

Three Realms 771

Chapter 771: The Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma

Although Pill King Yu wasn't sure where House Wei's guest pill king come from, privately speaking, he admired Jiang Chen more of the two competitors. This was because of the three pills Jiang Chen had brought out. Despite their average rank, they had all been incredibly pure, with a level of quality that couldn't be found at the hands of an average pill master. Moreover, all three pills had a unique personal style that Pill King Yu thought he'd encountered in the past. He just wasn't able to put his finger on it. Be it the Tiger Eruption Pill, the Half-step Immortal Elixir Pill or the Heptarune True Dragon Pill, they all possessed the marks of a confident master's hand. These pills were quite extraordinary. If he wasn't a judge who was ensuring the match's fairness, Pill King Yu would've admitted that he liked Taiyuan Tower's pills more.

The reason Taiyuan Lodge had been able to win was because its pills was of a higher rank. To put it bluntly, they were just bullying the weak. They were using emperor rank pills to compete against true saint rank or even saint rank pills. Although they'd won the stage, their victory rang slightly hollow. Moreover, everyone knew where the Longevity Pill came from. Even Pill King Yu himself didn't believe that Taiyuan Lodge had the capability to refine the Longevity Pill. It was likely the force who'd obtained the Longevity Pill's pill recipe who had refined it. They had probably only entrusted the Majestic Clan with selling them.

Of course, the rules said nothing about the store refining their pills with their own hands. A consigned batch of products was still within the rules. Although Pill King Yu admired Taiyuan Tower's pills more, he couldn't go against his conscience and claim that the Longevity Pill wasn't comparable to the Half-step Immortal Elixir Pill. Even if he did, the rest of the judges wouldn't do the same.

Yet, House Wei's pill king was actually calling out to Taiyuan Lodge with absolute confidence and fearlessness. His fighting will surprised even Pill King Yu. Regardless of the final outcome, Pill King Yu had to admit to feeling some sympathy and admiration for House Wei. After all, House Wei had proven themselves to possess genuine talent and skill. The fact that a ninth rank aristocratic family could resist the Majestic Clan this far was an incredible feat already. With Pill King Yu's intelligence, how could he not notice that the grudge between Taiyuan Lodge and Taiyuan Tower was a ploy by the Majestic Clan to suppress House Wei?

Taiyuan Tower had sent their invitation to him early on, whereas Taiyuan Lodge's invitation had only reached him last night. It was obvious from this alone that Taiyuan Lodge was aiming for Taiyuan Tower. To put it bluntly, the Majestic Clan had affixed House Wei in its crosshairs from the beginning. Pill King Yu was a person of great virtue and prestige. Although he had seen much darkness in this world, he hadn't lost sight of what was right and what was wrong as a pill king. Even though his sentiment wasn't so strong that he would unequivocally support House Wei, emotionally speaking, he was absolutely leaning towards their side. He stared rather meaningfully at Jiang Chen before casting a second glance at Pill King Rong of the Majestic Clan. Pill King Yu cleared his throat and spoke again, "The second stage of the first set is an ancient enigma. I'd come across this once in an ancient scripture long ago. To be honest, even after several hundred years of research, I have yet to crack all its mysteries..." At this point, Pill King Yu waved his hands. "I have two scrolls here written with a set of materials each. To be specific, 36 types of spirit herbs. The contents of the scrolls are completely identical. Your task is to use these 36

materials to brainstorm as many pill recipes as you can. The more the better. Whoever comes up with the most pill recipes wins the round. You have one hour. Remember, these spirit materials can be used infinitely. If you've written it down in one pill recipe, you can use it again in another pill recipe."

Once he was finished, Pill King Yu shook his sleeves slightly and delivered the scrolls into Jiang Chen and Pill King Rong's hands. Pill King Rong looked excited. It so happened that the pill recipe composition was one of his strengths. The thing he loved to research the most in his life was none other than the assembly and disassembly of all kinds of pill recipes. Jiang Chen revealed nothing on his face. When he received the scroll, he looked through it and felt the shapes of all thirty six spirit herbs flashing past his mind. Jiang Chen smiled inwardly when he looked through roughly thirty spirit herbs. He immediately figured out the true identity of the 'ancient enigma' Pill King Yu spoke of.

It was indeed an 'ancient enigma', and a very old one at that. This was because Jiang Chen had seen this enigma once or twice during his era. It possessed a very nice sounding name, the 'Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma'. It was called thus because this puzzle contained a total of thirty six spirit herbs, and they secretly corresponded to the thirty six calendar animals of the skies. It also just so happened that these thirty six spirit materials could produce a total of thirty six pill recipes, not one more and not one less.

It was impossible for the puzzle to contain even one more pill recipe. But if the answer lacked even one pill recipe, the enigma was imperfect. Countless pill dao seniors had spent who knew how much effort to put together the ultimate list for this ancient enigma. It was an exquisite pill riddle that countless geniuses wanted to crack. Those who couldn't solve it wanted to complete it even at the cost of their life. As for those who knew the 36 solutions, they wanted to overturn the answer key and come up with a 37th pill formula with equal determination. Unfortunately, no one had ever been able to come up with a thirty seventh recipe, despite the relentless efforts of countless pill dao masters.

Jiang Chen never imagined that this Pill King Yu would know the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma. However, it sounded like he hadn't mastered this pill enigma yet. Had he only heard of its reputation or understood only part of it? Either way, it wasn't Jiang Chen's problem, so he picked up his brush and paper and began writing in a masterful manner. He remembered this Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma so well that he could write it down backwards. He filled out all thirty six pill recipes of the puzzle in less than fifteen minutes.

It wasn't as if this pill enigma was some supremely confidential industry knowledge. To put it bluntly, it was just an interesting interlude of the pill industry. It was just like scholars who challenged customers with rhymed couplets, or chess players who studied all kinds of ancient chess puzzles.

"Are you done?" Pill King Yu was stunned when Jiang Chen suddenly stood up and turned in his paper. He never thought that Jiang Chen would finish in just fifteen minutes' time. An entire hour had been allocated for the round, but House Wei's pill king was turning in his answer already? Was this fellow just giving up? If that really was the case, then Pill King Yu would have to withdraw that bit about admiring Pill King Zhen earlier. Pill King Yu's original impression of House Wei's pill king was favorable, but if he was a weak minded person who gave up so easily, then he would not amount to much in the pill field. After accepting Jiang Chen's scroll with a flash of disappointment, Pill King Yu responded indifferently, "Please be seated and wait. The allotted time isn't up yet, and we cannot review your answer until then."

That was the proper rule. Taiyuan Lodge's Pill King Rong was still busy racking his brains on the other side. Every onlooker were stunned when they saw Pill King Rong so deep in thought and Taiyuan Tower's pill king submitting his answer so early.

What's going on? Pill King Rong, the sixth rank pill king well known for his research in pill recipes was looking harried, but the unknown Pill King Zhen of Taiyuan Tower had turned in his answer in less than fifteen minutes? This scene puzzled and surprised people to no end.

"I told you, didn't I? This Pill King Zhen of Taiyuan Tower is definitely a spy sent to House Wei by the Majestic Clan. He's a trap!"

"Hah, I'm actually starting to believe you a little. It does look like he's fooled House Wei."

"Sigh, can he at least not make it so obvious that he's screwing over his victims? Turning in his answer in fifteen minutes is just..."

Jiang Chen's actions had once again drawn the suspicion of onlookers at the scene. After all, his behavior were just too unusual. However, Jiang Chen returned to his own seat and looked completely unmoved by the comments tossed in his direction. His consciousness would occasionally flit over to the judges. In reality, he understood that he didn't need to worry about foul play. It was impossible that the judges would change his scroll or aid Pill King Rong in cheating.

The calmer Jiang Chen became, the more anxious and paranoid Pill King Rong became. Onlookers could freely suspect Jiang Chen of being a spy, but Pill King Rong knew that this Pill King Zhen of Taiyuan Tower certainly wasn't a member of the Majestic Clan. Since he wasn't sent by the Majestic Clan to trap House Wei, there shouldn't be any reason to give up just like that. But if he hadn't given up, then why did he turn in his answer so early? It couldn't be that he had come up with enough pill recipes to be assured of a complete victory? He refused to believe this. There was simply no way a nameless small fry could possess such skill!

For a moment or two, Pill King Rong wasn't able to calm down at all. It was Wang Teng who picked up some clues to his mood and sent a message to Pill King Rong, "Don't panic. That kid may be trying to disturb your mind so that you lose your concentration. Don't fall for his trap and just perform at your usual level!"

Pill King Rong trembled slightly when Wang Teng's reminder reached his ears. Taking a breath, he calmed down. He concentrated on the enigma once more and studied it seriously.

On the other side, Jiang Chen wasn't looking at Pill King Rong at all. He wasn't even looking towards the opposite side. Pill King Rong's performance wasn't concerning him in the slightest. No matter how well he performed, the prerequisite to even get a draw with Jiang Chen was to master the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma. In other words, this match was going to be a draw at best.

But if his opponent had mastered the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma beforehand, then he wouldn't be scratching his head anxiously and furrowing his eyebrows in thought. He should've turned in his answer a long time ago just like Jiang Chen. That was why Jiang Chen's mindset was as firm as a mountain. He'd known early on that this round was his already. Meanwhile, House Wei was unsure as to what Jiang Chen was planning. Thankfully, they had seen all sorts of miracles from Jiang Chen, so they didn't try to

interrupt him, even though they itched to do. However, they weren't able to hide their anxiety from appearing on their face.

Finally, the hour passed. Although Pill King Rong was feeling a little reluctant, he turned in his paper obediently. He also shot a fierce glare at Jiang Chen in passing, as if it could increase his morale and aid him in beating his enemy. Jiang Chen smiled disdainfully and swept his glance right past Pill King Rong like he was watching an idiot preen.

Now that both scrolls had been turned in, Pill King Yu was anxious to look at Jiang Chen's answer. He had been observing Jiang Chen since the beginning, and didn't find any signs of the impatience he'd expected. So why had he turned in his answers so early?

Chapter 772: Comparisons Beget Frustration

Pill King Yu was rather eager to announce the results—he simply couldn't see through House Wei's guest pill king. Was he a frivolous person pretending to be earnest, or did he truly have other tricks up his sleeves? The judge put Pill King Rong's scroll to one side and opened Jiang Chen's first. Nobody felt it odd that the earlier submission was being reviewed first. It was in the following moment that a truly baffling scene played out. Pill King Yu's eyes were glued to the scroll after a first sweep through its contents. It was as if some invisible force was drawing him in. He jumped up from his seat in excitement—appearing both shocked and delighted as his face eventually lit up—it was almost as if he was intoxicated. Every change in expression were vividly displayed on his face.

The audience was stunned by the scene playing out before them. What within the scroll was so attractive that it could cause a dignified, solemn pill king to act in such an odd manner?

The other pill kings couldn't help but come together to discuss this matter. The other judges were also racking their brains while glancing at the scroll. Their expressions were similar to kids fighting over candy; no one was willing to give way.

"Hahaha..." Pill King Yu suddenly broke into laughter. His eyes were tinged red as tears fell uncontrollably. He stayed hunched over the desk and sobbed. This odd scene petrified everyone present.

And what was the matter now? Why had Pill King Yu broken into tears without rhyme or reason? Was there a reason to be so emotional? Could it be that the pill king from Taiyuan Tower had submitted some melodramatic tale instead of pill recipes? How on earth could he have forced a pill king, who had lived for no less than a thousand years, to lose his composure and even break down into tears?

"I'd never have thought... thought that I would live to see a completed Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma. Who would've thought? This... is this divine providence?"

Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma? Many pill kings were shocked after hearing these six words. They had heard of the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma before, but most of them were only familiar with the name and not its contents. They didn't fully know the 36 spirit herbs, to say nothing of 36 pill recipes. However, many had still heard of the famed Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma.

Being a senior in pill dao, Pill King Yu was vastly experienced and informed. He was conversant with the 36 spirit herbs, but had never seen the completed 36 pill recipes of Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma. That

was why he had lost his composure so dramatically, and couldn't help but break into loud sobs after seeing Jiang Chen's answer scroll. He was particularly excited. Despite his advanced level in pill dao and the hundreds of years he'd poured into studying the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma, he'd only been able to unravel some twenty odd pill recipes. He'd always suspected, deep in his heart, that this Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma was bogus, a pretentious trick of their forebears. He'd thought that creating 36 pill recipes might not actually be possible. But today, he'd discovered that he was still truly a frog at the bottom of the well despite being a ninth rank pill king. The Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma was an ancient and renowned pill riddle. How could it be fake?

