next. If possible, let’s meet there.”

Ling Su wasn’t one to put on airs, but he still accepted only one escape glyph, “Little brother Jiang, these escape talismans are far more useful to you right now. The two of us only need one.”

The quartet had been conversing with each other through silent transmission. That was why they hadn’t drawn anyone’s attention. However, a clamor of swearing suddenly broke out from the front, “Bloody hell, which bastard sent out that fake news just now? There isn’t any great battle on the eastern side of the city at all!”

“Damn it! I’ll dismember that heartless bastard alive!”

“Alright, alright, time to go back. Who knows, maybe Jiang Chen’s already slipped into Tai-ah City and rescued Palace Head Dan Chi already!”

“Hehe, is this another diversion?” There were plenty of furious looking wandering cultivators returning back to the city, cursing loudly as they jockeyed for the best position.

Jiang Chen threw Ling Su a glance and parted ways with the father daughter duo. He wasn’t being cruel, but that it really wasn’t convenient for them to stay in contact with each other for much longer. If he was discovered, he would only implicate the Ling father and daughter as well. It was at this moment an enormous amount of sect disciples suddenly appeared in this area. The leader of the group cried out, “All wandering cultivators are not allowed to leave the city! You will all enter the city! Only those who have been inspected will be allowed to leave! All those who do not heed our orders will be killed!”

The overbearing Eternal Celestial Capital was obviously planning to lock down the entire city!

Ling Su’s use of “little brother” here is actually a mark of great respect, he means to call Jiang Chen his older brother, but obviously it’s a little weird to call someone your kid’s age “older brother”, hence the translation.

Chapter 706: Dog Eat Dog Between First Rank Sects

The Eternal Celestial Capital had locked down the entire city. Almost all of the wandering cultivators were gathered in a five kilometer area east of the city with no means of escape. They were soon driven back into Tai-ah City amid loud objections and complaints. Ling Su and his daughter were no exception as they were also forced to return. However Jiang Chen wasn't overly worried about them. The difference in gender and age would make it rather easy for them to be ruled out during the interrogation.

The inspection processes had become noticeably more stringent upon their return. Entry was simple, but if one wished to leave, they would have to undergo several rounds of inspections and interrogations. Apparently, the Eternal Celestial Capital had not yet given up on the search for Jiang Chen. The commotion just now had renewed Gong Wuji's feeling that Jiang Chen was already in Tai-ah City. Moreover, he was likely within the group of a thousand wandering cultivators. How could such fake news have spread otherwise?

It was obviously a programmed diversion to help Jiang Chen slip away during the confusion. This was why they had doubled the severity of their inspections.

Another commotion started to become heard above the noise. Furious curses were being thrown about, "The Eternal Celestial Palace has business here. Everyone else, get the hell away!"

A seemingly effeminate voice was immediately heard afterwards, "Tsk tsk... If I remember correctly, this isn't your Eternal Celestial Capital's domain. Does our Ninesuns Sky Sect require your permission to be here?"

The Ninesuns Sky Sect? The crowd became somewhat restless. They were stunned by this new and sudden development. One first rank sect within the Swordland Mid Region was terrifying enough already. Now that another group from a first rank sect had appeared—this was beyond odd. Jiang Chen was also astonished as he witnessed this scene from within the crowd. He slowly waded his way forward to get a better look. The two forces in conflict had no shortage of manpower. There were hundreds from the Ninesuns Sky Sect and hundreds from the Eternal Celestial Capital facing each other. They stood to each side like two fighting bulls grunting at each other.

"The Ninesuns Sky Sect has come as well?" Jiang Chen was happy after his initial surprise. He knew that the arrival of the Ninesuns Sky Sect likely had something to do with him. As things stood, Jiang Chen was not afraid of itches when he was already covered in lice. He had already thoroughly offended the Eternal Celestial Capital; adding the Ninesuns Sky Sect to the list made no difference. In fact, his enmity with the Ninesuns Sky Sect had been established much earlier.

But after seeing the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Ninesuns Sky Sect's hostile attitudes towards each other, Jiang Chen was quite astonished. It appeared that the two first rank sects were really not on the best of terms. They might even have a death feud with each other. It all became clear to him after some pondering.

The two sects had pursued Emperor Featherflight ages ago with limited cooperation. But their relationship had largely been that of competitors in all other scenarios. Two first rank sects erupting in hostilities over the inheritance of an ancient empyrean cultivator was no big surprise. It appeared the Ninesuns Sky Sect had come to deliberately upset the Eternal Celestial Capital's operations. Jiang Chen was suddenly in a position of cheering them on in secret.

Dogs eating each other will only result in mouthfuls of fur all around. Its best you bite each other even more ferociously! Jiang Chen already had bad impressions of both sects and was filled with disgust and overflowing loathing. It was true that the Eternal Celestial Capital was sinister, but those from the Ninesuns Sky Sect were no saints either. They were the ones who had first spread rumors about the Imperial Jade Seal and the Guardian Dragon Seal, undoubtedly to lure the Great Scarlet Mid Region into dealing with the Myriad Domain. Frankly speaking, they were just getting another to do their dirty work.

However, the crafty Eternal Celestial Capital had beaten them at their own game. They had long since taken control of the Great Scarlet Mid Region, allowing them to stay one step ahead of the opponent and take control of the whole situation. The Ninesuns Sky Sect now could no longer get involved in the affairs of the Myriad Domain.

Gong Wuji strode in with long strides after hearing about the disturbance. He gazed indifferently at the people from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. "It seems that your Ninesuns Sky Sect is so tyrannical that you wish to cause a ruckus in someone else's domain?"

A mid emperor realm cultivator from the Ninesuns Sky Sect walked out with a laugh. "Holy King Gong, I don't quite understand. What's this about the Ninesuns Sky Sect being tyrannical? Is your Eternal Celestial Capital made up of saints? If I remember correctly, the ones who caused an upheaval in the Myriad Domain were your people. Besides, this is the Swordland Mid Region, not your Eternal Celestial Capital's domain. Why can't our Ninesuns Sky Sect come over?"

These words stung deep and left Gong Wuji absolutely no face. He was even being mocked for acting wildly in the Myriad Domain and losing his beloved grandson in the process. Gong Wuji's face turned dark purple as he glared daggers at the cultivator from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. "Elder Hao, have you made up your mind to oppose us?"

Elder Hao laughed. "Holy King Gong, you're overthinking things. Our Ninesuns Sky Sect is also here in pursuit of an enemy. How could this be considered opposing you?"

"What enemy are you after?" Gong Wuji inquired with fury.

"Some disciples from our Ninesuns Sky Sect have gone missing and all clues point to the Myriad Domain. Now that you lot have annihilated the Myriad Domain, we can't even find a single shadow. We heard that you captured the palace head of the Regal Pill Palace and thought you might be able to lure out a few survivors that we can interrogate." Elder Hao's voice was without the slightest inflection, "We've said what we will. Holy King Gong, it isn't up to your Eternal Celestial Capital to criticize how our Ninesuns Sky Sect operates."

