

## Three Realms 81

### Chapter 81: The Law of the Jungle in the Catacombs

A din of curses sounded out as more and more dejected heirs gathered together.

“Everyone calm down, calm down. The heirs of White Tiger and Black Tortoise are here. They’re all heirs of the four great dukes, and the leader of us all. We must have a plan to combat against the Long family manipulating the contest. Otherwise, when we leave in a month’s time, we’ll all lose our dukedoms!”

“Yes, we must unite together and can’t allow them to do as they will.”

“That’s right. We don’t want to form factions, but don’t force us down the desperate road of disaster either!”

The heir of White Tiger, Bai Zhanyun, and the heir of Black Tortoise, Yi Tiachu, were both elected as representatives.

“Everyone, although I am one of the heirs to the four great dukedoms, I also think that everyone can see the prospects of the dukes within the kingdom in the future will surely change because of one person.”

Bai Zhanyun spoke loudly as his gaze rested upon Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen?

“Brother Jiang Chen, I, Bai Zhanyun, will concede only to you.” Bai Zhanyun had been foiled by Jiang Chen several times, but rather submitted with good grace.

“Brother Jiang Chen, I, Yi Taichu, also concede to you.” The heir of Black Tortoise, Yi Taichu, also nodded.

“Brother Jiang Chen, you have firmly suppressed the heirs of Soaring Dragon in your challenge for duke of the first rank. We also concede to you, please give us a few pointers.”

Jiang Chen was someone who could be persuaded by reason, but not by force.

“Everyone, I, Jiang Chen, am not someone who issues orders. However, my conjectures are that the greenwing swordbirds must be within the third level. Even with the many methods that the Long brother and sister have, they still wouldn’t dare to go to the fourth level. Therefore, no matter if they are willing or unwilling, the final battle is sure to be within the third level.”

“Everyone’s chosen strategy is correct. At this moment, the only suggestion I have for you is to form and hunt in teams. Moving about alone will force you to be very passive in the third level.”

This was all that Jiang Chen could say.

“Brother Jiang Chen, does this mean that we still have hopes of completing the mission?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “I can only say that you will have a bit of hope when you form a team. However, if everyone has their own selfish motives, then it will be difficult to say.”

“Right, form teams, form teams!”

“I want to form a team, who’s willing to hang around me?”

“Brother Jiang Chen, are you willing to form a team with us?”

“If you don’t want the Long family to hold a grudge against you or don’t wish to be caught in the crossfire, the best choice is to keep away from me.”

Jiang Chen spoke the truth. The Long siblings had done so much, and he would never believe it if there wasn’t the slightest hint of a sinister plot against him in all this.

Of course, on the other hand, Jiang Chen had always preferred to come and go about freely and naturally didn’t wish to move in conjunction with these other heirs.

After he finished speaking, Jiang Chen sprang off both feet and his figure vanished in the darkness.

No matter what sinister plot the Long brother and sister were planning, Jiang Chen decided to cope with shifting events using one fundamental principle. He wanted to complete the mission first before contemplating other things.

His plans made, Jiang Chen made straight for the heart of the third level.

After penetrating roughly fifteen to twenty kilometers, Jiang Chen suddenly halted his footsteps and his nose vaguely twitched a few times.

Jiang Chen caught a baffling familiarity in the hint of presence that faded in and out.

“What presence is this?”

He sniffed carefully, but gained nothing.

At this moment, Jiang Chen’s pupils abruptly contracted as his “God’s Eye” suddenly sent out a beam of concentrated light. It swept over a small forest of rocks and a flock of swordbirds. There were three or four in the lead, and their foreheads all emanated a faint silvery light.

“Silverwing swordbirds?”

Jiang Chen flung away all those random thoughts and raised his speed to the extreme, shooting towards that flock of swordbirds.

This was the first time he’d seen a flock of swordbirds since entering the Boundless Catacombs.

There were roughly forty or fifty swordbirds in this flock, with the four silverwing swordbirds in the lead. They were originally flying in another direction, but suddenly turned back and flew towards Jiang Chen’s direction.

Just as Jiang Chen’s body approached, several figures suddenly shot out from the corner directly opposite him. They split up into several directions and blocked off the path of the flock of swordbirds.

“Don’t let this fat target escape from our hands, go!”

The three figures that had appeared all flung attacks at the swordbirds.

How could Jiang Chen let such a prime opportunity pass him by? His body leapt out as he dashed up, the nameless blade cutting through the air!

It was as if the vast seas flowed backwards, as if the milky way hung upside down!

The second form of “Vast Ocean Current Splitter” – Wave Breaker!

A strong blade aura transformed into tempestuous billows and frightful waves, sweeping over a huge number of the swordbirds.

Jiang Chen reached out and snatched with a smooth motion, and two silver pearls immediately landed in his hands. His sleeves waved again, and he brought another nine spirit pearls into his sack.

The other three people also split up the spirit pearls with the fastest speed possible.

“Jiang Chen, you’re profiting off of someone else’s hard-earned effort! We’ve arduously laid in wait here and driven this flock of swordbirds, but you’ve picked up the biggest gains.”

One of the heirs was a bit unwilling to accept this outcome.

Although the other two didn’t make a sound, they watched Jiang Chen like a tiger casting covetous eyes on its prey.

Jiang Chen truly had profited the most this time. Two silver spirit pearls and nine green spirit pearls, it was the equivalent of gaining 29 spirit pearls in one stroke.

Add these 29 pearls to the 57 green spirit pearls that he had gained earlier, and that made for 86 pearls. He was now only 14 pearls away from completing the mission.

“Huh. If I didn’t make a move, would you have the assurance of keeping all these swordbirds here?”  
Jiang Chen laughed coldly and raised his foot, about to leave.

If he hadn’t made a move just now, it was very likely that the vast majority of these swordbirds would have escaped. After all, the speed of the swordbirds was exceedingly fast, and they were in the dark to boot. These three people could only surround three directions, and this flock had come barreling in Jiang Chen’s direction.

If Jiang Chen hadn’t made his move, they would have only been able to keep a few swordbirds.

At the end of the day, they had gained more from Jiang Chen’s actions.

“Jiang Chen, leave the silver spirit pearls, you can take the green ones.”

“Yes, we’ll let you profit a bit, but don’t be too greedy.”

“This is our bottom line!”

“Come and get it if you have the skills to.” Jiang Chen didn’t want to blather on and directly leapt into the boundless darkness. Jiang Chen had no plans to reason with a bunch of fellows who didn’t understand the concept of gratitude.

With Jiang Chen’s speed, the three of them naturally wouldn’t be able to make Jiang Chen stay if he wanted to leave.

In some remote corner on the third level, four figures were meeting.

One of them asked with a raspy voice, "Any news of Jiang Chen?"

"Boss, that kid has hidden himself well, but he's finally shown himself in the past couple of days. With the cooperation from the Long siblings, all is proceeding according to plan."

"Mm. I wonder how that kid has done for himself under these circumstances?"

"According to intelligence two days ago, the kid has already collected half or so of the required green spirit pearls."

"Half? Looks like this kid has some abilities for him to be able to hunt so many green spirit pearls under these circumstances. It looks like there was a reason for the Duke of Soaring Dragon to pay us double."

"Heh heh, of course there would be a reason. Otherwise, with the current strength of the Long siblings, what need would they have of us?"

"Mm. If the kid collects enough spirit pearls before reaching this area, then our plan will have to be modified."

"Mm. Seems like it needs to be modified. We have other plans anyways."

"Number three, you're more clever, you go. Since he won't come to this area, you go lure him here. Proceed according to our plan."