The other judges studying the scroll were intoxicated by the contents as they lost themselves within. It took a good while before they finally came back to themselves. They then turned to Pill King Rong's scroll and found nine pill recipes described within. Under normal circumstances, completing this much within an hour was quite good. But it was no better than trash when compared to Jiang Chen's scroll. After regaining control of his emotions with visible effort, Pill King Yu announced loudly. "For the first round, the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma, the victory goes to Taiyuan Tower by an overwhelming margin!"

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A fair amount of subjectivity was obvious within Pill King Yu's tone. Normally, words like "overwhelming margin" shouldn't be used by a judge. Pill King Yu, however, still felt that to be insufficient to express the ecstatic delight in his heart. "Countless top ranked pill kings in the Divine Abyss Continent have been unable to crack this Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma. Who would've thought that today, it'd be revealed in its entirety? Having lived for so long, I finally understand why a man enlightened in the morning would accept if he were to die in the evening!"

Although the less educated were unable to fully comprehend these erudite words, they were able to grasp the general idea. Pill King Yu was greatly moved and felt that being able to see the completed Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma was a great revelation. He would have no regrets even if he died then and there. Many turned pale with astonishment as word spread through the surrounding pill kings.

The completed Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma? There was actually someone in the Divine Abyss Continent who could complete the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma? This was a legend of the Divine Abyss Continent—a pill riddle for which there was no solution! A mere pill king of House Wei was actually able to decipher the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma and write down all 36 pill recipes?

This news once again petrified everyone present. Even Wang Teng couldn't help but speak out. "Pill King Yu, I hope I don't come across as skeptical, but I've also heard of this Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma. I've heard it to be an unsolvable riddle. Could this brat have deliberately misled everyone?"

Pill King Yu's expression turned solemn. "Young master Wang, are you suspecting our professional integrity or questioning our working standards?" Pill King Yu was obviously upset. The Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma was a divine puzzle to him. How could he tolerate Wang Teng's blasphemy? He spoke loudly, "This old man has been trying to unravel the mysteries behind this riddle for hundreds of years and am most qualified to judge this matter. I've only been able to come up with twenty three pill recipes in total. The ones I've discovered are all in this answer scroll along with the thirteen that I haven't! Whoever questions the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma is committing blasphemy!"

Pill King Yu's attitude made everything clear. The other judges all nodded in agreement. They had all studied this Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma at some point in their lives and knew that the answer scroll wasn't fake.

An unreconciled Wang Teng continued to press his case, "Pill King Yu is one of the most prominent experts of the pill trade in the Veluriyam Capital. Even you, your excellency, can only deduce twenty three recipes, and yet a mere guest pill king was able to decipher the whole pill chart in just a quarter of an hour. Does no one else find this odd?"

Wang Teng immediately shifted the spearhead towards Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen smiled nonchalantly and glanced at Wang Teng as though the latter was an idiot. "Could it be that I'm required to report how I mastered the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma to Sir Wang?"

He was giving them a taste of their own medicine. When they had previously discussed the origins of the Longevity Pill, Wang Teng had stated that they had no need to prove nor report anything regarding the source of the pills to him. Jiang Chen was simply returning the favor in kind.

Wang Teng's ears turned scarlet, momentarily lost for a retort. On the other hand, Pill King Yu was feeling a complex blend of remorse and curiosity. He was regretting looking down on House Wei's guest pill king earlier, thinking the latter was giving up on the competition. But he was also curious as to how this guest pill king from House Wei was so knowledgeable about the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma.

"Pill King Zhen, this old man means no offense, but I hope you can indulge my curiosity. The Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma is an unsolvable conundrum of the Divine Abyss Continent. Where... where did you see this completed version?" Pill King Yu wasn't deliberately making things difficult for Jiang Chen. He was truly just curious, and his tone was that of requesting a consultation.

Jiang Chen laughed, "Actually there's no such thing as an unsolvable conundrum. I had the fortune of meeting a sage during my youth, from whom I learned the dao of pills for over ten years. My mentor was a rather eccentric senior. He told me many interesting stories about the field of pills and medicine. I heard of this Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma's solution when I was ten, and committed it to memory ever since."

Pill King Yu was absolutely dumbstruck when he heard Jiang Chen's words. He had studied this riddle religiously for hundreds of years, but this person in front of him had mastered it at the age of ten. This... this is what was meant by comparisons begetting frustration! However, Pill King Yu was already an elder and naturally wouldn't succumb to jealousy. He was surprised, but now even more curious after hearing Pill King Zhen's description of his mentor. Just how powerful a pill dao expert would his master be? Pill King Yu's mind was besieged with a great many questions. He wanted nothing more than to sit down and chat with Jiang Chen deep into the night, nay, for three days and three nights straight! But he didn't forget that he was currently judging a wager between two houses. It wasn't proper for him to express too much of his emotions at this point. It might lead to unnecessary finger-pointing.

He suppressed his curiosity for the moment and nodded slowly before glancing communicatively at the other eight judges. They all came to a unanimous final decision that there was no doubt about Taiyuan Tower's victory in the first round. Wang Teng was utterly dissatisfied and full of suspicions. But the other party had no obligation to report anything to him, much like the matter regarding the Longevity Pill. He

gnashed his teeth in frustration, but could only pinch his nose and eat the loss. Fortunately, this was just an unexpected development. “Damn, what a lucky bastard! This brat mastered the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma a long time ago. He just won by pure luck this round!” Wang Teng consoled himself.

Pill King Yu slowly regained control over his emotions. “The second round of the pill king contest takes a different approach from the first, but still moves in the same direction. This time, we’ll be testing not only the pill kings’ theoretical knowledge, but also their practical skills.” As he explained, he waved his hands to summon two assistants to his side.

Each assistants carried a large tray, on which was an identical set of forty eight spirit herbs. The grade of these ingredients weren’t very high. Most of them were only spirit herbs suitable for use by origin realm cultivators.

“You will both be given a set of forty eight spirit herbs with some of the strongest fusion properties. A large number of possible combinations are possible between them. Your objective is to compose a pill recipe with these and then refine your pill. The competitor whose product is of a higher rank will be declared victor. We’ll judge based on the purity and quality of the pills if the final products are of identical rank. Supreme rank pills are the most optimal, followed by upper rank, and then mid and lower rank.” Pill King Yu read the rules out loud. Jiang Chen was already quite familiar with them. These contests were quite popular in the Divine Abyss Continent. He had already experienced a similar competition back at Mt. Rippling Mirage.

After receiving their respective trays, the two contestants were immediately isolated from the outside world by restrictive formations. “Remember, the time limit for this stage of the competition is two hours. If every aspect of your products are identical, the person who first completes the refinement is the winner,” Pill King Yu reminded.

Chapter 773: An Odd Choice of Materials

The round officially started after the judge’s declaration. Both participating pill kings were isolated inside a restriction formation that allowed the people outside to see through it, but not vice versa. Therefore, there was no need to worry about copycats. The one thing Jiang Chen was most familiar with during his past life was refining pills. The moment the restriction activated, he immediately attuned himself with nature. The forty eight spirit materials appeared in his mind and merged with each other over and over. His mind was like highly precise machine that swiftly tested all kinds of combinations. To Jiang Chen, this state was as easy as eating or sleeping.

The level of all forty eight materials definitely wasn’t high. They were just saint rank spirit herbs that corresponded to origin realm cultivators. True saint rank herbs were the ones that corresponded to sage realm cultivators. There were pitifully few true saint rank spirit herbs in the given forty eight, just eight. They were obviously insufficient for a pill recipe.

Jiang Chen’s mind began to spin quickly. He had two lifetimes of pill refining experience, so the thing he lacked the least was experience. These spirit herbs felt as familiar as his own fingertips. Countless thoughts and inspirations came to him. A couple of pill recipes appeared in his mind. However, the level of the pill recipes weren’t that high. They could barely be considered a quasi-true saint rank recipe, but this wasn’t the result Jiang Chen wanted.

“This is an incredibly demanding round. I’ll be able to win as long as the pill’s level is high enough. Therefore, the key to victory for this match lies in the sophistication of my pill’s level, not its level of precision.” Jiang Chen understood the rules and knew that a high level would automatically deliver victory to him. If the spirit herbs were all of the same rank, then it would be a competition of precision, purity and quality.

Jiang Chen swept his gaze across the spirit herbs again. Once, twice... Two hours had been allotted for this round. Therefore, it was unrealistic to dream of creating an exceptionally high level pill. However, he couldn’t guarantee victory if the pill’s level was too low.

Suddenly, an idea came into Jiang Chen’s mind. As of late, he had spent plenty of time researching the Deviant Pill Faction. Wasn’t their creed one about using the strangest materials to create the most unique and famous pill recipes? The most direct pursuit of the Deviant Pill Faction was to use strange materials and unexpected refining methods to create familiar pills. They also sought recipes that cut costs to a minimum. A pill made by the Deviant Pill Faction might cost less than half of what other people used when creating the same pill.

The Deviant Pill Faction was known for their uncanny craftsmanship, seeking a path in pill dao that went against orthodoxy. They were often able to use cheap materials to refine high level pills. It wasn’t uncommon for them to come up with extraordinary results that looked like true alchemy as they sought to excavate the maximum potential of spirit herbs. This was also the biggest charm of this faction, or they wouldn’t have become an outstanding name among many other pill dao factions, drawing the fanatical admiration of countless pill masters and turning them into diehard fans of the Deviant Pill Faction.

It was undeniable that many pill kings had great skill in pill refining. However, most of them had an obscene amount of wastage when it came to their refining process. Any high level pill they refined was the result of mountains of high rank spirit herbs. They would ensure success with pure quantity, and then skill. Even if they wasted their materials, it only made them look better to their peers.

Meanwhile, the Deviant Pill Faction hated inefficiency to the core. If they could refine a pill just using saint rank materials, they would never use a true saint rank materials. This was the charm of the Deviant Pill Faction. Their pursuit for cost reduction had reached an insane level of devotion. Quite a lot of inspiration came to Jiang Chen after he started to approach things like one of the Deviant Pill Faction. Suddenly, a pill’s name appeared in Jiang Chen’s mind.

The Triphase Pill! This pill could create the cycle of earth, wood and fire elements inside one’s body. The term ‘Triphase’ represented the cycles of the three elements. Earth grows wood, wood feeds fire, and fire reduces all to earth... The Triphase Pill differed from the great five phase cycle. It was a three phase cycle that enabled cultivators who cultivated these three elements to instantly replenish their inner energy.

There were no cultivators - even the emperor realm cultivators - whose inner energy was inexhaustible. Cultivators cultivated energy, and energy was a consumable resource. A cultivator would use up large amounts of inner energy in battle, over long distances, or just practicing their art. Even Titled Great Emperors might exhaust their inner energy if they were embroiled in an intense battle and had executed

several powerful techniques in a row. The Triphase Pill was a pill that sought to remedy that by replenishing one's inner energy.

Of course, the target of the Triphase Pill was extremely specific. It was made only for cultivators whose attributes were that of earth, wood and fire. One could say that this pill was tailored for just those cultivators. Moreover, the most amazing thing about the Triphase Pill was that it had no cultivation restriction. It could be used by either origin, sage or emperor realm cultivators. The level of the pill was usually solely determined by the level of the user. If the pill worked for a sage realm cultivator, then it would be categorized as a true saint rank pill. If it worked for an emperor realm cultivator, then it would be categorized as an earth rank pill. In general, the Triphase Pill was most commonly used by sage realm cultivators. Thus, most often treated it as a true saint rank pill.

Jiang Chen stared at the materials in his hands and deduced that he absolutely could refine the Triphase Pill with them if he followed the style of the Deviant Pill Faction. Moreover, he was sure that the pill's level would be quite high. That was how incredible the Deviant Pill Faction was. It wasn't impossible to create an earth rank pill with saint rank spirit herbs. Of course, it was normally inconceivable for such a ridiculous leap in rank to happen.