Gong Wuji had been in a violent rage, but surprisingly, he regained his composure upon hearing Elder Hao's words. It made no sense to accuse the Ninesuns Sky Sect of being ornery to spite him. Could it be that... the Ninesuns Sky Sect had found some leads regarding Emperor Featherflight?

Not everyone within the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Ninesuns Sky Sect knew about the affair regarding Emperor Featherflight. Only a select few of the upper echelon who were a part of the original operation were privy to this information. As a holy king of the Eternal Celestial Capital, Gong Wuji was also one of its directors. As such, he was very familiar with that operation. In fact, the ultimate goal of taking control of the Great Scarlet Mid Region had been to investigate the fate of Emperor Featherflight.

As for how overblown the circumstances had gotten with the Regal Pill Palace and the bounty on Jiang Chen's head, they were secondary grievances that had been brought about incidentally.

"Since this is the case Elder Hao, why is your Ninesuns Sky Sect sabotaging our search for the enemy?" Gong Wuji had realized the intricacies of this situation and sought a platform to negotiate, suppressing his anger.

"We're merely spectating. What sabotage were you talking about?" Elder Hao smiled faintly.

Jiang Chen suddenly had an idea after seeing the two sects' verbal spar. He could clearly sense the undercurrent of hostility between them. He secretly left the crowd, unnoticed by all. He entered a well hidden corner before momentarily walking out with a completely different appearance. He didn't go toward the hostile area this time, but toward the city gates where he approached a disciple of the Eternal Celestial Capital. "Greetings, senior brother."

The disciple from the Eternal Celestial Capital glanced at him. Jiang Chen was clad in a disciple's uniform and appeared just like a citizen of the Great Scarlet Empire.

"Eh? What business do you have?" The people from the Eternal Celestial Capital naturally felt a sense of superiority over those from the Great Scarlet Mid Region. It was a natural arrogance of someone who belonged to a first rank sect.

"Senior brother, I have been tasked by Great Scarlet royalty to return an important item to Master Gong. He forgot it in the palace and thus the Great Scarlet emperor ordered me to travel this vast distance and deliver it with all haste, lest the holy king have need of it. However, a conflict seems to have taken place over there, and us low level disciples are unable to enter. I humbly beseech this senior brother to return this item to Master Gong Wuji in my stead."

"Is that all?"

"That would be all. I'll also have to trouble senior brother to explain things personally to Master Gong. Please." With that, Jiang Chen produced a sword and offered it with both hands.

The disciple received the blade and was full of praises after a single glance. "A good blade indeed."

"Master Gong's sword is definitely of supreme quality. I hope the senior brother will deliver it with all due haste. Conflict appears to be brewing even as we speak—Master Gong might require it if a battle breaks out."

The Eternal Celestial Capital disciple was alarmed after hearing Jiang Chen's reminder and nodded quickly. "Since that is the case, I'll complete this mission for you. You've done well!"

"Thank you very much. Please convey the Great Scarlet emperor's greetings to Master Gong," Jiang Chen left with a bow, turning back to wave repeatedly.

The Eternal Celestial Capital disciple didn't dare neglect this task. It was indeed a good sword and the unsuspecting disciple had found no traps or mechanisms on it. He promptly carried the sword towards the central area. The disciple was delighted to accept such a task since it was, after all, a good opportunity to present himself to Master Gong. Moreover, he would be able to personally deliver Master Gong's weapon to him. This should more or less gain him some favor, right?

The ecstatic disciple squeezed through the crowds and met no resistance, swiftly arriving before Master Gong. "Sire Holy King," the disciple bowed ceremoniously.

Gong Wuji glanced at him. He was wondering why this low level disciple had come to join the excitement and even dared to appear before him! But he found it difficult to berate his sect's disciple under the current circumstances and merely let out a nasally "hmm" in acknowledgement.

The disciple didn't mind at all. With his identity, it was normal for the holy king to maintain a dignified air. He would surely be delighted after being presented with the treasured sword. "Sire Holy King, the Great Scarlet emperor dispatched a messenger to deliver the sword you forgot at the Great Scarlet Empire. Please accept it, sir." The disciple raised both hands as he spoke and presented the treasured sword to Gong Wuji.

Gong Wuji was baffled; when had he ever left his sword at the Great Scarlet Empire? But he noticed that it was an extraordinary blade at first glance. Gong Wuji supposed that the Great Scarlet emperor must have felt that he had let Gong Wuji down and thus had sent this sword as a form of apology. He swept his consciousness over the blade, and after making certain there were no hidden traps, accepted the sword and nodded lightly, "Understood. What is your name?"

"This disciple is called Zhao Neng." The disciple replied hurriedly, positively bursting with delight.

"Zhao Neng, this seat will remember you. You may withdraw," Gong Wuji was perplexed by the brief interlude but didn't comment on it. Since this sword had no problems, why wouldn't he accept the gift? It was, after all, a true emperor realm weapon. Zhao Neng left in high spirits after hearing Gong Wuji's words. Gong Wuji raised the sword to examine it once more, and was about to put it away when Elder Hao's expression changed abruptly, his eyes fixed on the sword, "Hold!"

Chapter 707: The Tragedy Caused by a Single Sword

Elder Hao's sudden command caused Gong Wuji to arch an eyebrow. He said with an obviously displeased tone, "What do you want now, Elder Hao?"

Elder Hao ignored Gong Wuji completely. He stared closely at the sword Gong Wuji was holding, "Holy King Gong, did you say that this sword is yours?"

Gong Wuji's patience had already reached its limit. Elder Hao's impolite question only added fuel to his rage. "What the hell does it have to do with you?!"

He didn't expect Elder Hao's anger to be worse than his, "So you mean this sword is really yours?!"

Gong Wuji was so furious that he had started to smile, "What, is it yours then? Is your name on the sword or something?"

Elder Hao stared closely at Gong Wuji, "So, you're saying that you really are the one who left this sword in the Great Scarlet Mid Region?"

"So. What. If. I. Was?" Gong Wuji still thought that Elder Hao was purposely picking a quarrel with him. "You're not going to say that this sword is yours, are you? If I remember correctly, you don't even use a sword, Hao!"

Elder Hao nodded with an extremely ugly look on his face. He said, "Good, very good! So you admit that this is your sword. How very good of you to take responsibility of your actions! Dare you to tell me where you got this sword?!"

Gong Wuji had lived as a tyrant all his life. He had always been the interrogator, never the recipient. Therefore, his anger soared when he heard this tone, "Where, you say? Do I have to report to you where I've gotten this sword? Let's just say I killed someone and took his property. What are you going to do about it!?"