"Yes boss!"

"Number two, number four, prepare yourselves. If we're to act, put on a good act. Make sure that this kid doesn't take the slightest bit of precautions."

"Don't worry, with our four brothers making a move together and scheming against the unwitting Jiang Chen, how will we be worthy of our reputation as the Hidden Hand if we can't get rid of this kid?"

As Jiang Chen penetrated deeper into the third level, he indeed began to hunt more swordbirds.

"It looks like I'll be able to collect enough green spirit pearls without having to go to the fringes of the third level." Jiang Chen calculated and felt that he would be able to complete his mission in another half-day at this pace.

Just as Jiang Chen was musing, one of his eyelids suddenly twitched, sending out a sign of alarm. "Who is it, come on out! What are you doing skulking around?"

Jiang Chen deployed his "God's Eye" in the darkness and saw an heir run out from behind a patch of broken rocks.

"Brother Jiang Chen, is it really you?" A look of surprise and happiness shot out from his eyes when he saw Jiang Chen.

"You?" Jiang Chen thought this person looked familiar, but couldn't remember his name.

"I'm Ouyang Ping of the Sunchaser dukedom. Brother Jiang Chen, I've searched for you all over this level. Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue have formed a team with a pack of heirs and got into a conflict with

some other heirs. They've taken quite a beating. I'm friends with Fatty Xuan and with my strength, couldn't help at all, so I've come out frantically looking for you."

In his memories, this Ouyang Ping seemed to really have a bit of a friendship with Fatty Xuan.

"Where are they? Lead on!"

Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue were Jiang Chen's only best friends. He was unable to sit idly by and ignore any matters that pertained to them.

At the same time, he felt that it was odd. With Hubing Yue's strength, who else could threaten him apart from the heirs of the four great dukes?

"Can it be the heirs of the four great dukes?"

Ouyang Ping led the way as Jiang Chen followed behind, but he didn't ask further questions. It had already been no easy feat for this Ouyang Ping to come bring him this message.

After roughly fifteen minutes, the two threaded past a patch of marshland, with a patch of thorns and thistles in front.

"They're right past this area of thorns and thistles."

Jiang Chen nodded, "Lead the way."

After passing the thorns and thistles, they arrived at an expansive grassland. The surroundings were all made up of sinister, shiny, slippery, and wet crag walls. The jagged, oddly shaped rocks ahead appeared exceedingly sinister.

"Brother Jiang Chen, just up ahead."

Jiang Chen nodded and suddenly asked, "Ouyang Ping, how many meridians true qi are you now again?"

"Heh heh, my prospects aren't as good, I'm only at six meridians true qi, pretty much the same as Fatty Xuan."

"Oh!" Jiang Chen mused upon something and nodded.

"Brother Chen, you've finally come!"

Jiang Chen followed the sound of the voice and saw Fatty Xuan sit dejectedly against a rocky wall. His face was pale and his breathing heavy. He seemed to have suffered injuries.

Hubing Yue wasn't that well off either. He sat cross legged beside Fatty Xuan, and revealed a trace of joy upon seeing Jiang Chen's arrival.

"Fatty, what's going on?" Jiang Chen frowned. "You're hurt?"

Fatty Xuan cursed dispiritedly, "It's Yan Yiming and those bastards. Damn it, he bullied us because he had strength in numbers. It was a good thing that I, fatty, have thick skin and flesh."

"Are you heavily injured?" Jiang Chen took out two Heavenly Karma Pills.

“A bit of an internal injury. Good thing I broke through to six meridians true qi or I may not have been able to withstand it.” Fatty complained.

Jiang Chen’s arm halted vaguely in thin air, but he still flicked his fingers, sending the two pills over. “This is the newest healing panacea refined by the Hall of Healing.”

“Brother Chen is the best!”

Fatty Xuan was wreathed in smiles.

Chapter 82: Falling Prey to a Plot

Jiang Chen nodded, asking, “How were your gains?”

“They were alright originally, but Yan Yiming seized them all.” Fatty Xuan’s face was suffused with anger as he gritted his teeth.

“Just hunt more if your spirit pearls were stolen. The greatest outcome is that you’re alright.”

Jiang Chen turned his head and spoke to Ouyang Ping, “Ouyang Ping, many thanks to your message today. I’ve got two extra green spirit pearls, here, take it as your reward.”

Ouyang Ping scratched his head, “This... how can I accept this?”

“Take it!” Jiang Chen’s forehead creased.

“Heh heh, then, I will accept deferentially as opposed to declining courteously?” Ouyang Ping carefully walked forward with the jitters and an arched back. He accepted the two green spirit pearls, and thanked him continuously, “Thank you Brother Jiang Chen.”

Fatty Xuan cried out and said, “Brother Chen, my shoulder blade still hurts. Can you come and see if it’s been dislocated?”

“Dislocation is a small matter, is it really worth making a big deal of like this? You’re still six meridians true qi. At the very least, can’t you even handle such a small thing?”

“Heh heh, that’s because Brother Chen is here!” Fatty Xuan had an exceedingly thick skin.

“Damned fatty.” Although Jiang Chen cursed outwardly, he still walked over and stretched out a hand towards Fatty’s shoulder blade.

Suddenly, the nine meridians true qi in Jiang Chen’s body roared to life, bursting out of his palm and reaching towards Fatty in the form of a fist. The abrupt punch crashed down onto Fatty Xuan’s chest!

Fatty Xuan cried out and hastily retreated, but he was still a beat too slow.

The punch that encompassed the mysteries of four cycles of blooming and wilting landed solidly.

Fatty Xuan’s tubby body smashed violently into the rock walls, as he spewed out fresh blood from his mouth.

Almost at the same time at which Jiang Chen made his move, Hubing Yue at his side also shifted. A short sword had appeared in his hand at some point, and came piercing down towards Jiang Chen's ribs like a viper.

There were no fancy flourishes to this strike – it was like the attack of a viper, directly aiming for the critical points.

Jiang Chen had obviously come prepared, so that when his fist punched out towards Fatty Xuan, his other hand clasped the sheath of the nameless blade, halting the attack of the venomous blade.

Jiang Chen's body retreated rapidly, wanting to dodge to the side.

At this moment, a surge of strength without the slightest forewarning shot rapidly through the air in the darkness.

A bow and arrow!

"True qi forming currents, a true qi master?" Jiang Chen was greatly startled and wanted to dodge, but it was already too late.

The arrowhead landed on Jiang Chen's back with a loud crash like a shooting star.

A dull thud sounded out. The arrowhead was uncommonly sharp, and it contained the accumulated strength of a true qi master. It should have pierced through Jiang Chen's chest, but that scene didn't happen.

The arrowhead connected with Jiang Chen's bag with a dull thud, and the force from the strong true qi sent Jiang Chen flying more than ten meters, crashing heavily into another rock wall.

A mouthful of fresh blood sprayed out.

Even with the protection of the skysilk armor preventing the arrowhead from piercing through his body, the impact of the tremendously strong true qi permeating throughout Jiang Chen's body was enough to send tremors through his organs to the point at which they almost shifted places.

After spitting out the mouthful of fresh blood, Jiang Chen's right hand grasped the nameless treasured blade as he pushed himself up off the ground. His God's Eye was deployed to its maximum strength as he scanned the surroundings.

He actually wasn't that worried about the people in front of him. The bow and arrow attack from the shadows was what he feared the most.

If he was hit by another arrow, he'd at least suffer heavy injuries, even if he didn't die.

And a true qi master existed in the enemy's camp!