Generally speaking, a leap of one rank was pretty common, but a leap of two ranks was definitely a lot more difficult. An apt comparison would be the notion of refining a sky rank pill with just true saint rank spirit herbs. It was a difficult task even for a Deviant Pill Faction pill master. Even the masters of the Deviant Pill Faction prayed for luck sometimes. They couldn't always create a miracle anytime they wanted to. They had to combine all kinds of coincidences to be able to occasionally manifest a success.

Jiang Chen gave his Triphase Pill recipe a thorough simulation and was confident that he had a ninety percent chance of success. Normally, a pill master would jump straight to work if the pill even had a thirty percent chance of success. Jiang Chen took a moment to settle his emotions, took out the Skysnatcher Cauldron and began heating it...

He had spent a lot of time in researching the Skysnatcher Cauldron lately, and he had come to the conclusion that this cauldron was very much a product of the Deviant Pill Faction. The style of its creation and naming was very in keeping with an outstanding achievement of the Deviant Pill Faction. Skysnatcher was as its name implied. Its function was to snatch fortune from heavens' hands. This school of thought was definitely deserving of this claim.

Jiang Chen had used the Skysnatcher Cauldron a few times, and the results had been even better than he'd imagined. With the Skysnatcher Cauldron in hand, he felt like the chances of successfully refining the Triphase Pill had increased dramatically.

Two hours weren't long, and Jiang Chen wasn't willing to waste even a second. Once he had selected all the materials to refine the Triphase Pill, he immediately discarded the rest to a corner. The speed at which Jiang Chen had chosen his materials surprised a lot of the onlookers. The nine judges were exchanging glances with each other. They couldn't possibly overlook the fact that there was only one true saint rank spirit herb out of all the materials that Jiang Chen had selected. The rest were all saint rank spirit herbs. Pill King Yu felt a twinge of surprise. Out of all forty eight types of spirit herbs, only eight were true saint rank spirit herbs. Technically speaking, Jiang Chen should have selected at least five of them to be able to refine a pill of the highest level. So why had this pill king of House Wei selected

only one true saint rank spirit herb? The rest of his materials were all just saint rank spirit herbs. This selection was quite perplexing.

Pill King Yu really admired Jiang Chen. The Tiger Eruption Pill, Heptarune True Dragon Pill and Half-step Immortal Elixir Pill were obvious indicators of Pill King Zhen's youthful potential. The revelation of the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma especially, had laid out a new world before Pill King Yu's eyes. But now, he was a little disappointed at Jiang Chen's choice of spirit herbs. With those materials, the best he would be able to refine was an upper level saint rank pill. Even if he overperformed, the absolute best he could come up with was a quasi-true saint rank pill.

What was the quasi-true saint rank? That was the designation for pills that were in reality just a saint rank pill, though it could barely be categorized as a true saint rank pill. If the bar was set a bit lower, then it could be called a true saint rank pill. If the bar was a tad higher, then it could be a saint rank pill. That was what quasi-true saint rank meant.

"This Pill King Zhen had the benefit of an extraordinary teacher in pill dao when he was young, but he ultimately lacks in practical experience. He may be well versed with many high level classics and fixed pill recipes, but he is too young and poor because of his age. His knowledge might not be able to make up for his lack of experience." Although Pill King Yu felt a little pity for Pill King Zhen, the former's admiration hadn't fallen because of this conclusion he'd formed. In his opinion, Pill King Zhen was only suffering from a lack of age and experience. With his intelligence and comprehensive ability, he would most likely become a famous pill king in the future.

The rest of the judges were also shaking their heads inwardly after they saw Jiang Chen's choice of spirit herbs. They'd also seen the materials Pill King Rong had selected. As experts in pill dao, they already knew from his materials that he was aiming to refine a mid level true saint rank pill. It would be very impressive if he was able to do this in just one hour's time. Even if the judges were to take the field themselves, that was likely the best they could've come up with. Though it wasn't the highest possible level of pill they could come up with, Pill King Rong looked like he had a ninety chance of winning this battle.

After all, even if the pill master wished to create a high level pill and came up with the materials to do so, two hours were simply insufficient to refine a higher level pill. This two-hour time limit was extremely important in that it prevented either party from creating a higher level pill with the available spirit herbs. A limit on time and material squeezed the competitors down to the wire.

The audience wasn't as professional as the nine judges, nor their insight as sharp, but they still gleaned a bit from both pill masters' choice of materials. No matter how they looked at it, the choice of materials made by Taiyuan Lodge's Pill King Rong were of a much higher level than Pill King Zhen's.

Chapter 774: Stunning Fire Control Technique

Wei Tianxiao was somewhat disappointed after seeing Jiang Chen's herb selection, but he wasn't convinced of the outcome. He knew that having a second rank pill king compete against a sixth rank pill king was already quite unfair. But he also knew that there was no other way out. They would at least go down in style! Even if they lost the wager, they'd at least express their loyalty clearly to the Coiling Dragon Clan.

Young master Ji San's thoughts, however, were not on the competition. He was still in stunned shock. His thoughts had been wandering after Pill King Zhen had deciphered the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma. He recalled the Pine Crane Pill Jiang Chen had mentioned before. He had been somewhat skeptical at first, believing its effects to have been exaggerated. But after witnessing the completion of the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma, young master Ji San couldn't help but realize that this Pill King Zhen from House Wei might be a person of great origins. He wasn't privy to Pill King Zhen's actual identity, but was certain the latter had been mentored by a great master. Furthermore, this teacher should be at a much higher level than these top ranked pill kings like Pill King Yu. This also meant that his teacher might possibly be one of those fabled pill emperors! But even so, one of those legendary existences still might not be able to grasp the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma in its entirety.

A pill dao expert with a complete grasp of the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma couldn't possibly be lacking in knowledge and experience. It was highly unlikely that Pill King Zhen's claim regarding the existence of the Pine Crane Pill was just an irresponsible remark. Young master Ji San had only previously seven parts confident, but now he was absolutely convinced. "This Pill King Zhen is definitely someone with a glorious future. I, Ji Ole Third, have made countless friends but laughably, all are fairweather companions. Very few can be counted on in times of need. It's actually this incidental acquaintance who might have such a potential. I must maintain this friendship no matter the outcome of this competition. Our Coiling Dragon Clan may yet rise again, if in the future, we find an opportunity to request a batch of Pine Crane Pills of his master."

Imagining all the wonderful possibilities greatly excited young master Ji San. As for the present contest, he didn't particularly care about it. What did temporary gains or losses matter? His thoughts and energy were focused on the Pine Crane Pill. They already possessed the Goldencrown Cloudcrane and only lacked the pinecone from the Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine. Young master Ji San firmly believed the heavens wouldn't bar every path. No matter how concealed, there was bound to be a path towards hope and light amidst the heavenly dao.

In contrast to the young master Ji San who lost in reverie, those from the Majestic Clan were all highly focused and confident. The seventh rank pill king was the highest ranking member of Wang Teng's entourage. He was reporting something to the latter. "Young clan lord, Pill King Rong's selected batch of materials is higher than Taiyuan Tower's by an entire level. We're almost certain to win this round, considering Pill King Rong's skill as a sixth rank pill king. Now it only remains for us to see whether he can successfully complete the refining within two hours." This seventh rank pill king possessed piercing insight. He'd also observed the brilliance of Pill King Rong's herb selection, just as the judges had.

Wang Teng had also noticed the technical disparity and nodded with delight. He was all smiles; he felt everything was proceeding according to plan. Taiyuan Lodge had already obtained victory during the first stage. Their opponent had won the first round of the second stage by sheer luck. But if Taiyuan Lodge won the second round, their scores would draw again. Then Taiyuan Lodge would only need to win the third round of the second stage to become the victor of the whole competition. House Wei's store would then change ownership and become the Majestic Clan's property!

Wang Teng was feeling ecstatic at the mere thought. He'd have trampled House Wei, slapped the Coiling Dragon Clan's face and secured House Wei's store in the Farmer's God Street Market at the same time. It was like killing three birds with one stone! Truthfully, Wang Teng had harbored certain misgivings before the contest had begun. He was suspicious of House Wei's unusual storefront wager. But at the

moment, he was quite certain that it had been a bluff in order to force him to back off and suppress the Taiyuan Lodge's morale.

Humph! Did you think this kind of scheme can trick our Majestic Clan? You lot from House Wei think too highly of yourselves! Wang Teng felt inwardly disdainful and reckoned that House Wei must've be hopping mad at the moment. No one in their right mind would offer their only storefront at Farmer's God Market as a wager. A mere ninth rank aristocratic family wants to compete against my Majestic Clan? They're simply looking to die!

Wang Teng was supremely smug. Victory was now in sight and so close at that. This sense of accomplishment elevated his mood greatly. It was as if he was already standing on the summit and taking in the panoramic scenery.

He couldn't help but glance at young master Ji San with glee. He wanted to see young master Ji San's troubled expression. But Wang Teng didn't expect to see the other lost in reverie as if the present contest didn't concern him in the least.

"Could Ji Ole Third have abandoned all hope?" Wang Teng felt a shred of uncertainty after seeing the young master's current state. He then turned to check on the father and son from House Wei. They were now looking rather distressed. This was especially true of Wei Tianxiao, who'd almost turned green. Wang Teng was reassured after seeing their expressions. n/.0ve**LB**In

"Wei Tianxiao, this is what happens when you refuse my toast. You're forced to drink a forfeit! Our Majestic Clan gave House Wei an opportunity. Not only did you scorn our kindness, but you also worked to oppose us! You simply don't know how to recognize the change of the times!" Wang Teng's contagious delight affected the father and son from House Tong as well as their subordinates. Victory seemed almost assured for those from the Taiyuan Lodge.

Others from within the audience secretly sighed after seeing Jiang Chen's selection of materials. They were originally hoping that Taiyuan Tower would produce a miracle of sorts and take the second stage of the competition in one fell swoop. They wanted him to prove it was possible for the weak to triumph over the powerful! But as things stood, it seemed the powerful were still powerful in the end, just as the weak were still weak. The Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma was likely just an unexpected hitch!

Jiang Chen was now already lost in his own world of pill dao. Ordinary folks couldn't comprehend the methods of the Deviant Pill Faction. But the principles were clear as day to him. The two hour time limit was quite pressing. Jiang Chen couldn't and didn't hide his strength any longer. He began to exhibit all of his various techniques, and only the heavens knew just how many fire control techniques Jiang Chen had mastered. However, this was obviously not the right occasion to show off flashy techniques. He merely activated the True Fires of Ninety Nine, the technique that had thoroughly filled Shen Trifire with admiration back at the Regal Pill Palace. The True Fires of Ninety Nine utilized the principles of layering and demanded fine control skills and proficient composition ability.

Jiang Chen had played with the True Fires of Ninety Nine countless times during his past life. But he wouldn't have chosen to use it here if he didn't have to consider the strict time limit. But the current situation was urgent and required more intense flames than usual. Furthermore, the Deviant Pill Faction didn't reject such fire control techniques. On the contrary, they even preferred them.

Pill King Yu's eyes lit up the moment Jiang Chen started his fire control technique. He'd just been sighing after witnessing Jiang Chen's selection of herbs and immediately noticed something different about this technique. Simply watching this fire control ability felt breathtaking.

Pill King Zhen had selected a batch of mediocre ingredients, but his fire control was spectacular! The contrast was too extreme. Pill King Yu's wildly fluctuating impressions made it difficult for him to accurately judge this young pill king. "Could it be that I've misjudged him? Is there some hidden wisdom behind his choice of unremarkable materials?" Pill King Yu was not one to go about with his nose in the air just because he was a ninth rank pill king. On the contrary, he was still full of passion and still hungered for new knowledge. Pill King Yu's eyes naturally lit up when he witnessed a fire control technique the like even he'd never seen before.

"It seems this Pill King Zhen had truly been mentored by an illustrious master. His fire control technique is obviously extraordinary. I have travelled far and wide throughout the Upper Eight Regions and exchanged knowledge with countless peers, yet I've never seen such a technique of fire control. I truly wonder who Pill King Zhen's master is." Pill King Yu was afire with curiosity regarding Jiang Chen's origins. How powerful would the mentor be if even the student is so accomplished? He had to admit that the mentor of House Wei's pill king must be someone at a much higher level than himself. He was, no doubt, a pill emperor. Pill King Yu was even slightly envious of Jiang Chen at this point.