The moment he said that, a look of enlightenment immediately sprung to Elder Hao's face. It was quickly overwhelmed by a look of terrible grief and indignation. He abruptly unsheathed a cruel looking warblade with both hands and cried out, "Heed my order, disciples of the Ninesuns Sky Sect! Gong Wuji is the murderer of our Ninesuns Sky Sect true disciple, Cao Jin! The Eternal Celestial Capital is now the Ninesuns Sky Sect's sworn enemy!"

Even before his words had the chance to ring through the air, Elder Hao slashed fiercely at Gong Wuji.

The momentum behind his blade and the aura of a powerful emperor realm cultivator immediately enveloped everyone within a thousand meters around him. All of them were instantly shoved several hundred meters away from Elder Hao.

Gong Wuji himself hadn't expected that Elder Hao would start a fight just like that. Rage clouded his mind as he swung his own weapon, a golden short axe, with both hands. A sharp blade beam with a rainbow like tail met his axe's fierce upswing.

Two middle level emperor realm cultivators had actually thrown aside any pretense of talk and started a fight in the most crowded area of Tai-ah City! Naturally, the disciples of both sects were triggered when they saw their best experts clashing against each other. They all joined the fray with a roar.

For a while, the cries of battle shook even heaven itself.

The two great sects hadn't seen eye to eye to begin with. The Eternal Celestial Capital felt that the Ninesuns Sky Sect was undermining them on purpose, and the Ninesuns Sky Sect was naturally filled with hatred towards the Eternal Celestial Capital when they heard that Gong Wuji had killed Cao Jin. They were all from first rank sects, so no one was inclined to try and bow to the other. The battle spun out of control the second it began. Even some wandering cultivators who were standing a little too close were dragged into it.

The battle became crazier the moment blood was shed. Cultivators fell left and right as the fighting grew madder. As their fellow disciples fell, the eyes of the survivors only grew more bloodshot. They fought ever more recklessly as the situation started to take on the uncontrolled atmosphere of a true battlefield.

The wandering cultivators had taken shelter far, far away, but they weren't willing to leave just like this. A battle between sects was something they would normally never have the chance to witness. Now that they finally had the chance, they weren't going to give it up just because they hadn't the slightest clue what was going on. In fact, they even hoped that the battle could grow even more intense.

After all, the wandering cultivators had always held a kind of enmity towards sect disciples. This enmity was born out of envy, even jealousy. They had always been incomparable to sect disciples in every way. The sects laid claim to most of the resources for themselves, standing right at the top of the status quo. They could order the wandering cultivators around however they liked. The power imbalance that was brought about by the monopolization of resources and training caused no small amount of resentment to build within the wandering cultivators. As a result, it was only natural for them to find joy in the fierce battle between the sects. They were extremely happy to see sects tearing each other apart. They would only hope that things would become more desperate and bloodier.

Meanwhile, Jiang Chen had changed back to his original clothing and was calmly watching the battle unfold as part of the rapt audience. He only felt boundless elation as Eternal Celestial Capital and the Ninesuns Sky Sect disciples fell one after another. More and more people started to join the fray. Although the Eternal Celestial Capital had the advantage of numbers, it was obvious that the Ninesuns Sky Sect had sent out their elites this time. No matter how desperate the battle got, the deadlock continued.

Jiang Chen cast Huang'er a glance. The duo didn't tarry any longer and made their way to the city gates.

Many cautious wandering cultivators were also heading towards the city gates. It was obvious that these people had realized that Tai-ah City was so chaotic right now that it was better to leave as soon as possible. Otherwise, it was only a matter of time before wandering cultivators like them were dragged into the mess. There was no way these two great first rank sects had erupted into battle over something as simple as a sword. Something bigger lay underneath all this. Therefore, the wise ones weren't willing to be turned into cannon fodder for a cause they didn't even know about.

Tai-ah City was hosting at least two hundred thousand wandering cultivators, and at least a couple of thousand of them were heading towards the city gates. While there were plenty of Eternal Celestial Capital disciples guarding the gates, they had dispatched their elites to join the battle against the Ninesuns Sky Sect. The remaining disciples were obviously incapable of stopping several thousands of cultivators on their own.

While Tai-ah City's forces had provided the Eternal Celestial Capital the leeway to go about their business, the city weren't willing to deal with these wandering cultivators itself. This was the city's territory after all. If they offended these wandering cultivators too much, Tai-ah City would be the one to suffer when they exacted their revenge. Therefore, Tai-ah City officials turned a blind eye and allowed the wandering cultivators to dash outside.

It didn't take long before the Eternal Celestial Capital's blockade was swept away. Several thousand wandering cultivators broke through the gates in an instant. Jiang Chen and Huang'er were easily able to dash away from the city as well, hiding amidst the crowd.

Ling Su had also seized the opportunity to exit the city with Ling Hui'er. Jiang Chen didn't meet up with them. He simply bid them goodbye with his consciousness and made a promise to meet up at Veluriyam Capital. Their journey was already ripe with danger. Jiang Chen knew very well that he would only be putting the Ling duo in danger if they were to follow him.

After they had left Tai-ah City, Jiang Chen mentally revisited the battle between the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Ninesuns Sky Sect and finally couldn't restrain his laughter any longer. He began to laugh

loudly. Even Huang'er couldn't help but smile, "That was truly an amazing ploy, Sir Jiang. I suppose the Ninesuns Sky Sect true disciple who was causing trouble at the Regal Pill Palace has already been eliminated by Sir Jiang?"

Jiang Chen knew that he couldn't hide this from Huang'er, and nodded, "That person was called Cao Jin, and it was true that he was almost unparalleled at the level he was at. If it wasn't thanks to various coincidences, it would've been infinitely difficult to kill him."

Cao Jin's death was the result of many factors that had come together at precisely the right moment. It wouldn't have happened if any single factor had been absent. Yet, ultimately, it had been Cao Jin's own fault for entering Mt. Rippling Mirage and trespassing on Jiang Chen's domain. It would've been quite difficult for Jiang Chen to kill him if he hadn't presented himself so.

"These two sects plotted and schemed, but they were all danced to Sir Jiang's tune with a casual trick. That was quite the display of intelligence!" Huang'er smiled. She was rather impressed by Jiang Chen's ability to think on his feet.

Jiang Chen didn't think that highly of himself. It was just a sudden inspiration, and while it had both sects fighting each other, it hadn't actually solved his problem. In fact there was a flaw in this ploy, and that was that he had just exposed the fact that he'd killed Cao Jin.

The two sects might be embroiled in a costly battle right now, but it would not take much to calm them down. Once they analyzed the situation, they would soon come to a realization that they'd been tricked. Resolving the misunderstanding would only take a matter of moments once that happened. When that happened, these two first rank sects would join forces and come after him together. That being said, the two sects were likely to target him even if he hadn't driven a wedge between them. So in that case, he might as well plot against them a little. This terrible battle must have been a very expensive misunderstanding. On a certain level, the casualties from this battle would more or less relieve the pressure on him as well.

"Sir Jiang, the two sects may put more effort into hunting you after this incident is over. We should quicken our pace. Veluriyam Capital is still some distance away."