"Just who are you?" Jiang Chen's tone was calm but he didn't dare let up his guard even a little. All sorts of weird stones came into view as his God's Eye swept the area.

"This won't do, there're too many obstacles here. I'll have to use Ear of the Zephyr." Since God's Eye was unable to discover the target, Jiang Chen once again deployed Ear of the Zephyr.

Ear of the Zephyr could catch any rustle in the grass within a radius of five kilometers.

Nothing to the east!

And nothing to the west!

Apart from the sound of underground creatures disturbing the marshland to the south, nothing as well!

Jiang Chen perked his ears up to the north and listened carefully, capturing the slightest hint of a breathing sound. It was suppressed to the extreme, and he wouldn't have heard it if it wasn't for his Ear of the Zephyr.

"There's an archer at the level of a true qi master to the north!" Jiang Chen was a bit reassured after capturing his opponent's position.

"Jiang Chen, you're quite strong! You could discover our flaws when you're in the mere advanced realm of true qi. You're not simple, not simple at all."

The person pretending to be Ouyang Ping threw the two green spirit pearls to the side, and the trace of a sinister smile was revealed at the corners of his mouth. "What a pity you'll be dead without a doubt today."

"Dead? My single death for all of yours? Even if I die, I'll bring down a few others with me to cushion the road."

"Huh. Your punch would have at most harmed number four. With your level in the advanced realm of true qi, there's no way you could've killed him!"

"Is that so? You've rather overestimated your companion's ability to take a beating." Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

A punch that encompassed the mysteries of "Divine Aeons Fist" ... even if the other was a true qi master, he'd be dead without a doubt if his chest suffered a blow.

Jiang Chen still had this little bit of confidence.

"Number four, are you alright?" The killer who had faked Ouyang Ping called out raspily.

The killer pretending to be Fatty Xuan only murmured lowly, the breath of life in his body wispy and tenuous.

"No need to call out to him. There'd be no hope for him even if the immortals descended to the mortal realm."

The fake Hubing Yue also dashed out from the shadows, "Number three, we'll attack him together. Boss, lock onto him with your bow, and torture this kid to death!"

Jiang Chen's figure wavered as he dashed beneath another rock wall, covering his body, and just so happening to stay out of attack range of the hidden archer.

"Kid, stop hiding, you'll be unable to escape, even if we fight three against one." The fake Ouyang Ping leered.



“Three against one? Are you sure you still have such combat ability?” Jiang Chen laughed in contempt.

“What do you mean?”

“Oh no, number three, you took his green spirit pearls just now! They were probably poisoned! According to the intelligence from the employer, this kid may be adept at using poison!”

The fake Hubing Yue was number two, and immediately spoke up to issue a reminder to the fake Ouyang Ping.

Jiang Chen took advantage of their confusion to once again leap up and dash into the darkness like a ghost. He vanished without a trace with only a few rise and falls of his body.

“No, this kid is escaping!”

Although Jiang Chen had fled, he didn’t get very far. Firstly, these people had provoked him, and Jiang Chen wasn’t the type to easily let them off the hook.

Secondly, since they had faked being Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue, this caused Jiang Chen to be slightly concerned. Were Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue safe and sound at this moment, or had they already been killed by these fellows?

“Judging from their skills, they must be professionally trained killers. Except, wasn’t the entrance to the Boundless Catacombs sealed? How did these fellows make their way in?”

How would Jiang Chen have known that the Duke of Soaring Dragon had spent a large amount of money to hire these four killers? They had long since targeted four heirs, and secretly disposed of them on the day that everyone had left for the catacombs. They then disguised themselves with the appearance of those four heirs, and made their way into the Boundless Catacombs.

And all of this was an arrangement from the Duke of Soaring Dragon – the plan of Long Zhaofeng!

They had originally used a few special methods to partner the Long family brother and sister together, in order to attract as many Swordbirds from the first and second level to the third level.

This location was the place they had set up to lure Jiang Chen to within the third level.

However, Jiang Chen’s hunting skills were great, and he had obtained enough green spirit pearls in spite of their plans.

Jiang Chen would even be able to complete his mission early, and leave without setting foot into the area they had set up.

Therefore, they had started executing another plan, which was to disguise themselves as Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue. They had planned on acting out the ruse of inflicting an injury on themselves to win the confidence of Jiang Chen, and attack unexpectedly when Jiang Chen was looking at Fatty Xuan’s injuries.

Except, never in their wildest dreams did they think that Jiang Chen would be able to see through them! This was outside of their expectations.

One had to know, the killers of Hidden Hand were all masters of disguise. Even if they had to disguise themselves as a chubby character like Fatty Xuan, they portrayed him with a living resemblance.

Actually, Jiang Chen hadn't even suspected that this was a trap in the beginning.

When the fake Ouyang Ping had led the way, Jiang Chen had only thought that it was vaguely strange. This Ouyang Ping was only six meridians true qi, how could he keep up with Jiang Chen's pace?

This little bit of strangeness had bothered Jiang Chen, but it didn't cause him to become suspicious.

The flaw that Jiang Chen truly did pick up on was the sentence the fake Fatty had said, when he said that he was of six meridians true qi.

One had to remember that on the bright morning before they had entered the catacombs, Fatty Xuan had come to specially tell Jiang Chen, gleefully, that he had broken through to seven meridians true qi.

Jiang Chen still remembered this matter vividly.

Except, the breakthrough had happened the night before they'd entered the catacombs. How was the killer pretending to be Fatty Xuan supposed to know?

However, even with this sentence, Jiang Chen had only suspected that maybe Fatty Xuan had said the wrong thing when he was injured.

But when he'd probed afterwards — You're still six meridians true qi, at the very least, can't you even handle this small thing?

Jiang Chen had once again emphasized six meridians true qi, and tested with his words.

This fake Fatty Xuan once again didn't offer a rebuttal and didn't correct him.

After twice in a row, as well as Jiang Chen's God's Eye, he finally discovered that there were still some differences in detail between the fake Fatty and the real one.

Many of the differences in detail were concealed by the boundless night. However, to Jiang Chen's God's Eye, they were as clear as looking at fire.

If you added the flaws in speech, it allowed Jiang Chen to discern that this was a trap.

So Jiang Chen turned the trick into something of his own use, and covertly applied poison to the two green spirit pearls, and then used the excuse of checking Fatty Xuan's shoulder to lay a lethal blow onto the killer pretending to be Fatty Xuan.

The end goal of his continued steps of plotting was to decrease the other's battle capabilities.

In this way, he had used one punch to kill number four who was pretending to be Fatty Xuan, and had employed poison to finish off number three who was pretending to be Ouyang Ping.

With this, there would only be the killer boss lying in wait from the shadows, and number two, who was pretending to be Hubing Yue, left.

"Heh heh, I was truly naive to think that the Duke of Soaring Dragon wouldn't move against me here! Who would've thought that the Long family would go to such extremes to take care of me. They think highly of me indeed."

Killing intent also surged within Jiang Chen's heart. The Duke of Soaring Dragon had overstepped his bottom line again and again.

"Boss, this kid is strange. He killed number four with one punch, and number three with poison."

"Hold your ground. He's been injured by my true qi and won't make it far. Remember, be on your guard against this kid's poison!"

"Huh. He plotted against number three. How would I fall for the same thing, knowing that he's adept at using poison?" The tone of the fake Hubing Yue was filled with a depth of hatred that reached the sky.

### Sovereign of the Three Realms (WN)

#### **Chapter 83: A Fight to the Death in the Catacombs**

Previously, the enemy had been in the shadows and Jiang Chen in the light. But now, Jiang Chen was in the shadows and the enemy in the light! He deployed "Boulder's Heart" and tried his utmost to adjust his mentality to the level of being impervious to desires and passions. He even held his breath. Even so, the heart of Jiang Chen's palms still sweated vaguely.