Jiang Chen's fire control technique also gave pause to many who were previously certain of his defeat. Although not everyone was a pill dao genius, they were still able to discern the skill of such a technique. Not even a high ranking pill king might be able to perform such a high level fire control method.

"Who would've thought House Wei had invited a genius in fire control!" The spectators were secretly surprised. Even Wei Tianxiao felt momentarily enraptured and forgot to bother with calculating his potential losses.

The highly complacent Wang Teng began to frown after seeing Jiang Chen's fire control technique. "This brat wasn't just for show after all. It seems his fire control technique was indeed taught to him by a great master." Wang Teng was startled, but he didn't believe the opponent would win with just this fire control technique. In the end, pill refining required a comprehensive set of skills. Defeat was assured if one couldn't refine the higher ranked pill, no matter how dazzling his fire control abilities were. That was the reason why Wang Teng was still fairly calm despite being somewhat surprised.

The nine judges, however, had already forgotten to observe Pill King Rong—the latter's choice of materials and refinement methods were all conventional—they'd probably be performing the same procedures in his shoes. The process itself wasn't very different, the only distinction being the brilliance of one's methods. It wasn't exactly something to wait with bated breaths. But it was an entirely different matter with House Wei's pill king. His selection of ingredients was mediocre at best, but his fire control technique was extremely brilliant. How could a person with such deep knowledge of fire control techniques not know how to select materials properly? They all felt it impossible. They were all eager to be the first to witness what new and dazzling technique House Wei's pill king had to show them.

Chapter 775: The Triphase Pill

Jiang Chen had never underperformed on the matter of pills. Though it was only a small display of skill, the requisite degree of technique for this segment was rather high. Only experts could appreciate

artistry; the rest were just along for the ride. Jiang Chen's plain choice of materials was universally deemed mediocre, because no depth of skill could be appreciated from the act. But when Jiang Chen began to show his fire-controlling skills, the experts present began to recognize his finesse.

Moreover, the methodology that followed caused more than a little head-scratching. It completely defied common expectations. The materials were thrown in with almost careless abandon. It seemed completely random. In that moment, even Pill King Yu was perplexed by the eccentricity of Jiang Chen's technique. *What pill is he refining, really?*

Pill King Yu was more than a little confounded. Jiang Chen's technique seemed to follow no rhyme or reason, and very little about it looked routine. Usually when making pills, the timing of inserting materials and how the fire should be controlled followed a series of rigid steps. A certain mastery and precision of heat and timing was needed. Doubtless, Jiang Chen's haphazard technique would have left a terrible impression on any pill king with a serious and inflexible personality. How was this attitude suitable for making pills? He was playing like a child! *no! 17e)lb)In*

However, after a period of careful observation, Pill King Yu noticed a hidden order to Jiang Chen's madness. Though his placement of materials seemed random, there was still some logic to it, although not a pattern of thinking normal people could make heads or tails of.

"Pill King Zhen uses some strange techniques, but there's a pattern. Each time, he first puts in an earth element spirit herb, then a wood element, then a fire element ... this cycle is repeated three times, for a total of nine ingredients. ...Hmm? What a unique pill-making technique. Isn't it too simple with only materials from three elements? How would such monotonous elements be fused together?" Pill King Yu gleaned little insights from his observations. Though he didn't miss a single detail, he couldn't put the full picture together. He was utterly mystified by the proceedings.

"Pill King Yu, Taiyuan Tower's pill king... what pill is he making?" Another judge poked his head over, asking in hushed tones. The other judges' faces were similarly lit up with curiosity. Jiang Chen's bizarre actions were too difficult for them to understand.

Pill King Yu smiled wryly, scratching at his head of white hair. "I can't make anything of it either. His choice of material and methodologies are too radical. If he's not just playing, then the only thing that comes to mind is that school that's almost died out..."

"The Deviant Pill Faction?" Another pill king to the side piped up as a lightbulb flashed. The other judges turned solemn as well at the three words 'Deviant Pill Faction'. That faction?

It was a pill faction that was almost legendary. Rumors had been circulating for ages, but a true master of the faction was exceedingly rare. A few pills from that faction circulated through the open markets every so often, but many of those pills were such in form only, not in spirit. Though they claimed to be of the Deviant Pill Faction, they lacked the various essential qualities that were their trademark. Many followed the faction, but pill masters worthy of the name were pitifully few. Oftentimes, pill masters merely borrowed from the methods of the faction, or grasped only a few basics. They couldn't be counted as purists of the faction at all.

But, even so, as a mysterious faction in the pill world, the Deviant Pill Faction enjoyed an excellent reputation. Though some traditional pill factions were dismissive of the Deviant Pill Faction, and felt it

was far too unorthodox for the mainstream, their discrimination and disdain was understandable. For the past thousand years or so, no master of the faction had risen in the Divine Abyss Continent. Let alone pill emperors, few pill kings were found worthy of representing the faction. Thus, the Deviant Pill Faction was quite a divisive topic for many. Those who worshipped the faction, and those who despised it—both sides took their views to the extremes. Of course, most pill experts didn't have such ardent views. They were amenable to learning from the philosophy of the faction without blindly worshipping it, and moreover would never go to the extent of declaring it worthless.

The sight of Jiang Chen's peculiar technique, coupled with Pill King Yu's reminder, shed a ray of sudden light into the hearts of those present. If not the Deviant Pill Faction, where else could such unusual pill-making techniques be found?

"It is said that the Deviant Pill Faction specializes in creating the extraordinary out of the ordinary. They focus on making high rank pills with low rank medicine. I wonder if this Pill King Zhen can show us such a miracle?" Out of the nine judges, two were rabid fans of the faction. The one who had spoken was an eighth rank pill king.

"Hmph, many up-and-coming youngsters call themselves adherents of the faction, but which one of that rabble has actually made a name for themselves? Ultimately, the Deviant Pill Faction is just that—a bunch of deviants." With fanatic admirers came stubborn critics.

"Haha, Pill King Zhao, your thoughts do not keep up with the times. With the Deviant Pill Faction, one is either a great genius whose name resounds under the heavens, or falls to the wayside." Hearing criticism of the faction, the enthusiast who'd spoken prior fired off a displeased retort.

"Great genius?" Pill King Zhao sneered. "Then let us see what tricks he has up his sleeve. Deviant Pill Faction, heh heh..."

Pill King Yu didn't quite have a dog in the fight. He paid more mind to the techniques themselves. From his perspective, House Wei's Pill King Zhen was very likely a genius with actual skill, and not someone who merely made empty boasts. Two hours was a short time, but waiting through these two in particular was particularly arduous. An anxious fire was lit in people's hearts. Everyone was eagerly anticipating the results, judges included.

In the Veluriyam Capital, observing techniques from the Deviant Pill Faction was exceedingly rare. Though some works surfaced from time to time, the pill masters behind those works never revealed their pill-making process. All of the faction's techniques were to be treasured in private, not casually shown to the masses. Their opportunity to publicly peruse Jiang Chen's technique was a rare occurrence indeed. Despite this, their ability to actually decipher the technique was uncertain, even after potentially watching it a dozen or hundred times. After all, there were many hidden details embedded within the techniques that couldn't be interpreted without extensive guidance. It was nearly impossible to decrypt the technique on one's own.

Time passed, and the two hours neared their conclusions.

Refining the pill was greatly taxing for Jiang Chen. Thankfully, everything went mostly according to plan, and he was just about to wrap things up. Nevertheless, Jiang Chen couldn't relax. Expertly making various hand seals without pause, Jiang Chen's fingers danced in the air.

"The Triphase Pill usually takes four to six hours to make. Compressing it into two really takes its toll." Jiang Chen felt a little fatigued, but he also felt very comfortable. He had a feeling that the batch of Triphase Pills would turn out well. At the same time, he rejoiced in his good fortune. "This kind of time saving refining process takes too much energy. I should be more careful about attempting it in the future."

As Jiang Chen slowly extinguishing the final embers of his flame, the temperature within the Skysnatcher Cauldron began to decrease. Tricolored smoke began to curl upward from the vessel. From the color of the smoke and the resonance of the pills audible to his Ear of the Zephyr, Jiang Chen knew that the risk he had taken had paid off. The time it took for the Skysnatcher Cauldron to completely cool also signaled the conclusion of the two hours.

Opening the cauldron, Jiang Chen was greeted by the sight of six Triphase Pills. Like well-worn jade, they gave off strong waves of vitality. His eyes lit up. The rank of these Triphase Pills were even better than he expected. Even if they could no be counted as quasi-earth rank pills, they were still peak true saint rank.

On the opposite side, Pill King Rong's refining was also coming to an end. His smile of satisfaction was a clear giveaway that he had been able to bring his skills almost fully to bear. As expected, he was the first to the judges' table.

"Honorable judges, I had the fortune of refining several Jade Marrow Pills of the true saint rank. Please feel free to give your judgment." The results that Pill King Rong submitted were not out of the judges' expectations. It had been easy to guess the pill king's intent of refining the Jade Marrow Pill from his choice of ingredients.

The Jade Marrow Pill was a true saint rank pill. Even a poorly made one would still be a lower true saint rank. A pill that was of somewhat better quality could be counted a mid true saint pill. If purity and flawlessness were achieved, then it was quite possible to appraise the pill as an advanced true saint pill. The Jade Marrow Pill was also a pill for restoring energy and was a commonly found pill. It was used by many sage realm experts. It was especially appropriate for human sage realm experts, but could also be used for those in the earth sage realm. For sky sage experts, however, the Jade Marrow Pill was somewhat insufficient.

Naturally, there was an improved version of the pill, the Jade Marrow Goldpill. As the improved version of the Jade Marrow Pill, the Jade Marrow Goldpill was specifically made for sky sage realm cultivators, and was of use even to those in the emperor realm.

Supposedly, those at initial emperor realm used Jade Marrow Goldpills when they were strapped for money. If one wasn't enough, two were better. Of course, despite a difference of only one word, there was nevertheless a significant distinction between the Jade Marrow Pill and the Jade Marrow Goldpill.

Pill King Rong's Jade Marrow Pill had been limited by the amount of available time, and didn't quite achieve perfection. Its wholeness and purity were both a little lacking. After a round of examination, several of the judges came to a reasonably unified opinion. The pill was mid true saint rank at most. The rest of the judges gave their feedback to Pill King Yu, who found nothing wrong with their judgement, and announced, "Taiyuan Lodge's Pill King Rong has refined the Jade Marrow Pill, appraised as a mid true saint rank pill."

A flurry of cheers from Taiyuan Lodge's side accompanied this announcement. Mid true saint rank was the most they'd expected. Materials and time had been both limited; that Pill King Rong was able to accomplish this in the short span of two hours was testament to his status as a sixth rank pill king. He had truly made the most of the situation. Those on Taiyuan Lodge's side threw looks of ridicule and derision at the Wei father and son duo. What did Taiyuan Tower have that could compare to a mid true saint rank pill? Though the work of Taiyuan Tower's pill king remained to be seen, everyone considered their loss to be certain!

Chapter 776: The Brilliant Deviant Pill Faction

Even the onlookers believed that Taiyuan Lodge was the definite victor after seeing Pill King Rong refining such a high quality pill in just two hours, much less Wang Teng. Even House Wei were staring at Jiang Chen with very serious expressions.

Jiang Chen himself looked completely calm. He stood up indifferently, chose the most excellent pill from his batch and presented it respectfully to the judges.

"My lords, this pill is called the Triphase Pill. It emphasizes the cycle of three elements where earth grows wood, wood feeds fire and fire reduces all to earth. It is also a pursuit to achieve quasi-earth rank pill quality using saint rank spirit herbs. Please review it!" Jiang Chen wasn't afraid that these judges would lack in knowledge. He just wasn't sure if they would recognize the Triphase Pill. A brief introduction like this would at least tell them why this pill was amazing and where its key element lay.

Indeed, a change stole across everyone's faces, including Pill King Yu. The onlookers were even more surprised by his words. Even Wang Teng felt his heart spasm. He subconsciously thought that Jiang Chen was just shooting off his mouth. A pursuit to achieve quasi-earth rank pill quality using saint rank spirit herbs? This boast is way over the top!

True saint rank came after saint rank, and earth rank was even more advanced than true saint rank! Was he claiming that he had skipped two levels and refined an earth rank pill using saint rank spirit herbs? This was absolutely bullshitting. He hadn't even thought through his words before opening his mouth, had he!? But Wang Teng was the young lord of clan. As such, he wasn't in the best position to publicly question the validity of Jiang Chen's claims, even if he was highly skeptical.