Jiang Chen nodded slightly, but revealed the hint of an eerie smile as he answered, "Miss Huang'er, the journey must go on, but I would like to wait a little longer before we continue."

"We're waiting some more?" Huang'er was slightly surprised by his decision, but she smiled and asked nothing about his plans. She knew that Jiang Chen must have something else up his sleeves if he was choosing to wait in this situation.

After being in his company for a couple of years, Huang'er had to admit that even she couldn't see through this young man. He always managed to pleasantly surprise her.

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Two hours of battle had passed before most of Tai-ah City's reputable experts made their way to the scene. This also included some top experts native to Swordland Region who happened to be nearby. The two first rank sects finally stopped fighting after a good amount of persuasion.

Tai-ah City was a local hegemon that possessed many experts, some were even stronger than Gong Wuji and Elder Hao, but it was ultimately just a mid region faction. They were still a long way from competing with a first rank sect in the Upper Eight Regions. Although city leaders were enraged by the chaos, they could only wear a smile and do their best to mollify the two participants. They didn't dare to put on a tough front in front of these two first rank sects.

Once the two sects were done calculating their casualties, they realized that this had been a far more expensive battle than they'd first thought. The Eternal Celestial Capital had lost at least a hundred people, whereas the Ninesuns Sky Sect had also lost dozens of men. In fact, two emperor realm experts had driven each other to death due to the ferocity of their battle.

The losses could only be described as horrific. But although the battle was ultimately halted, neither Gong Wuji nor Elder Hao looked like they truly wanted a cease fire. They were still glaring and snorting at each other. They looked like they would restart the fight at any moment. It was obvious that both parties had completely fallen out with each other.

"Please, please, listen to this old man for a bit," The one who spoke up was the city lord of Tai-ah City, a seventh level emperor realm cultivator.

Tai-ah City was one of the five great cities of the Swordland Region. Naturally, its city head possessed a powerful cultivation. Gong Wuji and Elder Hao had no choice but to give the city head of Tai-ah City some face since he had come out to meet them personally. Moreover, he was a high level emperor realm cultivator to boot.

Chapter 708: Tricked by Jiang Chen

"Holy King Gong, would you like to start?" The head of the Tai-ah City suggested with a laugh. He couldn't take sides since he was here to play the mediator, and neither could he afford to offend either side when all was said and done.

Gong Wuji snorted coldly, "The Ninesun Sky Sect came with the intention of picking a fight, greatly affecting our Eternal Celestial Capital's search for Jiang Chen. It became even more ludicrous later on—they claimed I killed their true disciple—what bullshit! I've killed countless people in my life and I'll admit to whoever I've actually killed. But this old man has never even seen this so-called true disciple of theirs! How could I have killed him?"

Gong Wuji was absolutely furious at this point in the conversation. The head of Tai-ah City smiled and turned to Elder Hao of the Ninesun Sky Sect. "Elder Hao, you insist that Holy King Gong killed a true disciple from your Ninesuns Sky Sect. Do you have any evidence to back that claim?"

"Evidence?" Elder Hao was almost apoplectic with anger as he pointed at the sword on Gong Wuji's back. "That sword is proof. Its name is 'Ocean Cover' and is our true disciple Cao Jin's personal weapon. That man and sword acted as one in this life. Their separation signifies the death of the wielder or the destruction of his blade. Cao Jin's soul lamp has long since shattered and today we find 'Ocean Cover' in Gong Wuji's possession. He's also admitted that he killed the owner to obtain the sword. Who else could be the murderer if not him!?" Elder Hao's temper had only grown with his accusations. He was ready to make a move at the slightest disagreement.

The head of Tai-ah City was placed in a difficult position after hearing Elder Hao's explanation. After all, the latter's reasoning was fairly justified. Gong Wuji, on the other hand, flew into a rage, "This sword is absolutely not mine!"

Elder Hao sneered, "You claimed it was yours just a moment ago. How come you're afraid to admit it now? Wasn't the sword delivered by a disciple from your sect, saying that you forgot it at the Great Scarlet Mid Region? Can you deny that?"

Gong Wuji's anger had reached its peak. He had a faint suspicion that he'd been made a fool of. Not only himself, but he had the feeling that everyone here had been toyed with as well. It was just that he refused to offer any explanation in order to maintain his dignity. It would give others the feeling that he was afraid of the Ninesuns Sky Sect if he persistently attempted to clarify the matter. His eyes turning cold, Gong Wuji turned around and issued an order, "Summon Zhao Neng."

Zhao Neng was soon brought before him. The disciple was still thinking he would be praised and promoted as he bowed. "Sire Holy King, disciple Zhao Neng..."

Gong Wuji gestured angrily, "Who asked you to deliver this sword to me?"

Zhao Neng took a moment to think before he recounted, "It was a certain sect disciple from the Great Scarlet Mid Region. I don't quite remember which sect he was from. He claimed to have been entrusted by the Great Scarlet emperor to return this sword. He said the blade must be delivered directly to Sire Holy King and asked me to convey the Great Scarlet emperor's greetings."

"What did this courier look like?" someone beside Gong Wuji inquired.

Zhao Neng scratched his head nervously. He was no idiot and had already caught on that something about the sword was amiss. But how was he supposed to accurately describe a person? He suddenly became tongue-tied and was unable to describe the person's appearance. He stammered, "I only remember that this person said the sword was of the utmost importance..."

"Then why didn't he deliver it himself?"

Zhao Neng replied with a miserable expression, "He claimed that the security at the site was too strict for an inferior sect disciple such as himself to enter. Hence, he entrusted me with its delivery."

Increasingly irritated with the explanation, Gong Wuji yelled at the disciple. "Get lost!"

He understood immediately that Zhao Neng had been tricked. Moreover, the perpetrator had done so deliberately, at the most opportune moment, in order to draw the two sects into a conflict. The enemy tactics were clearly as effective as they were sinister. Pale and trembling in fright, Zhao Neng duly took his leave.

The head of Tai-ah City forced a smile, "Gentlemen, I suspect that someone deliberately sprung a trap for you. Their aim was to instigate a battle between the two of you."

Elder Hao was also no fool. He had determined from Gong Wuji's expression that there was more to this incident than was immediately apparent. After careful thought, if it really was Gong Wuji who had killed Cao Jin, he would've kept this matter firmly under wraps. There was no way he would display the sword publicly, let alone leave it in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. More suspicious points about the whole

matter started to appear as he contemplated everything he'd seen and heard. But even so, it wasn't enough to completely dispel Elder Hao's doubts. Although things were rather ambiguous, it was insufficient to rule out Gong Wuji as a suspect.

A sect head from the Great Scarlet Mid Region suddenly asked, "Elder Hao, may I ask when it was that the soul lamp of your sect's esteemed Cao Jin shattered?"