"If it wasn't for the opponents revealing their flaws with their words this time, I would likely be a corpse by now." Jiang Chen's heart still palpitated with fright.

It was obvious that the Duke of Soaring Dragon had truly gone to great efforts this time, and had actually hired four true qi master assassins. If they hadn't tried the trick of torturing themselves to win his confidence and instead surrounded him on all sides, they would've had at least a seventy to eighty percent chance of slaughtering him.

"The only thing to find fault in is that these assassins were too cautious and wanted too much to be assured of their success." Jiang Chen could understand how things stood from their perspective. After all, this wasn't the outside world. It was the Boundless Catacombs. This was an endless night, an underground world that extended in all directions, and a complicated terrain. Once the ambush failed and the target escaped, it would be exceedingly difficult to recapture him within the Boundless Catacombs. The opponents had overly sought to be assured of their success, but had instead given Jiang Chen the chance to snatch his life from the jaws of death.

However, Jiang Chen didn't relax his guard. He had schemed and gotten rid of two out of four of the true qi master assassins, but two remained. One was skilled at close quarters combat, and the other at ambush. It looked like their strength would be even stronger than the two that had died.

Jiang Chen was nine meridians true qi now, and with his knowledge of strong methods, he wouldn't be at a disadvantage even he directly confronted a true qi master. But to face off against two at the same time, and both of them cold blooded assassins, was still a very big risk for Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen might not have been afraid of close quarters combat, but it was impossible to guard against that archer with surprising faculties. If it hadn't been for the protection of the soft armor against that arrow just now, Jiang Chen's corpse likely would have long since graced the scene. Even so, the strong true qi had still caused a certain degree of injury to him. Jiang Chen leaned lightly against the rock wall and raised his Ear of the Zephyr to the maximum.

The sound of water dripping from the crag wall... the sound of bubbles arising in the marsh... all sorts of movement from underground creatures in the ground below... various minute sounds all travelled into his ears.

Whoosh!

A strong sound pierced through the air without any warning, and suddenly violently attacked Jiang Chen's location.

Another arrow! It was very accurate as it'd made its way straight towards Jiang Chen's hiding place. It was as if the arrow would pierce through gold and shatter rock, coming with a dominating momentum as if burning true qi was powering it. It came directly piercing through, punching through the rock wall.

"He's discovered me?" Jiang Chen was startled as his body slightly wavered in that crucial moment. It was a good thing there was a wall of rock in between. Although this arrow had an unparalleled momentum, but piercing through a wall of rock was still a layer of obstruction, and its speed slightly slowed down that tiny bit.

Jiang Chen evaded it in that tiny beat of decreased speed!

Pfft!

The strong true qi pierced through the rock wall, and brought with it the arrow to the wall on the other side, sinking into the wall from the tip to the tops of the fletching!

Hummm!

When the arrowhead shot into the opposite wall, it emitted an ear piercing humming throb, shaking the rock wall and sending rock dust flying everywhere, the wall cracking open like a spider web.

"Such strong true qi!" Jiang Chen was awed. The true qi carried by this arrow was absolutely not something that a true qi master of ten meridians true qi would possess.

"An eleven meridians true qi master?" Jiang Chen became more and more shocked. This Duke of Soaring Dragon had spared no expense, and had hired even an eleven meridians true qi master?

There was a marked level of difference between the existences of ten meridians true qi and eleven meridians true qi. Within all of the Eastern Kingdom, the number of eleven meridians true qi masters probably didn't exceed twenty!

No time allotted for Jiang Chen's musing, the arrows broke through the air with unparalleled dominance like shooting stars. Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Three continuous currents of exceedingly strong arrow auras all shot towards the rock wall that Jiang Chen was hidden behind. "Damn it, an eleven meridians true qi master alright. If I can locate him, he can also find me!"

Jiang Chen suddenly discovered that his advantages gained from God's Eye and Ear of the Zephyr were all completely negated in front of an eleven meridians true qi master. It was a good thing that jagged rocks of grotesque shapes were all around the area that Jiang Chen had chosen to hide in. There were all sorts of rock walls for him to take cover with. Since his opponent wanted to shoot him, the archer would

have to pierce through multiple walls in order to do so. However, though the rock wall could stop his opponent, it could also stop Jiang Chen's counterattack.

A Layered Feather Throwing Dagger in his hand, Jiang Chen valiantly tried to control his tense emotions. The advantages of training "Boulder's Heart" began to become apparent. His emotions could become calmer the more he was faced with a critical situation. The rhythm of Jiang Chen's emotions slowly became one with the jagged, grotesque rocks. The weird rocks didn't move, and thus his mental state didn't fluctuate either.

"You can't hide, Jiang Chen!" The boss-assassin's raspy and sinister voice sounded like a demon from hell within the darkness. The cold blooded assassin was like a demon that pursued relentlessly. Not only did his methods of killing give one a hair-raising feeling of horror and fright, but so did his voice as well. Except, such emotional oppression was without effect in the face of Jiang Chen's "Boulder's Heart".

"Heh heh, Jiang Chen, I see you! Taste my sword!" Another voice sounded. The fake Hubing Yue had already traveled to within twenty meters of Jiang Chen under the cover of the arrows!

Whoosh!

Another arrow flew out with wily true qi, making for Jiang Chen's hiding place again!

Jiang Chen was resigned. His opponent's targeting abilities were strong to the point of being abnormal. No matter how he dodged, he'd never escape out of the other's firing range. In the moment that he moved once again, assassin number two had already rushed up and stabbed fiercely towards Jiang Chen's stomach.

"Die, kid!" With a hideous laugh, number two's sword stance suddenly shifted.

Another stab towards Jiang Chen's right rib! Assassin number two was well versed in close combat. The sword technique that he was displaying had obviously gleaned its true meaning from viper attacks. Every move was as accurate, cunning, and ferocious as a viper!

If it was direct combat, then Jiang Chen's "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" could absolutely match up to this wily sword technique. However, there were two on the other side. Although this close quarters combat looked vicious, it was only to drag down Jiang Chen. The truly lethal threat was from the arrow attacks of the eleven meridians true qi master!

"What a frightening combination! I'll be dead without a doubt if I become entangled with this person. The attacks from the arrows can absolutely slowly torture me to death!"

What to do? Jiang Chen had no avenues of retreat and no time to contemplate. In those critical moments, an exceedingly bold - even risky - thought flashed through his mind.

The nameless blade in his hand struck straight out! "Eat my blade, first form of Wave Slash!" Nine meridians true qi infused a blade that was as if a reverse ocean current, hewing straight towards assassin number two. It was the strength of one triumphing over ten. This Vast Ocean Current Splitter was the tyrant amongst blades, and possessed an extremely imposing momentum. It was a technique of utilizing the strength of the blade to the utmost.

This simple and unadorned slash was enough to cause assassin number two's wily sword techniques to halt briefly!

"Go!" Jiang Chen immediately turned to leave when he forced assassin number two to retreat with this move, tarrying for not even a moment.

The assassin was gleeful upon seeing this scene. This Jiang Chen was still inexperienced after all. He also knew that Jiang Chen had no desire to continue fighting because he was afraid of the boss's arrow attacks. However, with the way that Jiang Chen had turned to leave, this was equivalent to him leaving his back open to number two!

"This kid is looking for death!" Number two's sword aura churned, as a vicious sword struck for Jiang Chen's back like a viper! "Die!"