However, the Tong father and son had no such qualms. They were here to act as the Majestic Clan's frontline troops from the beginning. Naturally, they wouldn't back off from the chance to sing of their opponent's downfall. House lord Tong Xianwei sneered, "That's a big boast to shoot off, kid. Even the best pill king might not dare claim that they could refine an earth rank pill using saint rank herbs. Do you think the judges are three year olds who'll fall for your pathetic lies?"

Tong Kun also yelled loudly, "How dare a self-taught bastard like you behave so atrociously in the pill industry of Veluriyam Capital? Do you think so lowly of Veluriyam Capital's pill industry?"

The father and son duo was going all out for the Majestic Clan. However, Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered to quarrel with them at all. He ignored the pair completely as he maintained the faint smile on his face. He continued to wear a smile that was neither obsequious nor supercilious as he awaited the nine judges' review. As long as these judges weren't blind or biased, his Triphase Pill would absolutely defeat his opponent's Jade Marrow Pill. If his opponent's pill had been a Jade Marrow Goldpill, then

perhaps there might have been an actual competition. But it was just a Jade Marrow Pill. In Jiang Chen's mind, it was completely incomparable to his Triphase Pill.

Pill King Yu felt a bit of astonishment too when he considered Jiang Chen's claims. But when he set his eyes on the Triphase Pill, a strange light immediately appeared inside them. He couldn't help but pick up the pill, hold it in his palm and carefully sense its quality. A pill king could differentiate the level and rank of a pill with a single look. This was particularly true for high rank pill kings. Their eyes were better than any precise instruments, and they could distinguish any pill's rank with a single glance. Even if they failed to get a good look at the pill, a careful feel would still reveal its quality without too much error. What was good was good, and what was bad was bad. There was no faking when it came to pills.

The more Pill King Zhen examined the pill, the more his admiration grew. He asked, "Did you say that this pill is called the Triphase Pill? The cycle of the three elements?"

"Yes," Jiang Chen smiled and answered.

"Good, very good!" Pill King Zhen slapped the table once and exclaimed in amazement, "This is practically the work of the gods! What an amazing pill. I am thoroughly impressed by the usage of materials, the skill in refining, and the pill quality of this Triphase Pill. If I may ask, what is your name, my friend?"

Jiang Chen answered, "My name is Zhen Shi."

Zhen Shi? It was obvious that none of the nine judges had heard of this name before as they exchanged puzzled glances. But Pill King Yu knew that it was impolite to dig into one's roots, and so restrained his curiosity forcefully to praise, "My friend—I'm over a thousand years old, so I do hope I'm not going overboard by calling you a friend—this is the first time I've seen your Triphase Pill. If I may ask, does your refining practices hail from the Deviant Pill Faction?"

The rest of the judges stared at Jiang Chen closely. They very much wanted to hear Jiang Chen's answer.

Jiang Chen knew that it wasn't something he had to hide. Therefore, he nodded, "It is as you say, the handiwork of the Deviant Pill Faction. The Deviant Pill Faction pursues the goal of creating high quality pills with low cost materials. They pursue the method that stands out from the masses."

"What an amazing goal that is!" Pill King Zhen smiled as he clapped once loudly. Then, he turned to the other judges and asked, "What do you think about this pill, everyone?"

The pill king who was a die hard fan of the Deviant Pill Faction hurriedly said, "This pill is absolutely at quasi-earth rank. In my opinion, this pill will be useful even for an emperor realm cultivator. Its rank is even a tad higher than the Jade Marrow Goldpill!"

"That is true. Even the Jade Marrow Goldpill seems a tad inferior compared to this pill, much less the Jade Marrow Pill." Another Deviant Pill Faction fan echoed in agreement.

Pill King Zhao, the judge who opposed the Deviant Pill Faction, wasn't sure what to say even though he wanted to criticize the Triphase Pill's quality. He just couldn't go against his conscience and claim that it was inferior to the Jade Marrow Pill. The gap was so obvious that he would be lying to himself to claim that the Triphase Pill was inferior to the Jade Marrow Pill. His bias would then be criticized by the public too. Therefore, he could only smile wryly and say nothing. The rest of the judges had none of Pill King

Zhao's bias, so naturally they wouldn't lie to themselves and claim that the Triphase Pill was inferior to the Jade Marrow Pill. The judges discussed amongst each other for a long moment. In the end, they all nodded at Pill King Zhen. They obviously thought that the Triphase Pill absolutely qualified as a quasi-earth rank pill. In fact, even if it was an entire rank lower, the pill would still be an upper level true saint rank pill. It beat the Jade Marrow Pill without question.

Everyone on Wang Teng's side could see from the friendly interaction between Pill King Yu and House Wei's pill king that the former admired the pill king very much.

For a while, everyone on Taiyuan Lodge's side was dumbfounded. How could this be? The ingredients that kid chose had been incredibly mediocre, so how did the situation turn on its head all of a sudden? Even Pill King Yu was praising him non-stop. Were they actually going to lose this round?

Wang Teng's face instantly darkened. He found the sudden turn of events a little unacceptable. It'd come out of nowhere! If Taiyuan Lodge lost this round, then the second stage of the pill king battle was lost. Both sides would be at a draw. As a result, the competition would enter the third stage. Although Wang Teng still thought that his side was certain of victory, it was hard to say if another shift in the situation like this would appear again.

For a long moment, Wang Teng's expression was extremely ugly. He looked at his own pill king with an obvious question in his eyes. The pill king smiled wryly and sighed, "Young clan lord, the situation doesn't look good. This round was really bizarre. Even if I were to attend the battle myself, I can only do as well as Pill King Rong. This pill king of House Wei is a little strange..."

Wang Teng grew even more displeased. He hadn't thought to bring the strongest pill king in the family with him on this trip. He never thought that the outcome of this battle would deviate so far from his expectations. Although the results hadn't been announced yet, the situation was obviously very disadvantageous to him. As expected, the judges quickly came to a decision and announced, "The Triphase Pill refined by Taiyuan Tower's Pill King Zhen is of incredible quality and is skillfully made. It is also a rare, outstanding work of the Deviant Pill Faction, and we are very impressed by it. We unanimously agree that the Triphase Pill is a quasi-earth rank pill!"

Quasi-earth rank!

The weight behind these three words was palpable when they came out of Pill King Yu's mouth. Pin drop silence reigned. It was obvious that everyone was stunned by this revelation. Their entertaining expressions of surprise were all frozen on their faces, like a statue. Taiyuan Tower's Pill King Zhen had refined a quasi-earth rank pill?

Why did this sound so utterly ridiculous? It was in stark contrast with their expectations. A long moment later, Taiyuan Tower was the first to recover from their shock and break out into loud cheers. It was obvious from the happy tears flowing down their cheeks that they were besides themselves. This unexpected victory and pleasant surprise was something no one at Taiyuan Tower had foreseen. When Pill King Rong's pill was judged to be at mid true saint rank, almost everyone at Taiyuan Tower had been plunged into deep despair. In their opinion, the maximum anyone could do with such limited materials in just two hours' time was precisely that. However, Jiang Chen had literally forced his way out of an impossible situation through pure skill and seized victory for himself!

The tens of thousands of onlookers actually became infected by Taiyuan Tower's emotions and began to applaud. For a while, the entire place was filled with thunderous claps. Wang Teng's handsome face distorted. It was obvious that this unexpected blow greatly affected his emotions. He found it difficult to swallow the outcome.

Although the tens of thousands of people likely hadn't applauded to attack the Majestic Clan, there was no doubt that it represented at least a part of their true feelings. These fence sitters might not necessarily like Taiyuan Lodge more than Taiyuan Tower! It didn't matter if they were applauding because they sympathized with the weak, or if they were impressed by the exciting pill battle before them. These claps were still slaps to his and Taiyuan Lodge's face all the same!

When the applause slowly subsided, Pill King Yu added, "Taiyuan Tower has won two rounds in a row in the second stage and are therefore the victors of the second stage. The score is now 1:1. It seems that a third stage is unavoidable!"

Young master Ji San was also stunned and extraordinarily pleased by Jiang Chen's exciting performance. This Pill King Zhen was practically a genius bestowed from heaven! He felt especially vindicated to see Wang Teng's distorted expression. He smiled and said leisurely, "This second stage has been far more exciting than the first stage. During the first stage, Taiyuan Lodge borrowed outside help and the Longevity Pill of unidentified origin to win the match. But during the second stage, Pill King Zhen won through true skill and knowledge! I personally think that Pill King Zhen will take the third stage in one fell swoop! Don't you think so, everyone?"

Young master Ji San's voice was extremely moving. All forces loyal to the Coiling Dragon Clan roared loudly with agreement. As for the fence sitters, they obviously weren't afraid to fan the flames further and joined in the commotion. For a moment, the Majestic Clan actually became the side that lacked support!

Chapter 777: Wang Teng Panics

This outcome was an ordeal to Wang Teng. He'd never imagined that the Majestic Clan, at the peak of its glory, wouldn't be as welcomed by the citizens of Veluriyam Capital as he'd imagined. The guests had seemingly chosen to grace Taiyuan Lodge not because they respected the clan, but simply because they were afraid of the clan. This feeling felt as unpalatable as eating a fly. Reality was straying further and further away from his original predictions. The victory he had felt to be set in stone had acquired a layer of uncertainty.

No, we absolutely cannot lose this match. Wang Teng knew better than anyone that the loss of this pill battle meant that the plans and arrangements they'd made for months would all go to waste. They would even lose an excellent shop front in Farmer God Market. They wouldn't just be losing face, but also actual money.

"You may have to attend to this third stage personally, Pill King Han Zhu," Wang Teng turned around and spoke to a high ranked pill king beside him when his thoughts reached their grim conclusion.

Pill King Han Zhu was among the top five pill kings in the Majestic Clan. Although he wasn't the Majestic Clan's strongest pill king, he was one of the best. Judging from the current situation and his appearance, it was obvious that Pill King Rong had lost his confidence and spirit. Be it in terms of skill or morale, Pill

King Rong shouldn't participate in the third battle. Wang Teng had no intentions of losing this wager. Therefore, Pill King Han Zhu had to participate in this battle. He was the best card the Majestic Clan could play at this moment.

However, Pill King Han Zhu was in fact quite reluctant to take part in the battle. Especially after witnessing the last two stages, the risks involved in this battle were incredibly high. If he were to slip up even a little during this third stage, he would become the sinner who'd lost the Majestic Clan the entire gamble. Therefore, he didn't want to become involved even when Wang Teng voiced his preference. All experts had a kind of intuition they'd grow to rely on, and Pill King Han Zhu couldn't shake the feeling that House Wei's pill king was an extremely strange person wielding an equally unorthodox skill in pill dao. Even if he were to attend to the battle himself, he might not necessarily be able to defeat his opponent.

He wasn't afraid of his opponent, but he was just instinctively wary of the unknown depths of the Deviant Pill Faction. It was obvious that this Pill King Zhen of House Wei was an outstanding representative of the Deviant Pill Faction. After all, Jiang Chen had displayed his prodigal skill in pill dao in the previous two stages. Pill King Han Zhu was a cautious person, and he wasn't willing to participate in a pill battle where he had no confidence in winning. Thinking quickly, Pill King Han Zhu responded, "Young master, we've set the rules and chosen the participants before the start of the match. If we were to switch members now and are turned down by the judge, this crowd might grow even rowdier than before. It'll be extremely bad if our opponent were to use this as an excuse to attack us."

Wang Teng's expression turned chilly, and he gave Pill King Han Zhu a deep, meaningful glance. Pill King Han Zhu served the Majestic Clan. Although he had shown Wang Teng every courtesy deserving of a young lord, the only person who could make him cower was the clan lord of the Majestic Clan, not the clan lord's son. Considering how awkward the previous matches had turned out, he had absolutely no wish of partaking in this battle. Even if he did win, he wouldn't be winning much glory for himself. And if he lost, then he would be turned into a scapegoat.

The judges hadn't noticed Wang Teng's little interlude. Pill King Yu cast a glance at both sides before saying, "We will review the third stage personally. There will also be three rounds in this third stage. Anyone who wins two rounds shall win the third stage. Does anyone have any objections?" Pill King Yu paused for a moment before continuing, "You should voice any objections before this final stage begins. The moment victory is decided, the gamble cannot be changed. Nothing you say later will change the outcome."