Elder Hao could not be bothered to reply. However, someone from the Ninesuns Sky Sect stepped in to answer. All those from the Great Scarlet Mid Region laughed ruefully after the date was announced. "Elder Hao, this means that the demise of your esteemed sect's Sir Cao indeed has nothing to do with Master Gong. Both Master Gong's arrival at the Great Scarlet Region and his subsequent departure for the Myriad Domain were obviously after Sir Cao's death. The dates just don't match up."

Elder Hao also felt that the dates didn't conform as he took in this information. Moreover, the Ninesuns Sky Sect had several agents throughout the Myriad Domain. If a big shot like Gong Wuji had in fact appeared, it would have been impossible to not hear of it.

The city lord of Tai-ah City promptly spoke, "Elder Hao, there are obvious indications of a third party involving themselves in this matter. Zhao Neng admitted a moment ago that a sect disciple had given him the sword. Things will be made clear if we call out all the sect disciples from the Great Scarlet Mid Region and have Zhao Neng identify them. If there is such a person, he'll be easily recognized. If there isn't, we can confirm this as a case of impersonation."

This method also received the approval of the neutral parties standing around. "Yes, this method is good."

Those from the Great Scarlet Mid Region were happy to cooperate. They were not being compliant for the Ninesuns Sky Sect's sake, but for the Eternal Celestial Capital. They were unwilling to see Gong Wuji doubted. From their standpoint, they definitely did not want to fall out with the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Hence it would be for the best if Master Gong Wuji was cleared of suspicion.

The sects of the Great Scarlet Mid Region had brought no small amount of people. They each stood there to be identified by Zhao Neng, who went through them for several times before shaking his head. "He's not among them."

The head of the Tai-ah City enquired, "Are all of your sect disciples in attendance?"

"They are. No one is absent," the various sects replied.

The head of the Tai-ah City glanced at Elder Hao. "Elder Hao, this matter is basically confirmed. You have all been tricked."

Elder Hao was also already ninety percent certain at this point. But, it was impossible for him to admit his mistake in public. He walked over to Gong Wuji huffily and extended his hand, "Hand over the sword."

Gong Wuji was incensed. "What gives you the right to attack people on a whim? Do you think everything you do is justified? You have the audacity to demand now that I hand over the sword?"

“The sword belongs to the Ninesuns Sky Sect! It is only right and proper that I take it back.” Elder Hao went tit-for-tat, convinced that his demand was rational.

“Nonsense! You come to pick a fight without cause or reason and inflicted severe casualties on my Eternal Celestial Capital. Now, you want to take back this sword without a single explanation?! What kind of pushover do you think I am, ah!?” Gong Wuji was obviously not going to let this slide.

Elder Hao laughed coldly, “How do you suggest we settle this with strength, then?”

Gong Wuji replied indignantly, “You think I’m afraid of you?!”

The head of Tai-ah City hastily interjected. “The two of you, please calm down! We all know this incident was instigated by a third party. What good would it do to fight each other anymore? You will only injure yourselves and make the enemy happy. Please, give this old man some face and talk this over peacefully. Elder Hao, you attacked the other party without clarifying things and should offer Holy King Gong an apology. As for Holy King Gong, you should return the sword since it belongs to the Ninesun Sky Sect.”

The head of Tai-ah City was actually not willing to play the mediator. However, since the two heavyweights were threatening to start a battle in his territory, the role had been thrust on him and no one else. Hence he had to brace himself and attempt to broker some kind of peace.

Gong Wuji laughed coldly, “Apologize first.”

“Return the sword first,” Elder Hao was also stubborn.

The two were diametrically opposed—the dispute had turned into a matter of pride. Reports started to come in from the surroundings as they glared at each other. “Master Gong, the wandering cultivators have broken our blockade and are escaping by the thousands. At least two thirds of the hundred thousand have run.”

“Master Gong, at least half of the people we were monitoring have escaped...”

Bad news trickled in as each report only made Gong Wuji’s expression grow increasingly uglier. He hadn’t just been tricked this time, but made an absolute fool out of! A face suddenly appeared within Gong Wuji’s mind. Jiang Chen!

Although he didn’t know who had actually delivered the sword, Gong Wuji immediately thought of Jiang Chen. The kid could’ve easily disguised himself as a sect disciple from the Great Scarlet Mid Region and completely fooled that moron Zhao Neng. The unsuspecting disciple had then delivered the ominous blade into his hands, inciting this whole bloody incident. Gong Wuji felt a sudden surge of sweetness well up in his throat. He was on the verge of spitting out a glob of blood. Jiang Chen had made an utter fool of him once again, without a doubt! He no longer paid attention to Elder Hao and instead led his sect elites towards the outskirts. “More importantly, exactly how many among the monitored wandering cultivators have escaped?” Gong Wuji asked with a dark expression.

“Sire, the pairs we detained from among the wandering cultivators numbered over four hundred. Among them, two hundred teams have escaped, but we were able to recapture over a hundred pairs. That leaves over a hundred teams still loose. Although they have gone pretty far, we have people chasing after most of them.”

Gong Wuji asked with a long face, "How many of those pairs are headed in the direction of Veluriyam Capital?"

"There are seven in total."

Gong Wuji nodded. "Prioritize tracking those seven pairs. Don't forget to bring any pair you capture to me. Report immediately if anyone resists or goes missing."

"Everyone, chase down those traveling in the direction of the Veluriyam Capital!" Gong Wuji, for all his faults, possessed a flexible and mature mindset. His greatest target at the moment was still Jiang Chen. The grievances with the Ninesuns Sky Sect would have to be settled at a later date. He had a strong premonition that Jiang Chen had already come to Tai-ah City and had personally delivered the sword. Gong Wuji couldn't help but burn with rage at that thought. Not once, not twice, but Jiang Chen had made fun of him several times now! This deeply offended Gong Wuji's dignity. He was certainly amongst the seven pairs that were headed toward the Veluriyam Capital!

Gong Wuji was almost completely certain of this. "Jiang Chen, I want to see how you can escape my grasp! You think you're so smart but what you don't know is that once someone is marked by the eternal imprint of our sect, he can only dream of getting away!" Gong Wuji gnashed his teeth while his cold eyes looked in the direction of Veluriyam Capital. His frosty countenance was brimming with killing intent. Gong Wuji was enraged beyond words after successive failures and repeatedly falling victim to Jiang Chen's schemes.

Chapter 709: Gifting Huang'er an Opportunity

As for the Ninesuns Sky Sect, Elder Hao also brought a large group of elites back to the inn they were staying at.

"Elder Hao, are we really just going to let it go like this? Venerated elder Chen Lei has declared that he will seek revenge for Cao Jin's death..."

Elder Hao sneered as he answered in a dark mood, "Let it go? Of course not! However, Cao Jin's death probably has nothing to do with the Eternal Celestial Capital."

"Are they really not responsible for this?" The Ninesuns Sky Sect crowd were all surprised by this revelation.

Elder Hao frowned and said, "What's the current situation of the Eternal Celestial Capital?"