A cunning curve of terrifying true qi once again struck Jiang Chen's back! Jiang Chen's body stumbled as he rushed to the fore, the strong true qi almost causing him to fall in a dead faint. It was a good thing that he had raised his speed to the extreme. His forward momentum had more or less decreased the power of this strike.

"Boss, I hit him! This kid is dead for sure!" Just as assassin number two called out loudly to his companion, a cold light flashed in front of his eyes during his moment of pride. A scary thought suddenly streaked through his mind. Except, at this distance, it was too late for him to make any sort of reaction in this critical moment.

Pfft! The moment that cold light lit up in his eyes, it had already sunk into his throat!

Layered Feather Throwing Daggers! Jiang Chen had taken one of the hits in order to turn back and return the favor!

Although this strike wasn't an attack that encompassed the mysteries of "Moonshatter Flying Daggers", it was the basic attack of the technique. Its strength was astounding as it skipped a level to kill with its attack, making it impossible to guard against! One had to say, Jiang Chen had taken such a risky move out of resignation.

A bold plan, resolute execution, and the slightest chance of assurance had to accompany this unerring strike of throwing dagger technique! A perfect knife was the satisfactory conclusion to this time's daring plan.

The eyes of assassin number two bugged out like those of a dead fish. His face was filled with incredulity as he clutched his throat, emitting raspy, hoarse sounds, but unable to ever speak a single word again.

Bam! Another true qi master had fallen.

Jiang Chen had no time to spare for retrieving his throwing dagger. He didn't even pause as his body dashed away and once again sank into the piles of grotesque rock shapes. It was now one on one! The boss of his opponents was adept with the dao of bow and arrow. And he, Jiang Chen was also versed in the technique of throwing daggers!

Long ranged attacks versus long ranged attacks. Without the existence of helpers, the pressure on Jiang Chen immediately decreased by quite a bit. Except, the original bit of injuries he had suffered had worsened after taking the other's slash.

His stomach and lungs roiled like overturning rivers and seas, and he wanted to throw up several times. "This assassin is indeed professionally trained. If I'd hesitated even a moment just now, or been briefly entangled by the second guy, then the person on the ground now would likely be me."

Close quarters combat combined with long range attacks... This type of combination was indeed the most frightening. Jiang Chen had taken a few turns on the edge of life and death, but his emotions had in fact become more and more steadfast and persevering. Jiang Chen circulated his true qi after swallowing a Heavenly Karma Pill, dispersing the medicinal effects into his various meridians. After taking two hits in a row, it was a good thing that he had the soft armor protecting him, otherwise he wouldn't even have the chance to take the pills right now.

At this moment, the stubborn and headstrong face of Princess Gouyu suddenly flashed through Jiang Chen's mind. He thought that if it wasn't for her thoughtful considerations, this Boundless Catacombs would probably have become the place where he died unavenged. "At the end of the day, it's that my strength isn't enough. If I was the level of a true qi master, and deployed my various methods then, how would I be in such a difficult position that I'd have to expend so much effort with this duo?"

Hidden in the darkness, Jiang Chen once again realized how the insufficiency of absolute power was hampering his movements when faced with such a situation.

Chapter 84: Cornered into Desperate Circumstances?

"Jiang Chen, I'll admit that you're a genius!"

In the darkness, the raspy, bloodcurdling voice of the boss sounded once again. His tone was remote, without any emotions, as if the death of his three companions were like three ants being stepped on, and didn't serve to elicit any ripples of emotion in his heart at all.

"Killing three true qi masters, although you used a bit of trickery, I have to admit that I've underestimated you."

"However, you've been injured twice and you are now an arrow at the end of its flight. These catacombs are destined to become your burial place. I swear in the name of the Hidden Hand that I will kill you and torture you slowly, letting you taste true despair before you die!"

"Kill me?" Jiang Chen's voice also sounded out coldly in the dark. "There were four of you just now and you still haven't succeeded, what makes you think you can kill me with just one?"

"Four? One?" The boss sneered. "Do you think it's a numbers game when killers kill people? Sometimes too many are a burden."

"Being a slick talker? Forgive me for not being in the mood!"

Jiang Chen had once again raised his foot as he talked, using the strong intuition of "Boulder's Heart", he could already perceive that the other's bow had likely once again locked on the area that he was in.

It was a good thing that there were countless grotesque rocks, intersecting stone walls, and row and rows of protruding stones that impacted the other's movement.

However, Jiang Chen's heartstrings dared not slacken.

The pressure from an eleven meridians true qi master was like a sharp blade that hung over his head, able to fall down at any time and kill him!

He couldn't let down his guard, especially since his injuries were not yet fully healed.

The bow twanged again.

Jiang Chen subconsciously moved his foot, but then halted his movement afterwards.

The instinct of the Boulder's Heart didn't capture the traces of a great strength coming to attack in that delicate moment.

"No arrow? He only pulled the bowstring?" The notion flashed through Jiang Chen's mind.

The bow sounded once again.

Jiang Chen remained as unmoving as a mountain, having entered the finest realm of the Boulder's Heart. It was as if all minute changes were unable to escape the perception of his mind.

Jiang Chen thought of a story, the story of birds being startled by the merest twang of a bow string.

"Is the boss thinking of me as a frightened bird? He only pulls the bow without shooting an arrow in order to wear away at my fighting spirit and to test my nerves?"

Jiang Chen suddenly understood something, and traces of a cold smile leaked out from the corners of his mouth. "If I hadn't trained 'Boulder's Heart' and my mental strength wasn't steadfast enough, I would have been affected by this parlor trick."

Twang, twang!

Consecutive bow twangs!

Jiang Chen moved this time!

Truth and falsehood mixed in with the bow twangs, two false and one true. The one in the middle was the attack of an arrow!

Truths and falsehood, truths and falsehood.

One had to say, the boss had a thorough understanding of attacking the heart, and a deep grasp of the way of hunting.

What a pity that he'd met Jiang Chen, an opponent with an exceedingly strong heart.

A rock wall was utterly demolished into rock dust by this arrow.

"Currents of true qi, an explosion of true qi! He's an eleven meridians true qi master alright!" Jiang Chen was also privately astounded by the power of this arrow.



He had to admit that his opponent was quite strong.

Even if he hadn't been injured, the only way out would most likely have been to make a clean getaway if he was faced with this person in combat.

It was a good thing that the Boundless Catacombs led in all directions, and was an endless underground world with no end.

"With my strength, it would be incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to kill this person in return. He's a killer, and has more than enough time to play with me. I have a mission to execute. Although I'm only a few green spirit pearls short, almost half of the month's time has passed already. If I'm dragged down by him, it would be quite severe if I'm unable to complete the mission."

Although Jiang Chen held an abiding hatred for this person, his reason told him that it would only waste his time and effort if he continued to be entangled with him. He was beset with danger on all sides and it'd be difficult to have any results.

Out of the thirty-six stratagems, running away to fight another day was the best policy.

"It's also a bit difficult to shake this person off. The terrain within the third level is dangerously precipitous and thus easier to hide in. The terrain becomes less complex back in the second and first level. It would then be even more difficult to shake him off."

Jiang Chen was in a dilemma.

If he stayed and was unable to kill the other party, then he'd only become his prey.

Leave? With this killer's tracking abilities, it would be tough to free himself from this killer once the latter had their sights set on him. Besides, as Jiang Chen still had a bit of spirit pearls to collect, this was as difficult as climbing up to the sky.

Two days afterwards, Jiang Chen lurked behind a hidden wall, his breathing a bit hurried. The wild goose chase and battle over the previous two days had greatly expended his energy.