Candid words were spoken ahead of the battle. House Wei cast a glance at Jiang Chen. At this point, they trusted Jiang Chen fully and were dead set on supporting him no matter what. Whatever hesitation they might have had disappeared when Jiang Chen soundly defeated the Jade Marrow Pill with the Triphase Pill. Naturally, they had no objections to raise. At this point, it no longer mattered if they won or lost. Even if they did lose in the end, Jiang Chen's efforts had already won back House Wei's reputation and fame in full. Therefore, Wei Jie smiled calmly and said, "We have nothing to raise."

However, Wang Teng spoke up. "I would like to request a substitution."

The moment he said this, the entire scene became engulfed in an uproar, and Pill King Han Zhu's face had turned cloudy. It was obvious that he was extremely displeased that Wang Teng had forcefully

foisted this on him. Young master Ji San sneered, "Are you daydreaming, Wang Teng? We've already selected our participating pill kings before the gamble, and now you wish to send in a substitute? Do you think this is all a joke? Plus, aren't you the one who wanted to send out Pill King Rong to teach Pill King Zhen a lesson in humility? The lesson hasn't been taught yet, has it? Or are you hoping to take that lesson instead?"

Young master Ji San had a deadly silver tongue, and his words were far sharper than any actual face slapping. Wei Tianxiao was also smiling faintly, "Young lord Wang, you are the one who started this gamble, and the rules were agreed upon by everyone. By this substitution, are you trying to tell the entirety of Veluriyam Capital that the Majestic Clan is a sore loser?"

The notion of a 'sore loser' had popped up again. *noVe)lb)In*

Wang Teng was so ashamed he could die. Countless pairs of eyes were looking at him from all directions, and most of them held nothing but ridicule. It was obvious that everyone disdained his suggestions. Pill King Yu exchanged a glance with the rest of the judges and shook his head resolutely. "The rules cannot be changed once it has been agreed upon. If you must challenge this rule, then we can only announce that Taiyuan Lodge has lost the bet."

These words completely destroyed Wang Teng's request to substitute Pill King Rong out. Pill King Han Zhu actually let out an discreet sigh of relief . *Thank goodness I don't need to participate in this farce.* On the other hand, Pill King Rong felt a little dejected. He was depressed because Wang Teng's suggestion was a great humiliation to him. At the same time, he himself was a little unsure if he could win this battle. This was supposed to be a piece of cake, but now the outcome was shrouded in uncertainty. No one could predict who was going to win this battle anymore. In fact, he wasn't even the favored side. Wang Teng wouldn't have requested for a substitution otherwise.

"Alright, if both sides have no more objections, then the third stage of the pill battle will now begin."

The third stage of the pill battle was in fact quite similar to the second stage. It was still a competition between pill kings, and the process was almost the same. "For the first round of the third stage, please refine the pills you displayed during the first stage. You must be able to refine all three types of pills. Whoever finishes first shall win the first round."

Wang Teng grew furious the second Pill King Yu finished. "I object, Pill King Yu!" Wang Teng could no longer give a damn about losing face.

Pill King Yu smiled faintly and said, "Please go ahead, young lord Wang!"

"I suspect that this round is purposely disadvantageous for us!" Wang Teng exclaimed. The Longevity Pill wasn't their product to begin with, so how on earth could their pill king refine it? Wasn't this basically an announcement of their loss?

"Purposely disadvantageous, you say?" Pill King Yu smiled wryly, "Don't you think you're overthinking things, young lord Wang? I swear on my heart that we aren't purposely making things difficult for anyone."

"Then why must we refine the pills we showed during the first stage?" Wang Teng contained his anger with visible effort.

“You’re the ones who supplied these pills. You can view our request to have you refine those same pills as an extension of that previous stage. This is a decision we judges have unanimously agreed on. Also, considering how special those pills are, we would also like to witness their refinement process and broaden our knowledge as well. Since you’ve chosen us as your judges, then you should obey the rules we’ve set!” There was no need for Pill King Yu to give Wang Teng face.

The rest of the judges were neutral parties who shared no conflicts of interest with the Majestic Clan. Naturally, they had no reason to be biased towards the Majestic Clan. It was obvious that they had their own selfish motives when they set up this third stage. They were hoping to observe how the Longevity Pill was refined. Even if they couldn’t learn how to refine the pill, there was nothing wrong with observing its process.

“Wang Teng, you should just admit defeat if you’re going to be a sore loser. I can’t help but be ashamed of your incessant complaints, even if you’re not!” Young master Ji San had no intention to be polite, so of course he wouldn’t pass up the chance to strike his enemy while he was down.

The onlookers were also joining in with their opinions. “This content of this round is completely fair! They’re not telling you to refine your opponent’s pills, they’re telling you to refine your own! If you yourself don’t know how to refine the pill you’re selling, then you very well may have been cheating earlier!”

“That’s true. I can find no faults to pick at for this test.”

“You’re not trying to obstruct this battle, are you? Are you really afraid of losing, young lord Wang?” There were tens of thousands of people and mouths present at the scene. Wang Teng had no idea where these voices were coming from, but there was no doubt that they were exerting pressure on him.

If you couldn’t afford to make the bet, then why did you act so arrogantly earlier?

You want to slink away now that the situation is awry? You want to turn this battle into a mess?

The crowd says no, Wang Teng!

The scene was raucous for a while as all sorts of accusations were lobbed at the Majestic Clan. Wang Teng felt completely conflicted, and panicked. He suddenly had a feeling that he had shot himself in the foot.

Pill King Yu responded indifferently, “The match will begin now. If Taiyuan Lodge refuses to participate, you may forfeit this match. If that happens, then Taiyuan Tower will win by default.”

Such were the rules. The judges truly weren’t trying to make life difficult for anyone on purpose. If the rules could be challenged whenever the participants felt like it, that would be a challenge to the judges’ credibility and prestige. It meant that they could be challenged at the drop of a hat. It was obvious that Pill King Yu wouldn’t accept this. Therefore, the contents of the bet wouldn’t change regardless of Wang Teng’s intentions!

Pill King Han Zhu also persuaded Wang Teng discreetly, “Young clan lord, please allow your pill king to do his best. While I don’t know how to refine the Longevity Pill, I do know he knows how to refine the other two. What if this Pill King Zhen doesn’t know how to refine some of the three pills that Taiyuan

Tower produced too? It's not like we don't have a shot at victory if we quickly refine the two. Wouldn't it be a pity if we were to forfeit and lose the round without even trying?"

Thankfully, Wang Teng hadn't lost his reason. Although he was a little dissatisfied at Pill King Han Zhu's show of cold feet, he knew that this suggestion had the best intentions. And so he responded, "Pill King Rong, just do your best and perform to your usual standards!"

At this point, Wang Teng could only hope that this bullshit pill king of House Wei didn't know how to refine some of the pills he produced during the first stage. If that was the case, then the Majestic Clan would have a sliver of hope at obtaining victory.

Chapter 778: An Idol of the Deviant Pill Faction

With nine judges personally supervising the match, cheating was naturally impossible.

"Please prepare your ingredients swiftly, both of you. Time is limited, so don't dilly dally," Pill King Yu commanded.

Jiang Chen had no need to make any preparations. He was the one who'd refined his pills, so of course he had plenty of ingredients in stock. After all, he had chosen the Tiger Eruption Pill, Half-step Immortal Elixir Pill and the Heptarune True Dragon Pill after careful consideration. He was going to use them as Taiyuan Tower's key products. If Taiyuan Lodge hadn't muddied the waters, Jiang Chen was absolutely confident that these pills could help them break into Veluriyam Capital's pill market and earn Taiyuan Tower a seat in Farmer God Market. He never thought that the Majestic Clan would strike out of nowhere and disrupt his plans. If they hadn't crossed his bottom line, he wouldn't have retaliated against them.

"At this point, the Majestic Clan can only be my sworn enemy. I must win today's bet and defeat Taiyuan Lodge!" Jiang Chen knew very well that Taiyuan Tower could only open for business smoothly if he won this bet. As for making an enemy out of the Majestic Clan, now was not the time to consider such things. House Wei was never going to coexist peacefully with the Majestic Clan in the first place.

If the Majestic Clan failed to open their business on the opposite side of the street, if their momentum was thwarted today, then it would be very difficult even for the clan to regain their vigor after the blow to their reputation. Jiang Chen shed all of his hesitation as his thoughts came to a close.

He had refined all three pills using the Deviant Pill Faction's methods. His selection of ingredients was just as unique. No one had it in them to be surprised anymore at this sight, not after witnessing Jiang Chen's Triphase Pill earlier. And unlike Jiang Chen, Pill King Rong was obviously still feeling apprehensive. After all, he couldn't refine the Longevity Pill. If he couldn't refine the Longevity Pill, then his chances to win this round were minimal at best. He knew this very well. Noting the pill king's mentality, Wang Teng couldn't help but send him another message, "Don't be distracted, Pill King Rong. Even if you can't win this round, there are still two rounds left to turn things around! You will be the Majestic Clan's sinner if you simply give up like this!"

Pill King Rong shuddered all over and felt cold sweat bead out of every pore on his body. He immediately reined in his thoughts and concentrated fully on refining his pills.

That being said, Pill King Rong really had no chance of victory. Jiang Chen was giving free rein to his skills as he reached a state of flow. Fire control, cauldron heating, pill refinement...

The entire process was as smooth as a stream of water, every movement pared down to flawlessness. His practiced movements and his astounding skills were truly an eye opener to everyone present. He was stunningly brilliant!

Everyone knew that followers of the Deviant Pill Faction were supposedly very skillful, but not many had ever seen a representative of the Deviant Pill Faction with their own eyes. But today, Jiang Chen proved to the world that this school of thought was absolutely deserving of its reputation. There was absolutely a reason behind the Deviant Pill Faction's popularity. It wasn't the heretical pill faction many people criticized them to be!

There were almost no one paying attention to Pill King Rong's work at the moment, regardless of whether or not they were a fan of the Deviant Pill Faction. Almost all attention was focused on Jiang Chen. For diehard fans, Jiang Chen's work was naturally a wonderful and pleasant feast for the eyes. For those maintaining a neutral stance, they were sighing with admiration at the Deviant Pill Faction representative's skill and handiwork. It absolutely deserved to be called a work of the gods, a sight they wouldn't ever forget. Naysayers were at a loss for words after seeing Jiang Chen's skill. They hoped to find some flaws that they could use to attack the Deviant Pill Faction, but were left floundering.

The pill dao was a sea made up of hundreds of large streams. There were plenty of factions pursuing the art of pill dao, but today, those assembled finally learned the reason why there were so many adoring fans of this school of thought. The onlookers were incredibly excited by Jiang Chen's skill, and the Deviant Pill Faction fanatics only wished that they could worship him as a god. These people had always been diehard fans of the Deviant Pill Faction, and they had always diligently researched this subject. But while it was easy to claim that one was a member of the Deviant Pill Faction, it was very difficult to actually possess the appropriate skill.

Although there were many so-called Deviant Pill Faction creations and pill masters on the market, they were mostly false advertising. While they hung the Deviant Pill Faction's shop sign over their store, they knew little to nothing of its methods. There was almost no true master of the Deviant Pill Faction around. For the past several hundred years, there had been many who'd passed themselves off as a member of the Deviant Pill Faction. However, there hadn't been a single representative who could truly win the trust and worship of the people! But today, Jiang Chen had stepped into this void. The fans of the Deviant Pill Faction vaguely sensed that a person who could represent them had finally appeared!

Time slowly passed by.

In reality, the process of a pill battle was pretty dull. Most people looked forward to the end results more than the process. But now, everyone was enjoying the interim to the fullest as well. They only wished that time could pass slower so that they could fully observe and enjoy the refining process of the Deviant Pill Faction.

Indeed, Jiang Chen's skill had won many a heart. It was true these three pills weren't outstanding in terms of rank, nor could they be considered top class. However, the Deviant Pill Faction's methods and skills were there for everyone to see. Just based on this point alone, everyone could determine that Pill

King Zhen of House Wei absolutely deserved the title of a master of his craft, even if he wasn't a top class pill king yet.

What was a master ?