"They're acting suspiciously, like they've found a clue. They all look very confident in themselves. Could it be that they've found something about Jiang Chen?"

Elder Hao nodded, "Watch them closely regardless of what happens. I suspect that Cao Jin's death may have something to do with that Jiang Chen."

"Ah?" The crowd were taken aback when they heard that. It was obvious why they couldn't quite wrap their heads around that revelation. They had heard a lot about Jiang Chen lately. He'd been trapped in Mt. Rippling Mirage, but had somehow appeared at the Myriad Grand Ceremony. They'd heard that the entire Myriad Grand Ceremony had been blockaded, but he'd mysteriously slipped through Great Scarlet Mid Region's grasp with ease. They'd even heard that Jiang Chen had returned to the Myriad

Domain and dealt a severe blow to Gong Wuji, killing the man's most beloved grandson. These first rank sect disciples had to admit that Jiang Chen's repeated, almost legendary performances had stunned them greatly.

Once upon a time, Jiang Chen had just been a small fry in the sixteen kingdom alliance. If it hadn't been for the murder of Long Juxue, no one would know of his existence. It was because Jiang Chen had murdered Long Juxue and ruined the Ninesuns Sky Sect's plans for the sixteen kingdom alliance that they'd first heard mention of this character.

Of course, the reason they remembered Jiang Chen wasn't because he'd successfully destroyed their plans, but because Long Juxue had been the cultivation furnace that senior brother Yong Xingyun had selected for himself. Yong Xingyun was the third ranked out of the top ten true disciples in the Ninesuns Sky Sect. The fact that Jiang Chen had dared destroy senior brother Yong Xingyun's plans was the biggest reason why everyone in Ninesuns Sky Sect had committed this name to memory. They'd never imagined that Jiang Chen could grow so swiftly in just a few years. But how could he possibly kill one of their ten true disciples, Cao Jin?

Why did this sound so utterly ridiculous?

However, Elder Hao wouldn't be so bored as to create an imaginary enemy after that large battle not long ago. With his temper, such acts were beneath him. Everyone exchanged looks with each other; he was serious.

"Elder Hao, Jiang Chen was said to be at the initial stage sage realm. Even if he did run into some fortune, he still shouldn't be a match for Cao Jin."

"Indeed, Cao Jin is half step emperor realm. He may be ranked ninth among the top ten true disciples of Ninesuns Sky Sect, but even an initial stage emperor realm wouldn't dare claim that they could beat him with absolute certainty." The crowd threw in their opinions one after another. The meaning behind their words was quite obvious. Jiang Chen might be a monstrous genius, but he shouldn't be able to threaten Cao Jin at his current level. They didn't even think that a person who could kill Cao Jin existed in the entirety of the Myriad Domain.

Elder Hao sighed, "Under normal circumstances, I too would believe that Jiang Chen is absolutely not a match for Cao Jin. However, according to the latest results of the sect's investigation, Cao Jin once suffered a loss when he visited the Regal Pill Palace. After that, he joined hands with the second rank pill king Shi Zhen and formation genius Wu Heng, and all signs point to the fact that they headed to Mt. Rippling Mirage. I don't need to tell you that Jiang Chen was the only living person present there at the time. Even if Jiang Chen hadn't killed Cao Jin personally, he must've used a restriction or killing move already present inside Mt. Rippling Mirage. If we then factor in today's incident where the Eternal Celestial Capital's hunt for Jiang Chen was coincidentally interrupted by Cao Jin's Ocean Cover being delivered to Gong Wuji... It's obvious that the purpose of the delivery was to antagonize the two sects into fighting each other. Therefore, there's a ninety nine percent chance that the mastermind behind this all is Jiang Chen!"

Although Elder Hao had not seen any of this with his own eyes, the plethora of clues were almost all pointing towards Jiang Chen. Moreover, none of the deductions he'd made based on these clues contradicted each other. Accounting for all the factors, Jiang Chen's name practically bent over

backwards to present itself as the answer. Everyone's expressions was ugly as they processed Elder Hao's analysis.

"I can't believe that brute Jiang Chen is so cunning!"

"Sigh, as much as a genius as Cao Jin was, he was too reckless in the end. What a shame!"

"If that Jiang Chen really is this despicable, then we cannot possibly let him off easy, Elder Hao!"

Elder Hao sneered, "Let him off easy? Of course not! Have you forgotten what we're here for?"

The crowd came to a sudden realization. Indeed, what exactly are we here for? They were here to take advantage of the confusion! They were here to capture the Myriad Domain geniuses who'd made a trip into the Paramount Realm! Without a doubt, Jiang Chen had just made the top of their target list.

They'd originally had a lot of targets to capture, such as the Great Cathedral's Xiang Qin, Yue Baize and more. But now, Elder Hao realized that Jiang Chen was their true top target. In fact, he was even more important since they had lost all contact with the spy they had sent into the Regal Pill Palace after he entered the Paramount Realm.

According to their intelligence, Jun Mobai hadn't come out of the Paramount Realm. They'd also heard that the Great Scarlet Mid Region sects that'd attacked the Myriad Grand Ceremony and locked down the Paramount Realm had captured a bunch of geniuses who'd emerged. However, Jun Mobai was not amongst that group of captives. As a pawn of the Ninesuns Sky Sect, Jun Mobai possessed many trump cards that could've helped him escape unhindered. Moreover, the group of captives had ultimately been rescued by someone else. They deduced that the person most likely to have rescued them was also Jiang Chen.

If Jun Mobai really had been amongst those freed captives, he would have tried to contact the Ninesuns Sky Sect. However, they hadn't received any such signal. All the clues pointed to Jun Mobai's death in the Paramount Realm. But he'd entered the Paramount Realm to carry out a special mission. He would not have involved himself in pointless conflict. So, why had Jun Mobai perished in the Paramount Realm?

Elder Hao deduced that Jun Mobai had most likely discovered some clues inside the Paramount Realm. If the clues really were related to Emperor Featherflight's inheritance, then the situation would be complicated. Just who had killed Jun Mobai?

The Ninesuns Sky Sect's upper echelon had made their deductions, and they all thought that the Great Cathedral's Xiang Qin and Yue Baize were the only ones who had the raw power to kill Jun Mobai. Of course, Jiang Chen was one of the suspects as well. After all, Jiang Chen did defeat Xiang Qin in the Myriad Grand Ceremony. But he'd just been a secondary suspect. But after this incident, Elder Hao was now listing Jiang Chen as a primary suspect and their number one target. Whether or not Jiang Chen had really discovered Emperor Featherflight's inheritance in the Paramount Realm, Elder Hao felt that he had to capture Jiang Chen as soon as possible!

"Everyone, your mission is to do all you can to capture Jiang Chen. We absolutely must not allow Jiang Chen to fall into the Eternal Celestial Capital's hands!" Elder Hao wasted no time in giving out new

orders when his thoughts had travelled to this point. "Remember, Jiang Chen must be captured alive at all cost!"