This opponent was strong enough to the point in which Jiang Chen felt prickles down his back.

In these two days, Jiang Chen used many tricks and thought of many plans.

However, this person was like a ghost from beginning to end, always able to hang over Jiang Chen, following him at a distance not too far away and not too close.

Jiang Chen had also tried to counterattack, but his attacks had always been a beat behind. The other's bow and arrow attacks were accurate, wily, and could always firmly restrain his counterattacks.

If he wanted to throw the other off on the basis of strength, the speed of the other wasn't faster than him, but it also wasn't slower than him.

He'd been unable to befuddle the other by concealing his body, scurrying this way and that, and disguising his features or his pace.

Jiang Chen suspected that the other must have a special method to follow his tracks.

He couldn't shake him off, and couldn't beat him in battle.

After two days of this, Jiang Chen felt a bit weary. It was a good thing that he'd prepared many heaven-defying medicines.

The Heavenly Karma Pill allowed him to recover seventy to eighty percent of his injuries.

The Vast Ocean Pill facilitated the timely recovery of the true qi he'd expended.

With the aid of these pill medicines, although Jiang Chen continuously resided in the face of danger, he had yet to be beaten by the other.

"Jiang Chen, doesn't it feel grand to be in a constant state of anxiety and on tenterhooks?" The raspy voice like a ghost or a ghouel sounded once again.

"Who would've thought that you'd be able to hold out for so long. I greatly admire and am excited by you. You are the kind of prey that makes the hunt and torture more meaningful."

"However, it ends here today."

The boss never forgot to attack his prey's heart at any given time. In his eyes, prey that constantly existed under a state of fear was no different than birds frightened by the merest twang of a bowstring.

Attacking the heart, undermining the fighting spirit, until the prey finally suffered a mental breakdown in the end and was tortured to death by him.

Jiang Chen's heart was as if a boulder. Although the circumstances were exceedingly disadvantageous to him and he was extremely bedraggled, these wretched conditions made his courage mount as the battle progressed.

"You're a killer, but have the flapping mouth of a woman. Come kill me if you really have the skills to. If you don't, then we'll continue whiling the time away in the Boundless Caverns. Let's see who lasts longer."

Jiang Chen didn't bother concealing his body anymore. He didn't fear being ambushed by the bow and arrow of the other as long as he kept the proper distance.

After all, both were quite familiar with the other's ways after multiple days of chasing.

"Lasts longer? What qualification do you have to while away time with me? There's not much left of the allotted one month's time. Can you afford to waste time?" The boss killer laughed leisurely.

"A month? Didn't you just say that it ends today? You're slapping yourself in the face?" Jiang Chen sneered.

"You have a glib tongue!" The raspy laugh sounded out in a sinister fashion. "However, you probably don't even know that you've already walked into your final resting place?"

Jiang Chen's thoughts raced. Instinct told him that there seemed to be some truth to the other's words.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen's heart sank. The Ear of the Zephyr twitched slightly. There were two sets of footsteps quickly approaching from the east and west.

And, a frightening power was also contained behind these footsteps, a strength that didn't pale in comparison to true qi masters!

Familiar, a feeling that became more and more familiar.

"It's them!" Jiang Chen was startled.

Jiang Chen hadn't seen the two ever since entering the Boundless Catacombs. Were they finally going to reveal themselves at this moment?

Long Yinye, Long Juxue!

The two heirs of the Duke of Soaring Dragon!

"Jiang Chen, you're looking a bit bedraggled." Long Yinye's voice sounded from within a hundred meters to the east.

"Jiang Chen, I gave you a chance that day in the capital." Long Juxue's lofty tone belonged to one high on top. "You didn't cherish it and decided to be my enemy."

"We can only crush you if you move against my Soaring Dragon dukedom. Jiang Chen, face your death!"

The Long siblings echoed each other as they circulated their true qi with awe inspiring momentum. They were both true qi masters!

"Long siblings, my three subordinates have all been killed by Jiang Chen. I've decided to double the price for this transaction."

The boss killer spoke with a leisurely voice.

Long Yinye's tone was cold. "Xue Sha, don't reach for more after getting what you want. The price we've given you is already double."

"Yes, you've given us double, but my brothers have lost their lives. Some compensation is appropriate?" The boss continued to speak in a voice as diffident as the fleeting wind and clouds.

"Are you trying to break the contract?" Long Yinye's voice lowered.

"The decision is yours. You can choose not to accept. I can give up this job. Not that I'm boasting for Jiang Chen, but as soon as I let up here, he is sure to escape like a slippery eel. You have no idea how much energy I've spent the past three days just to pin him down!"

Long Yinye and Long Juxue looked at each other, with Long Juxue finally nodding, "Alright, then we'll do as you say. We'll double the price again, but you cannot drag your heels when completing your work!"

"Drag my heels? Do I, Xue Sha, look like someone who takes money without doing work?"

As he spoke, he notched an arrow and sent it flying like a shooting star directly where Jiang Chen had hidden himself.

"Jiang Chen, die!"

"Kill him!"

Long Yinye and Long Juxue cooperated together and came at him from both sides.

The depths of an expert's skills are revealed when he makes a move.

Subtle runes shimmered over Long Yinye's broadsword, emanating rays of dark gold light, appearing exceedingly sinister.

Long Juxue had a short sword that sparkled with a remarkable green light. The surface of the short sword was encompassed by a green current of air, vaguely forming the shape of an azure phoenix.

When the boss killer saw this, he rasped out, "Spirit weapons! You, you have two spirit weapons!"

Jiang Chen was also abruptly enlightened when he heard the words "spirit weapons", his face changing slightly. These Long siblings actually had spirit weapons on them!

In the span of a moment, Long Yinye's broadsword had already started cleaving through the air. The golden runes on the exterior of the broadsword started expanding endlessly, swirling out a golden splendor and forming a frightening momentum. It was as if a five clawed golden dragon was imbued on the blade's edge as it came viciously chopping down.

Long Juxue's short sword was suffused with green light, turning true qi into the shape of an azure dragon. It formed a beam of falling light and stabbed straight towards the critical parts of Jiang Chen's stomach and chest.

Beseiged on three sides.

To the front was an arrow shot out with the full strength of eleven meridians true qi!

On the left and right were two newly ascended true qi masters and the terrifying blows from their spirit weapons!

Desperate circumstances. Jiang Chen had been cornered into desperate circumstances in the blink of an eye!

Chapter 85: Plunging into the Forbidden Zone without Hesitation

His strength, it still wasn't enough.

Faced with desperate circumstances, and armed with the will of a boulder, he could no longer worry about the small things.. The true qi in his body was all concentrated on the nameless treasured blade.

"Treasured blade, I barely caught a glimpse of the passing beauty that was your splendor that night. The spirit strength that passed as quickly as a white pony's shadow across a crevice, the aura that once pierced the stars, the secret that palpated hearts... will you awaken at this moment?"

Jiang Chen had thrown all the random thoughts in his mind to the back of his mind in this moment of life and death.

Whether he lived or died would be decided in this pivotal moment.

The true qi within his body surging up like the tidewaters, as he circulated the true qi currents of the "Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans" to the utmost.

Coalescing nine meridians true qi as one.

Surging to the treasured blade in his hand.

“Second form of Vast Ocean Current Splitter – Wave Breaker”

At this moment, an astounding scene happened. That simple and unadorned nameless saber suddenly awoke — like an ancient deity reviving from its slumber, breaking free of the shackles of heaven and earth, and trampling the rivers and mountains of the world.

The dusky splendor of stars and a dim sun and moon.