A master of the craft was the outstanding representative of a faction. If the faction he represented was acknowledged as a proper faction, then the representative themselves would be acknowledged as a master of the craft too. Back at the stage of battle, it seemed that happiness was always short-lived. The speed Jiang Chen used to refine the three pills was much faster than anyone expected.

In just fifteen minutes before the end of the time limit, Jiang Chen turned in three newly minted pills to the nine judges. Pill King Rong, on the other hand, was still just finishing up his second pill.

Once Pill King Yu and the rest of the judges had accepted the pills, confirmed their authenticity and identity, they showered Jiang Chen's handiwork with praises. They looked at Pill King Rong again. The victor was obvious.

Although Wang Teng had predicted this outcome from the beginning, he still felt like someone had slammed a hammer into his chest. The expressions on his face flickered constantly. At this point, he had no choice but to admit that his Majestic Clan and Taiyuan Lodge had come off worse in this bet, even if he didn't want to. This was because Taiyuan Tower had them at match point already. His opponent only needed to win one more round to be the final victor of the entire bet! If that happened, then all his plans would become a joke. The Taiyuan Lodge that he had invested his time and effort into would become his opponent's property instead! Meanwhile, the Majestic Clan would also become Taiyuan Tower's stepping stone and the butt of a colossal joke.

As the judge, Pill King Yu had no obligation to care for Wang Teng's feelings. He announced loudly, "Taiyuan Tower is the winner of the first round of the third stage!"

It was a completely unbiased announcement, but it still felt like a sharp blade plunged straight into Wang Teng's chest. He really wanted to kill someone.

Pill King Yu smiled a little and asked Jiang Chen tentatively with kind eyes, "Pill King Zhen, this old man has a sudden request to make."

"Please speak, Pill King Yu," Jiang Chen didn't put on airs. There was no reason to show Pill King Yu an ugly face when he had been treating Jiang Chen with courtesy the entire time. nOVe(ℓb)1n

"These pills are truly a work of the gods. I am incredibly impressed by them. I wonder if I may have the fortune to take one of these pills back with me for observation and study?"

Jiang Chen smiled in response, "I wouldn't dare to turn down the request of a senior."

He had refined three cauldrons of pills just now, and every cauldron contained several pills each. He immediately took out nine pills and gave one of each to the judges. His generosity made the rest of the pill kings think much better of Jiang Chen too. Regardless of his intentions, none of these pills were cheap. The fact that he could gift nine of them just like this proved that this young pill master of House Wei was no ordinary person.

Jiang Chen's actions didn't make the onlookers think that he was bribing the judges either. After all, it was just a friendly interaction between pill kings. If this was bribery, it wouldn't involve just one pill, and it definitely wouldn't happen in public. But Wang Teng didn't think so. He sneered with a dark expression, "Honored judges, I don't think it's too appropriate for him to offer you a pill in public, is it?"

Pill King Yu seemed to have predicted Wang Teng's response, so he tossed out a storage ring to Jiang Chen and smiled faintly. "Pill King Zhen, this is your payment for the nine pills. Let no one say that this is not a fair and proper transaction."

Wang Teng's face immediately took on a greenish hue. He felt resentful, feeling as though the entirety of Veluriyam Capital and Farmer God Market was joining forces against the Majestic Clan today. It had been an incredibly lousy day. These judges were all normally neutral parties, and they had never been hostile towards the Majestic Clan. So why were they all acting like they had a grudge to settle with the Majestic Clan today? He didn't realize that these neutral judges had been angered by his words and actions again and again.

Young master Ji San smiled leisurely at Wang Teng's loss of composure. "Wang Teng, you're the guy who talks the most in every round. As a clan member, you seriously need to learn some grace from House Wei. See how calm they've been all along!"

The crowd laughed uproariously at this. It was true that the Wei father and son hadn't spoken much at all during the battle. In comparison, Wang Teng had been hopping up and down and making a big deal out of every little thing that had come his way. He had something to say at every round of each stage. His pettiness truly made the Majestic Clan look boorish and ill mannered.

"Young clan lord, please compose yourself," Pill King Han Zhu advised silently.

House Lord Tong Xianwei also sent a message, "Young clan lord, don't fall for the enemy's trap. They're purposely trying to enrage us so we grow impatient and affect Pill King Rong's performance. There are still two rounds left. If Pill King Rong performs at his usual standards, how could a sixth rank pill king possibly lose to a second rank pill king? This kid is just lucky because he has an advantage using the Deviant Pill Faction's methods."

Wang Teng was alarmed; he had never lost his cool like this before. It was a strenuous effort that finally bought him his calm. There was no turning back now that the gamble had progressed to this point.

The judges gathered together and mumbled amongst themselves for a very long time. Finally, they came up with an idea on how to proceed with the next round of the battle. Pill King Yu finally said, "After our discussion, we have decided that the nine of us shall each produce a type of pill, making for a total of nine pills, for the second round of the third stage. We shall give one of each type of pill to the participants, and your task is to analyze these pills and determine the pill ingredients within the allocated time. The participant who manages to analyze the most pills in the allocated time wins the round."

Chapter 779: Jiang Chen's Full Potential

Pill King Rong perked to attention at those words. Back in the first round of the second stage, they'd been given the task of composing recipes with the provided ingredients. Then, he'd considered the round as good as won, since dissecting and composing recipes was his forte, his favorite and most well

versed field of study. But fate had dealt them the Ingenious Decan Enigma, which happened to be something his opponent was highly proficient in. Even though he had acquitted himself well, the opponent had bested him that round by sheer luck, comparable to a blind cat who'd chanced upon a dead mouse.

Now they were being asked to analyze the components of the provided pills. This was simply the first test in reverse. Regardless of the direction, this was still the field he was most confident in. Furthermore, this round didn't depend on any single judge because all of them would be involved in the test. This greatly reduced the chances of his opponent encountering a fortunate situation. *You might know one of them by chance. But what are the odds of knowing two or three?*

There were a total of nine pills. The chances of knowing them all by chance were simply too low. Pill King Rong felt that this was a great opportunity for him! It was his time to shine! Since the beginning of this competition, he'd lost two consecutive rounds in the second stage and now the first round of the third stage. He was in a dangerous situation. One more loss meant his fourth consecutive loss, by that token, the loss of the entire bet.

"Humph, that brat relied on the Deviant Pill Faction's heretical methods and luckily won three tests. Let's see how far dumb luck can take him!" Pill King Rong was actually still unconvinced at heart. He felt that this mere second rank pill king shouldn't have been his match at all, considering his own skill and talent as a sixth rank pill king. He'd been greatly humiliated by the previous three losses.

Apart from the round where his Jade Marrow Pill had lost to the opponent's Three Elements Pill, he still didn't quite accept the other two as true defeats. He felt that he'd lost to luck with the Ingenious Decan Enigma. As for the round where they were asked to refine pills previously presented, that loss was purely a result to the rules. "I must take this round by storm! I must let this brat know that a mere second rank pill king is not at the same as a sixth rank pill king!"

Pill King Yu brought out 18 pills and distributed nine to each contestant. "If you would, please take note that the set of nine pills given to you is identical to the other. There is one more rule we've put in place in order to preserve the fairness and brilliance of this competition. Each of you will only have to write down six of the ingredients which make up each pill in order to pass the test. It goes without saying, however, that the six answers must be correct. You'll have failed for that particular pill if any single one is wrong. If the scores are tied, we'll judge based on the total number of ingredients analyzed. The competitor with the highest number of identified materials will triumph."

Most pills were refined from at least seven to eight types of ingredients, and some involved a dozen or more. The fact that only six ingredients from each pill needed to be identified somewhat reduced the difficulty of the contest. The catch however, was the requirement for perfection. Failure could come with a single mistake, and restricted the contestants from guessing the materials randomly in pursuit of quantity and speed over quality. One could write down fewer components, but wasn't allowed to make mistakes.

"Do you both understand the rules?" Pill King Yu's penetrating gaze enveloped the two contestants. He confirmed once more whether they had clearly understood the rules. Regardless, once the contest began, they would have to play by the rules, whether or not they understood.

“Understood,” Pill King Rong confirmed. This was the field he was most proficient in and the perfect match for him to turn things around. He was exuberant as his spirit began to vibrate with enthusiasm.

Jiang Chen only smiled indifferently and nodded. He glanced at the highly spirited Pill King Rong and sneered inwardly. *This Pill King Rong seems to be in high spirits. This must be his preferred field of study. But who in the Divine Abyss Continent is qualified to show off their pill knowledge before me!* This wasn’t Jiang Chen being purposely arrogant. Even in the heavenly realm of his past life, few were qualified to discuss and debate theories of pill dao with him, to say nothing of a mere Divine Abyss Continent.

Pill King Yu waved his hand after receiving confirmation from both parties, “Let the competition begin!”

As a judge, Pill King Yu wasn’t biased regarding the rules and regulations despite his admiration for Jiang Chen. The criteria for this round stood testimony to this fact. Analyzing nine pills together reduced the odds of obtaining victory by chance and increased the demand on one’s knowledge and experience. Even Wang Teng found nothing to criticize about this round’s format. On the surface, the competition even appeared to be more or less in favor of their Taiyuan Lodge. But Wang Teng loved advantages. Now that things were looking advantageous for him, he’d kept mum, ready to silently reap in the gains. On the other hand, he would be sure to complain loudly if things were even slightly disadvantageous for him, almost as if he’d suffered the greatest of injustices. This type of advantage-seeking mindset vividly reflected the Majestic Clan’s principles.

“Pill King Rong, I am greatly optimistic about your chances in this round. The credit belongs to you as long as you perform to your utmost and turn the tables on the other party. You’ll be the new chief pill king of Taiyuan Tower once we win this wager and obtain the shop!”

One had to admit, Wang Teng was extremely adept at raising morale and controlling his subordinates. As expected, Pill King Rong immediately became more spirited after hearing this promise. The dejection from the previous losses had all but vanished.

Wang Teng was feeling delighted after realizing the nature of the second round of the third stage. The only thing that made him unhappy was that he couldn’t find any sign of distress or displeasure on the faces of House Wei. It seemed that the Wei father and son did indeed possess the superior grace and composure that Sir Ji San had mentioned. This greatly upset Wang Teng. *How can this father and son be so confident? This round is already in Pill King Rong’s pocket Don’t you two feel any anxiety at all?* He refused to believe that to be the case. He felt that the father and son were putting on an act.

Jiang Chen had already entered his zone and was completely oblivious to the reactions of the outside world. There was only one thought in his mind: to thwart Taiyuan Lodge and slap Wang Teng resoundly by obtaining a clean victory this round, effectively ending this competition!

Jiang Chen was determined to go all out in order to achieve this goal. Few occasions had ever warranted his all out effort in the field of pills. There were even fewer people living on the Divine Abyss Continent capable of holding their ground against Jiang Chen’s full ability. With the pills in hand, Jiang Chen fully activated his consciousness—analyzing, dissecting...

He was working almost non-stop. He only needed to scan each pill and fiddle with it momentarily to be able to guess its basic composition. After all, he’d done this every day for tens of thousands of years.

Comparatively, Pill King Yu was considered an authoritative figure amongst the pill kings of the Divine Abyss Continent after only a thousand years of life. His experience and age were rather insignificant compared to Jiang Chen. Moreover, it was impossible for these pills from the mundane plane to be more complex than those from the heavenly planes, no matter how intricately designed they might be. In his past life, Jiang Chen had also started out by learning the pills of the mundane plane and then slowly advanced over the course of hundreds of thousands of years. Only then did he reach the level where he could work on heavenly pills with ease.

Jiang Chen quickly formed rough ideas of the composition of each pill as soon as he rolled them in his palm. To make things even easier, the test only required him to identify six components. This was no better than a beginner's handicap. Jiang Chen immediately identified three out of the first five pills. There was naturally no need to expend great effort to analyze their components since he knew what they were. It took him just a brief moment of recollection to write down all the ingredients.

Jiang Chen was unable to immediately recognize the other two, but it easily came to him after some detailed analysis. He instantly identified the sixth pill. Then the seventh, followed by the eighth... He completed his analysis of all nine pills right before half the allotted time had passed. He was in no hurry to submit his answers and took his time to double check them all in detail. He walked out in a leisurely manner after confirming that there were no mistakes.