"Also, deploy all the available forces we have to obstruct and hunt down Jiang Chen along the routes to Veluriyam Capital. If necessary, you may shed all pretenses of cordiality with the Eternal Celestial Capital!" Elder Hao was this operation's highest authority. Naturally, his words were law.

Someone came in with a report at this time, "Elder Hao, Gong Wuji has departed personally towards the northwest with a large group of men."

After a moment's astonishment, Elder Hao hurriedly ordered, "We depart immediately."

They had failed to track down Jiang Chen, but there was a dumb tactic they could use; chase after the Eternal Celestial Capital wherever they went. He would definitely be able to find Jiang Chen as long as he stuck close to Gong Wuji.

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Huang'er was slightly surprised as the two of them travelled. This was because Jiang Chen had slowed down so much that they weren't even travelling at half their usual speed. In fact, it didn't look like they were escaping a pursuit. They looked like they were on a vacation. After watching the sun dip below the horizon, Jiang Chen found a relatively secluded spot and entered deep underground as usual. This time however, he summoned the little cicada.

"Hi~ Do you need anything, big brother Chen?" The little cicada's life had been pretty comfortable as of late. Ever since it'd been baptized by the wood spirit spring, its bloodline had been improving by leaps and bounds.

Jiang Chen chuckled and said, "Little cicada, I want to borrow a drop of blood from you..."

Jiang Chen was prepared to haggle with the little cicada, but to his surprise it grinned and answered without hesitation, "Big brother Chen, I'll give you anything you ask for."

Jiang Chen was slightly surprised by its words. He discovered that the little cicada's tone and expression were growing more and more like a human's. Could it be that this little cicada was about to assume human form?

"Teehee, big brother Chen, I've already entered the sage realm, but I planned to cultivate some more before attempting my transformation! Here you go! Here's a drop of blood for you." The little cicada had bartered a couple of times with Jiang Chen and had haggled greatly with him at the beginning. But after the baptism of the wood spirit spring, the little cicada had taken Jiang Chen for its master and the two of them had gotten closer. It was obvious that the little fellow understood that a race like it needed a powerful patron to survive. Jiang Chen was without a doubt its best choice.

Jiang Chen was about to say some more after he received the droplet of blood, but the little cicada didn't give him a chance to say a word, "Big brother Chen, I'm going to cultivate now. When I can transform I'll talk to you and relieve your boredom then, okay?"

The little fellow flashed and vanished immediately. Jiang Chen chuckled and shook his head. He looked at Huang'er. She was no longer surprised by Jiang Chen's various fortuitous encounters. It wasn't really surprising that a man who possessed even a true dragon would possess a Thundercloud Cicada too.

"Miss Huang'er, this is a drop of cicada blood. Please refine it."

"Me?" Huang'er was slightly surprised by this.

"Mhmm. This cicada blood will ensure that you're immune to poison and lightning. It is incredibly precious," There were no arrogance in Jiang Chen's eyes, just complete sincerity.

"I... I haven't done anything to earn it though," Huang'er was shocked when she heard of the benefits of refining cicada blood. Even in her world, there were very few people who dared to claim that they were immune to poison and lightning.

"Miss Huang'er, I would never hurt you," Jiang Chen's eyes were sincere.

They could both see the sincerity in each other's eyes. Huang'er was a worldly child, and wasn't the type to play coy. After a moment's thought, she nodded, "Okay. I owe you a great favor again, Sir Jiang."

Jiang Chen also smiled cheerfully when he saw Huang'er accepting his gift without hesitation.

Chapter 710: Huang'er's True Face Is Revealed

Huang'er's comprehension ability and talent far exceeded Jiang Chen's imagination. The speed at which she refined the cicada's blood was so fast that it left him stupefied. Jiang Chen himself had spent quite a lot of time to refine the cicada's blood, but Huang'er actually completed it in just a few hours.

Moreover, Jiang Chen had checked the degree of her assimilation and found it to be no poorer than his.

"Miss Huang'er, I'm not a gossipy person, but sometimes I really can't help but wonder just where on the Divine Abyss Continent could someone as smart and talented as you be raised?" Jiang Chen's exclamation wasn't just empty praise; his breath really had been stolen away by the surprise that Huang'er had brought him. Huang'er's bearing, temperament and talent couldn't be found in even the first rank sects of the Upper Eight Regions, much less the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen had seen plenty of first rank sect disciples in the past, such as Cao Jin and Gong Qi. Setting aside Gong Qi, while Cao Jin's composure was decent and not as frivolous as the geniuses of the Myriad Domain, it was still a far cry from Huang'er's. The difference between them was night and day, like the gap between Wang Han and Cao Jin. There was an enormous gulf between the two.

Huang'er's expression turned stiff for a brief moment, as near indiscernible sadness flashed across her eyes. It was there only for a fleeting instant, but Jiang Chen didn't miss it. He couldn't help but be startled, before a bit of regret surfaced in his heart. He realized that his question might have been a little too forward, and that it would be difficult for Huang'er to answer. After the time they'd spent together, Jiang Chen had come to admire Huang'er's character and conduct. This was especially true when they were performing music together. It made him feel like he'd found a soul mate.

He had never experienced this feeling from any other woman. In fact, Jiang Chen had almost forgotten about her background and her looks. It was as if her mortal shell no longer mattered to him.

Huang'er suddenly let out a sigh. "Sir Jiang, there is something I've wanted to apologize for, actually, for the longest time now. It all started because a silly thought of mine that I've perpetuated to this day..." She looked up and stared at him with eyes that shone with sincerity. Then, she raised a hand, and wiped off the disguise she wore on her face in one pass. A face that was as exquisite as a painting abruptly appeared in front of Jiang Chen.

He was completely flabbergasted for a moment. Countless words used to describe a woman's beauty flashed through his mind, but at that moment, they all seemed so dull and lacking. He was a loss for words; nothing seemed to encapsulate his feelings right then. No turn of phrase, no metaphor or analogy could describe how shocked he was right then. Just what kind of force of creation did it take to create such a perfect and flawless human fairy? Her skin was creamy white, her breath the scent of orchids. She was as beautiful as a bright flower blooming through the mist, a painting within a painting. Even if the beautiful women of his past life were to descend to this realm he was in right now, they would still be inferior before Huang'er.

"Sir Jiang, back when Elder Shun took me along to find a cure for my sickness, I was timidly worried that I would encounter many lechers. That was why I changed my appearance on purpose. But I didn't realize that Sir Jiang is a true gentleman until later on, and it would appear that it was I whose thinking was too narrow-minded. Please forgive my past mistakes, Sir Jiang."

Jiang Chen broke free of his reverie and sighed softly, "Unbelievable, truly unbelievable. It is entirely normal that you would decide to hide such an unworldly, exquisite countenance, Miss Huang'er. Otherwise, you would attract attention wherever you go."