In that moment, the vast waves true qi around the nameless blade concentrated into the vague shape of a deity from time immemorial, holding the skies and the earth.

The aura of this stroke was as if it carried the representation of the ancient deity — as if it held the terrifying power to destroy the heavens and earth.

A crisp crack sounded out twice.

The blades had connected. Under the edge of the nameless saber, the golden runes on Long Yinye’s broadsword flickered out like a candle being snuffed, and the shadow of the grimacing five clawed dragon was as if scattered by the wind.

A crisp sound like ripping silk rang out from Long Juxue’s azure phoenix short sword.

True qi drained out in the next moment.

Long Yinye’s broadsword cracked in the middle, breaking into two pieces.

Long Juxue’s azure phoenix short sword had been broken into many pieces, and been turned into scrap metal.

As for the nameless saber, its remaining prestige was ceaseless. The sounds of the blade howling were emitted in continuous succession as beams of bright light emanated from it, completely unharmed.

Long Yinye was dumbfounded. Long Juxue was similarly dumbfounded.

Even Jiang Chen was quite astonished by this scene. It was obviously outside of his expectations. One had to know, his opponents were using spirit weapons.

Even true qi masters couldn’t dream of obtaining a spirit weapon.

“Die!” The boss killer’s long readied arrow shot towards Jiang Chen at the best possible timing.

The perfect moment, an incomparable arrow.

It had inserted itself into this delicate timing without the slightest error.

Jiang Chen’s strike had been deployed. Although he’d broken through the blows from the Long siblings’ spirit weapons, he still couldn’t avoid this terrifying arrow.

The arrowhead crashed viciously into Jiang Chen’s chest. Although the strong true qi still didn’t pierce through the Skysilk Soft Armor, it still sent Jiang Chen flying.

The arrow that Jiang Chen had taken before was on his back.

This arrow connected solidly with the crucial area of his chest. As he was sent flying, fresh blood spewed wildly. Every meridian was invaded by strong true qi, as if he'd been electrocuted, nearly destroying every single one.

It was a good thing that the soft armor had already blocked more than half of the power.

Jiang Chen had also spent a lot of effort during normal times to strengthen his meridians, and had used unique methods to forge them, nurturing them with spirit medicine over long periods of time.

This was why his meridians weren't churned to pieces.

However, even if they weren't churned to pieces, they were heavily injured, and could no longer circulate the slightest bit of true qi.

After he landed, Jiang Chen almost couldn't catch his breath. He vomited up three mouthfuls of fresh blood in a row and finally crawled up, sustained by burning his life energy. His body jerked as he ran in a stumbling dash into the endless darkness.

"After him."

Long Yinye was the first to rush over, with Long Juxue close behind him. The emotions of the two at the moment were both astounded and enraged. They had prepared so long for this time, and had even brought out their spirit weapons. They had thought that they could easily crush Jiang Chen.

Who would've thought that the two spirit weapons would be made worthless by Jiang Chen's unassuming blade.

The boss killer of the Hidden Hand was in no panic or rush, always keeping his calm as he rounded up the rear, chasing at an appropriate speed.

Ever since Jiang Chen had entered their ambush zone, he'd had a unique way to plant some sort of brand on Jiang Chen's body, making it so that no matter where Jiang Chen walked, he would be unable to shake off the killer's pursuit.

He'd been unconcerned about losing Jiang Chen previously, and was naturally even less rushed now that Jiang Chen had been severely hurt, and could fall down at any time.

"To think that Jiang Chen's blade is that strong and domineering, thoroughly trouncing two spirit weapons. I must have it. These Long siblings..." A killing intent flashed through the boss killer's heart. Even if the Long siblings were to do something impetuous within the Boundless Catacombs, he wouldn't mind getting rid of them.

The desire of all the practitioners in the world held for a divine weapon was enough to drive someone mad.

Even spirit weapons were unable to contend with Jiang Chen's blade. This was enough for the boss killer to take the risk of forming the intention to kill the Long siblings.

"Jiang Chen, you can't escape!"

Although Long Yinye's spirit weapon had been destroyed, he didn't lose his footing.

"We've already surrounded the way out of here. If you continue any further, that'll be the taboo area. You have no path to heaven, and no way to fly through the earth."

Jiang Chen was actually also pouring out his grievances as he ran. He was already dancing on the edge between the third and fourth level beneath his feet right now.

With every few hundred meters he took, he could deeply feel that he had entered a terrifying abyss.

The frightening aura exuded by the fringes of the fourth level, the subtle terrifying presence, was already enough to cause all of Jiang Chen's hairs to involuntarily stand on end.

"You mustn't set foot into and beyond the fourth level at any costs. That is a forbidden zone. Countless numbers of geniuses have once brashly ventured in, and still no one has ever emerged. The odds would be stacked against even a spirit dao practitioner. So remember this well, remember this very well!"

Princess Gouyu's repeated admonishments from that day seemed to ring by within Jiang Chen's ears.

Proceeding further would be entering the fourth level, the forbidden zone.

Even when spirit dao practitioners had entered, their way was fraught with grim possibilities. No one below the realm of spirit dao had ever walked out again.

But, to turn back?

The way back led to the Long siblings, who were eying him like tigers to prey.

There was also a frightening cold blooded killer.

Any of those three could kill the heavily injured Jiang Chen as easily as snuffing out an ant.

Proceeding forward was the forbidden zone of the fourth level. There basically would be no return from it. Yet, retreating and finding the way back was already barred. Those three would never let him off.

There were only these two choices left for Jiang Chen. Either of them seemed to lead to death and desperation.

"Haha, Jiang Chen, why aren't you running anymore? Keep going." Long Yinye's vision could already catch sight of the Jiang Chen circling around the fringes of the fourth level.

"Jiang Chen, I've said that you must die for fighting against my Soaring Dragon."

Jiang Chen's gaze shifted. The boss killer had also arrived within five hundred meters of his vision.

"Long siblings, I want to say first that the blade in Jiang Chen's hand will belong to me." A domineering sense that was beyond all question suffused the boss killer's tone.

"Belongs to you? On what basis? You seek to take advantage of the situation to profiteer with four times your usual rate already?" Long Yinye was outraged.

"Heh heh, young duke Long. If you don't agree, I still have a hundred ways to obtain this blade, and can make your hunting plan all for naught as well." The killer's tone was leisurely.

“You!” A violent light peaked in Long Yinye’s eyes.

“Forget it. When I enter the sect in the future, a spirit weapon will be nothing much.” Long Juxue understood the importance of observing the times and judging the occasion.

“Haha, Miss Juxue is highly educated and reasonable alright. Then it’s happily decided. Jiang Chen is a rat in a case now, he can’t get away.”

Jiang Chen’s face was expressionless as he gaze swept fully across the three of them. “I’ve remembered you. Come on in as well if you want to kill me. Don’t forget that the day I, Jiang Chen, reappear is the moment that you will pay back ten, a hundred times.”

With that said, Jiang Chen’s feet pushed off the ground as he rushed into the darkness. He didn’t even turn his head back as he rushed towards the forbidden zone of the fourth level.

“This... Jiang Chen, you’re dead without a doubt if you go in!” Long Yinye called out.

“Jiang Chen, if you come out, we promise not to involve your family clan. Only death awaits you if you still insist on going in. We will be certain to bathe Jiang Han manor in blood afterwards.” Long Juxue knew the strategy of attacking the heart.

A bloodbath at Jiang Han manor?

Jiang Chen’s heart shuddered vaguely, but remained as solid as a boulder, resolutely rushing into the depths of the forbidden zone.