His actions stunned the audience. Only half the allotted time had passed. What did he intend to do by walking out at this point? Did he not know that it was against the rules to leave the area during the competition? Leaving would be considered cheating. The competition area was isolated by a restrictive barrier. People outside could see the interior but not vice versa, making it impossible to communicate with the outside world. But once the competitor walked out, he would be able to communicate with the outside world. Cheating would certainly become possible then.

"Can it be that he's already completed it?" Many spectators were secretly shocked. The Wei father and son glanced at each other. They were also alarmed by Jiang Chen's actions. But they soon thought of the possibility that Jiang Chen had already completed the test.

Jiang Chen completely ignored the many astonished pairs of eyes on him and proceeded to walk towards the judges' seats. The nine judges glanced at each other in puzzlement, but then turned to Jiang Chen with a hint of doubt in their eyes. It would be a miracle if he was able to analyze the nine pills in such a short period. Even these high ranked pill kings might not be able to perform this feat so easily.

Wang Teng's eyes went wide as he stared at Jiang Chen. Astonishment was written all over his darkened face and he was almost crying tears of blood. He was suddenly hit by an extremely bad premonition. It gnawed at his whole body like a poisonous snake and made all his hair stand on end. *What if...*

Their Majestic Clan would've lost this bet if the other party won this round! Taiyuan Lodge would then become another's property even before the opening ceremony. The most terrifying part was that their clan would lose a fine storefront in Farmer God Market! Wang Teng followed Jiang Chen's every move with a heavy gaze.

"Honored sirs, I've completed my pill analysis. I offer it for your inspection." Jiang Chen respectfully handed over his answer scroll.

Commotion rose from the audience before those words could hit the floor. *He's really done? He's already finished dissecting all the pills in half the allotted time? What kind of inhuman speed is that? It's practically poised to break through the horizon!* nǎ?Vē)lǐ)In

Wang Teng felt as if he'd suffered an electric shock. He was petrified. He couldn't even find a voice to speak up with. The other party was able to submit his answer early, and with such confidence! What were the chances of such a person making mistakes? Who in their right mind would turn in their answer scroll at half the allotted time if he wasn't completely confident?

The Wei father and son were ecstatic. They felt that victory was near at hand. Even a well composed person like Ji San felt ineffably shocked. Wild joy surged in his heart as he looked at Jiang Chen with fervent eyes. He had a certain feeling at this moment, a feeling that was born of his intuition. His intuition was telling him that this mysterious pill king from House Wei was the key to changing the fate of the Coiling Dragon Clan!

Chapter 780: Victory Decided

On the other side, Pill King Rong was completely focused and unaware of the changes in the outside world. He was currently overflowing with confidence since he seemed to have reached past his limits in performance.

"With my current speed, I can absolutely analyze seven out of nine pills before this round is over. If I could finish the analysis of seven pills, then not even a high rank pill king can defeat me. Perhaps the greatest ninth rank pill king could beat me in this regard, but that second rank pill king of House Wei is just a poor fellow who relies on tricks to attain victory. His true colors will be revealed this round!" Pill King Rong was full of confidence. Unfortunately, he had no idea that the entire world was being shaken outside.

Fortunately for him, the round hadn't ended yet so he hadn't walked out of his own accord. According to the rules, no one was allowed to disturb him until the allotted time had passed or he walked out. Moreover, Jiang Chen's answer couldn't be inspected until the judges had accepted Pill King Rong's answer too. That was why the final result wasn't announced yet, even though the reactions outside had almost turned riotous.

That being said, everyone could basically confirm that House Wei's pill king was going to be the dark horse of Veluriyam Capital. Especially after witnessing Jiang Chen's composure under pressure and his performance at this pill battle.

An overnight celebrity! He was absolutely that after today's battle!

"What do we do, young clan lord?" Tong Xianwei himself was feeling a little worried. It was looking more and more like they were going to lose this round. Tong Kun wasn't a person who was afraid of trouble, but even he had shed his initial arrogance as his white and handsome face became shrouded in a dark haze. Wang Teng had never been in such a passive position in his life. He was completely disconcerted. He could never imagine that the bet he'd worked so hard to engineer so that he could attack Taiyuan Tower and House Wei would backfire on him. Not only did he fail to entrap his enemy, he'd fallen into his own trap instead! The remainder of the time limit had already become pointless. What was supposed to be a very close battle was completely meaningless.

This was even truer when everyone saw Pill King Rong fighting hard from their vantage point outside. From time to time he would beam with joy or clench his teeth in anger, looking like he had everything under control. The more Pill King Rong acted like this, the more laughable the people outside found the whole situation to be. Wang Teng and the others could only feel bleakness creeping up to them as they watched their pill king. Wang Teng very much wanted to push all the responsibility onto Pill King Rong, but could he really do that and accuse the pill king of underperforming? He obviously couldn't. The result would have been the same even if Pill King Han Zhu, a seventh rank pill king, had been the one to attend the battle himself. In fact, even a eighth rank pill king might have been defeated had they been in the same situation.

Wang Teng's mind was filled with bitterness. If this was any other occasion, he absolutely would've flipped out and even denied making the bet. He would've become hostile and used his authority to suppress any and all dissenting opinions. Unfortunately, he really didn't have the ability to do so today.

Forget that House Wei was supported by the Coiling Dragon Clan for the moment, not even one of these nine judges were easy pickings. If he were to deny the existence of the bet, he would be accused of having contempt for authority and dishonoring the judges. He would definitely become a public target after that. Wang Teng might be domineering, but even he knew when not to deny all responsibilities. Funnily enough, it was the Tong father and son who looked restless.

Meanwhile, young master Ji San's reaction were quicker than anyone's. He had a feeling that Taiyuan Tower was going to win the moment he saw Jiang Chen turning in his answer scroll. Resolutely, he immediately summoned some of his trusted aides, mobilized his men and deployed them at the scene in secret. Now, Wang Teng wouldn't be able to do anything even if he tried to go back on his words. In fact, Ji San was even looking forward to Wang Teng trying to deny! He wasn't afraid in the slightest.

This entire incident would turn serious the moment Wang Teng decided to play stupid and abuse his power. As long as House Wei was in the right, and as long as they were supported by the Coiling Dragon Clan, the Majestic Clan would only lose even greater face if this matter escalated all the way to seven emperors.

Although the seven great emperors didn't interfere with the worldly affairs of Veluriyam Capital, this didn't mean that they ignored everything that happened within it. No one was allowed to publicly flout the law. Not even the Majestic Clan was an exception. The reason Veluriyam Capital was able to become a hegemon of the Upper Eight Regions was thanks to this set of rules. Although the great clans enjoyed many special privileges, it didn't mean that they could ignore the rules however they wanted to. Wang Teng had obviously noticed young master Ji San's arrangements too. For a short while, he was both anxious and furious.

And finally, the round reached its end. Pill King Rong walked happily out of the battle zone, looking incredibly spirited. His face was full of smiles, and his footsteps incredibly light. However, just when he looked at Wang Teng cheerfully and was about to take credit for his achievements, he suddenly discovered that Wang Teng's face was not riddled with the acknowledgement and praise he had imagined. Instead, an expression more akin to a rumbling storm greeted him.

Pill King Rong's heart skipped a beat as a premonition suddenly struck him. A cold breeze caressed his head and neck. When he looked at the judges' seat, he noticed Jiang Chan already standing at the side,

as if he had been waiting there for a quite a while. Pill King Rong's heart sank. What's going on? Why is that kid out already?

"Pill King Rong, we were waiting on you," Pill King Yu smiled. "Please submit your answer scroll."

Pill King Rong's feet suddenly felt as heavy as lead. His wonderful feelings suddenly plummeted like he had fallen off a cliff. He too noticed that the situation wasn't quite right. But he refused to believe in the impossible. Why was young master Wang Teng looking so dejected even though he had performed so well this round? Does he think that I will definitely lose? Was it because that this kid turned in his answers early? So what? Just because he finished early doesn't mean that he's absolutely going to win.

Fueled by his thoughts, Pill King Rong said loudly, "Please look through my answers, honored pill kings. I am confident that I have performed very well this round."

These words were directed more at Wang Teng than the judges. Pill King Yu smiled faintly and nodded as he accepted the scroll from Pill King Rong. Then, the judges gathered and began reviewing the answers. Although everyone thought that there were almost no doubt as to who would win the round, the final result wasn't announced yet. Therefore, they all wanted to know why the pill king of House Wei had submitted his paper so early. Were all his answers correct? Was he really that confident in himself?

Just as before, Pill King Yu and the rest of the judges looked through Jiang Chen's scroll first. There were nine types of pills in total, and every relevant analysis and every ingredient was written clearly on the paper.

When the judges looked through the answers, their eyes focused sharply in attention. Not long after, amazement appeared in Pill King Yu's eyes, "Genius, what a genius! I never imagined that Veluriyam Capital would be sheltering such an amazing genius!"

Pill King Rong felt as if he'd been plunged into an icy cavern when he heard this unconscious praise. Of course he knew that there was no way it would be directed at him. His answers were good enough, but they absolutely didn't deserve such praise from Pill King Yu. An answer that could win such praise from Pill King Yu must be an extraordinary level of performance! The rest of the judges were letting out admiring exclamations themselves.

"He really is a genius. He actually managed to analyze all nine pills! Even we may not have been able to do it in such a short period of time." In all truth, this was slightly exaggerated, because everyone knew that there was no way they could achieve the same level of performance had they been in Jiang Chen's position.

"Although it's not perfect, he's still managed to analyze all nine pills correctly."

It wasn't that Jiang Chen couldn't produce a perfect answer. He simply hadn't done so, because he didn't want to shine too brightly. There were some pills that he had fully analyzed but written down only six of their ingredients—just enough to pass. If Jiang Chen hadn't held back, he could've written down every single ingredient used to create these pills. However, he also understood that too far was just as bad as not enough. He didn't want to shock people too much. This level of performance was enough for him to win out over that Pill King Rong.

Pill King Rong was dumbstruck. He was sure that he had analyzed seven pills correctly. He believed that his performance was enough to guarantee him a win in this round. But he never imagined that he would lose so utterly and completely. Correct analysis of all nine pills. There was no way a second rank pill king had this much skill. Even Pill King Yu, a veteran ninth rank pill king, might not necessarily be able to do the same!

“Impossible! Absolutely impossible!” Tong Xianwei couldn’t hold himself back no longer. He understood that the situation wasn’t suitable for young clan lord Wang to deny making the bet. However, he didn’t need to consider such things. If he didn’t take the lead and try to change things now, then when would he ever have another chance? “Honored judges, I am not suspecting your integrity. But don’t you think that this kid’s performance is much too unbelievable? The successful analysis of all nine pills? If I may ask, how many of you are able to perform this kind of impossible task when only half the allocated time has passed?” At this point, Tong Xianwei couldn’t care less about his honor or pride as the house lord of a ninth rank aristocratic family. He only had one thought in mind, to disrupt the situation as much as he could. If he could cancel the bet in the process, then that would be for the best.

Pill King Yu’s face darkened, “Tong Xianwei, do remember that you are the house lord of an aristocratic family. Can you bother to think before you speak? By inviting us to become your judges, it means that you’ve acknowledged the nine of us. If you suspect us, then why had you even bothered to invite us to become judges? Is blaming the judge over the loss of a match the grace shown by an aristocratic family?”

Pill King Yu possessed a relatively high status in Veluriyam Capital, and he didn’t always have to submit to higher authority. The rest of the judges also scolded Tong Xianwei as well.

“Tong Xianwei, if you’re going to be a sore loser, then don’t even call for a bet in the first place.”

“Questioning our authority as judges, are you? Are you saying that we’re doing this all for nothing?”

“Ignore him. There’s no need for us to bother with a lackey, is there?”

Pill King Yu stopped the other pill kings from complaining further with a wave of his hand. He stared deeply and calmly at Wang Teng, “Young master Wang, a victor has now been decided. Taiyuan Tower has won the bet. What do you say?”

There was no need for them to waste their breath on Tong Xianwei. After all, the bet hinged on Wang Teng. Wang Teng was absolutely burning with fury, and he himself very much wanted to push the responsibility of his loss on the judges’ head. However, his reason warned him that this was absolutely not the right course of action. Doing so wouldn’t bring the Majestic Clan any benefits. In fact, it would only turn them into a bigger joke. But he really was reluctant to admit defeat just like this!