Huang'er had heard countless words of praise as she'd grown up, but she'd never been so pleased to hear them as she was today. Praise from someone one disliked was only torture. Only the praise from someone beloved would elicit true happiness. On the other side, Jiang Chen's composure slowly returned. He may have been somewhat startled at the transformation, but he hadn't completely forgotten himself. .

"Sir Jiang, it wasn't that I wanted to hide things from you. It's just that my background and origins involve too many complications. If I were to tell you, then I may bring trouble upon you instead."

If a regular people had said these words, then they were likely just maintaining a half-hearted pretense. However, Jiang Chen knew that Huang'er was absolutely not such a person. Moreover, Huang'er's clear, endlessly pure eyes were proof of her sincerity. The clarity in her eyes brooked not even the slightest inkling of lies. Jiang Chen had never seen such a pure and clean pair of eyes in either his past or current life. He nodded and didn't ask further into her background. Instead, he smiled broadly, "Miss Huang'er, I was simply blurting out my thoughts without thinking just now. I wasn't trying to inquire into your background on purpose."

"Mm, I know," Huang'er smiled faintly at him.

"In any case, it's about time. We should be going now," Jiang Chen stood up and revealed a trace of a meaningful smile. "I think they've almost caught up to us."

"Oh?" Huang'er was startled for a brief moment before she smiled faintly in response, "I thought that you hadn't noticed it yet, Sir Jiang. Does this mean that you sensed them from the start?"

Jiang Chen smiled and nodded to her, "That little trick of theirs might have been well hidden, but they can't fool my senses just yet. That being said, I couldn't have stopped them from applying a mark on me in that kind of situation anyway."

"Mm, I took a look at this mark just now. I believe that it will be rather troublesome to wipe it off. It might be very difficult to erase it without at least three days of time," Huang'er's slender brows raised slightly.

"Hehe, it's true that erasing it won't be a simple task, but I have my own ways to conceal it from detection. That being said, we don't need to do that right now." Jiang Chen was familiar with this kind of tracking mark from his past life. He had also seen marks that were at least tens or hundreds of times better than this one. But he was loath to give up such a good opportunity.

Back when they had hidden amongst the thousands of wandering cultivators, they had been singled out by the Eternal Celestial Capital because they were travelling as a pair. There, they'd been tagged with unique tracker mark. Jiang Chen was different from the other wandering cultivators. He knew very well what they had done to him and Huang'er. He'd just been incapable of stopping them from doing so at the time. Doing so would only reveal their identities.

Considering that there were thousands of people who had been tagged with the same tracker mark, it was unlikely that the Eternal Celestial Capital would quickly hone in on him. That was why Jiang Chen had chosen to wait patiently. However, as time passed, the Eternal Celestial Capital would remove more and more suspects from their lists. He figured that it was about time they'd narrowed their targets to the two of them. Moreover, Jiang Chen had purposely left behind many clues along the way because he wanted to draw his pursuers over. n-(Ove**Lb**1n

He had a new plan.

After the duo emerged from the ground, their relationship didn't change just because Huang'er had revealed her true appearance. Everything was as usual. However, Huang'er was feeling like a weight had just been lifted off her shoulders. She was no longer burdened by self-blame and guilt. She didn't think to ask Jiang Chen where they were going at all. She simply thought that travelling and adventuring with Jiang Chen like this was the happiest and most pleasant experience she had ever had in her twenty years of life.

The duo travelled in secret for an entire day, eventually arriving at a dark valley. Almost entirely covered in shadow, the valley seemed to sink into the depths of darkness, with no way to tell how deep or long it was. It looked like the personification of hell in the Divine Abyss Continent. An eerie atmosphere pervaded its outskirts, and it only seemed to grow more sinister further in.

"What is this place?" Huang'er asked curiously.

"A valley called Infant Shriek," Jiang Chen answered calmly.

Its name alone sent chills down one's spine.

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Gong Wuji appeared on an open plain about three hundred kilometers away from Infant Shriek. This open plain was rather large, serving as a crossroads for many travellers who sought to cross the region. Roads lined every cardinal direction, with many splitting off in the distance.

“Master Gong, we have tracked down four out of the seven pairs of solo cultivators who were travelling towards Veluriyam Capital. We’ve also homed onto another two pairs who’ve entered another city. The last pair has strayed slightly away from the path leading towards Veluriyam Capital, but only slightly.”

Intelligence flowed in steadily to Gong Wuji. He spread open his map and looked at it for a moment. Then, he ordered, “Contact the local forces of those cities, and send some men to arrest the two pairs who’ve entered the city!”

“Aren’t we going after them, Master Gong?”

“We will be heading towards the northwest. I have a strong feeling that the pair on the northwest path is the real target!” Gong Wuji smiled savagely. He pointed at the map and searched up and down, finally pointing at a certain location, “This is the place. There’s no way they could bypass Infant Shriek no matter how hard they try!”

Some expressions changed slightly when they heard the name ‘Infant Shriek’. “Master Gong, I’ve heard that that Infant Shriek contains an enormous amount of yin energy. Even the locals don’t visit it too often. These kind of places are only frequented by spirit alchemists.”

Gong Wuji sneered, “Locals? Are there any places we cultivators are afraid to travel to? If someone like Jiang Chen isn’t afraid of that place, then why should we be afraid of it?”

Jiang Chen had become Gong Wuji’s internal demon. Be it for revenge or for the secrets of the Paramount Realm, Gong Wuji had more than enough reason to capture Jiang Chen. He was tired of this endless tug-of-war already. This time, he would kill Jiang Chen no matter what the cost!

“Anyone amongst you afraid to go can stand forth now!” Gong Wuji’s cold gaze swept across everyone’s faces.

Their group was extremely powerful in their own right. Three thousand strong, they were all elites from the Eternal Celestial Capital as well as the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Which cultivator would admit to cowardice? This was especially true when they were standing right in front of Gong Wuji. The Great Scarlet Mid Region forces only wished that they could demonstrate on the spot just how courageous they were. What better opportunity was there to flatter Gong Wuji than now? They all cried out, “There’s nothing to be afraid of! We’re willing to follow the holy king and kill that little rat Jiang Chen as soon as possible!”

“We will listen to the holy king and grind that maggot to pieces! If we fail to catch that little rat Jiang Chen, then what joy is there to be found in our purposeless lives?”

“That’s right, I will not be able to sleep or eat well if I don’t catch this kid!”

“Let’s go, we’ll all go! Anyone who doesn’t go is a coward!”

A tiny smile finally appeared on Gong Wuji's face. He nodded, "Alright, I'll say this to all of you. I have not forgotten your hard work, and if we really manage to catch Jiang Chen, then I will owe all of you a favor. I will not stand by in the future if anyone troubles your sects in the future!"

Every Great Scarlet Mid Region sect became highly motivated upon hearing Gong Wuji's promise. Obtaining the favor of an Eternal Celestial Capital holy king was no different from finding a patron who was willing to support their sects!