Would they let the Jiang Han manor off the hook if he surrendered?

Just like a promise from a tiger to a lamb, there was no credibility in it at all.

“Father, my apologies. To think that after my reincarnation, I would still be unable to help Jiang Han walk out from a difficult situation?” A few traces of bitterness were found in Jiang Chen’s smile.

“Ai, this kid is quite stubborn.” The boss killer also sighed.

Long Yinye said wrathfully, “And isn’t it all because of you? If you hadn’t mentioned killing him and taking his blade, it might not have been enough to upset him enough to take this path.”

“Heh heh, young duke Long, your words demonstrate that you don’t understand your opponent at all. Pardon my candor, if it wasn’t for the situation of today, the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s position of first duke beneath the heavens was sure to be lost if you had competed with Jiang Chen in an open and straightforward way.”

The boss killer’s tone was bluntly candid.

“You...” Long Yinye flared into a burst of anger.

“Forget it, what’s the use of quarreling with mouth and tongue? Should we unite together and continue pursuing him, or guard this place?” Long Juxue spoke up and mediated.

“If you don’t want to live any longer, you can pursue him inside. But I won’t keep you company.” The boss killer hadn’t lost his composure even when his underlings had been killed. However, when his gaze



looked into that yawning blackness with no end that was the fourth level, he actually revealed the hint of a wary and shocked look.

“Then do we keep waiting like this?” Long Yinye asked out of sorts. “We don’t have that much time to wait.”

“I can wait.” The boss killer smiled faintly. “The payment of four times the usual rate is unchanged. I’ll wait here a few months”

“How do we know that you won’t go easy on him?” Long Yinye laughed coldly.

“Go easy? One, I never go easy once I’ve accepted payment. Two, am I waiting for him to grow up and get his revenge if I go easy on him? Third, I want his blade.”

Any one of these three reasons were enough.

Finally, both sides agreed that the boss killer would take up watch here to prevent Jiang Chen from escaping.

Long Juxue didn’t actually suspect that the boss killer wouldn’t keep his word. She was well aware that this person was selfish. As long as he didn’t lose interest in Jiang Chen’s blade, he would definitely not leave.

Of course, there was no point in waiting for a long time. No one could make it past three days within the forbidden zone of the fourth level.

Their agreement was to wait for a month. That was enough.

“Long siblings, I hope that the payment of four times the usual rate will have already arrived when I leave. You must be aware of what I would do if it hasn’t.” The boss killer reminded faintly.

Long Yinye snorted coldly but was dragged away by Long Juxue as the two walked outside.

Chapter 86: Forbidden Zone, Spirit Level Beast

Jiang Chen stumbled and staggered, using all the remaining strength within his body to flee into the depths of the fourth level. At this moment, he no longer cared about the so-called forbidden zone, and no longer cared about the point of no return.

He could die, but definitely not in the hands of the Long siblings!

He could never accept the Long siblings displaying his head and going back to the capital to bluff and bluster in front of his father!

If he couldn’t control his birth, then he would at least control how his death came about!

Therefore, Jiang Chen didn’t tarry. His feet rushed forward with all their might. He didn’t know how long he’d walked either. He only knew that his body felt increasingly heavy, his mind increasingly dull, his pace increasingly scattered, and his consciousness increasingly foggy.

He fell down. He fell down with a body of blood and dirt.

After who knew how long, a vague trace of light seemed to shoot into the endless darkness of Jiang Chen's consciousness.

He seemed to be awake, yet also seemed to be dreaming.

He dreamed that he seemed to have returned to his past life, returning to the glories of being the son of the Celestial Emperor, returning to the resignation of enduring millions of years of emptiness...

The dream landscape took another turn in the blink of an eye. He seemed to have returned to the capital and saw that large hordes of Soaring Dragon soldiers had rushed into the Jiang Han manor, hauling his father out all trussed up.

And then an executioner's sword used for beheading people sentenced to death, swung high, chopping down towards his father's head.

"No!" Jiang Chen felt a pain in his chest and abruptly opened his eyes.

"Awrk!"

A Goldwing Swordbird seemed to be startled and fluttered away with a flap of its wings, flying away from Jiang Chen's side.

Jiang Chen lowered his head and discovered that his clothes had already been slit open by the sharp edge of the Goldwing Swordbird's beak. It was a good thing that there was a layer of Skysilk Armor protecting his body.

Otherwise, that beak would have laid him open and disemboweled him just now.

"Goldwing Swordbird?" Jiang Chen was incredibly enfeebled. Whenever he circulated true qi through his meridians, he felt like his meridians would split open and that his body would completely fall apart into pieces..

Jiang Chen coughed lightly a few times, spitting out some trace liquids from his lungs. He felt that his breathing had become slightly easier.

Fishing out a Heavenly Karma Pill, he was about to put it in his mouth when his hand suddenly halted.

His eyes almost goggled out of his head.

The hairs on his body all involuntarily stood up as he looked around.

A thick crowd of Swordbirds were standing on every surface possible in all directions!

On the walls, on the grotesque rocks, on the marsh, the shrubs, the dirt...

As long as there was a place to stand, it was packed with Swordbirds!

The saying of "tens of thousands" is used for describing something numerous, but how could the number of Swordbirds in front of his eyes be numbering in the tens of thousands?

Jiang Chen swept his gaze around and couldn't see the end. He only saw a mass of Swordbirds with keenly honed and neat feathers, glowing spirit pearls on their foreheads, and sharp beaks comparable to blades and swords.

“Have... Have I arrived in the base camp of the Swordbirds?”

Originally, one or two Swordbirds would pose no threat whatsoever, but the scene at hand was basically an ocean of Swordbirds!

Even if he was unharmed and in good shape, and even if his strength were to increase tenfold, he would probably still only suffer the downfall of being ripped into meat scraps in this ocean of Swordbirds, not to mention how he was covered with serious wounds right now!

You could kill one or two.

You could also kill ten or a hundred.

You wouldn't be able to kill thousands or tens of thousands, but you could run.

Except, Swordbirds met the eye in every direction. They were present no matter where one walked or escaped. How would he escape? There wasn't even the room to escape!

Besides, some Silverwing Swordbirds were scattered amongst these Swordbirds, and there were even around ten Goldwing Swordbirds!

One Goldwing Swordbird had the fighting strength of a true qi master!

Jiang Chen laughed wryly, it looked like even if he didn't meet violent beasts within this fourth level, this incalculable ocean of Swordbirds would be able to drown him.

“What a pity, why didn't the Long siblings take the risk and chase after me in here?” Jiang Chen didn't even have any thoughts of escaping now. He only rued the fact that he couldn't perish together with the Long siblings.

He threw the Heavenly Karma Pill into his mouth, simply deciding not to think so much.

However, he felt that it was a bit odd. These Swordbirds were all eyeing him like prey, but why had none of them taken any action yet?

With his current battle strength, a normal Greenwing Sword would be able to slice and dice him inch by inch into meat scraps.

A Goldwing Swordbird circled past the top of Jiang Chen's head.

Another Goldwing Swordbird from the opposite direction left behind a golden colored shadow.

The golden-feathered Goldwing Swordbirds were comparable to the existence of true qi masters alright. Those perfect wings and perfect lines emanated a frightening aura. They were indeed in no way inferior to the human true qi masters.

Their degree of wildness and fierceness even slightly surpassed true qi masters.

Numerous Goldwing Swords flew over Jiang Chen's head, circling.

Jiang Chen only felt baffled. These Goldwing Swordbirds continuously spiraled overhead, as if dancing in the sky. Although Jiang Chen could feel their hostility, he could also clearly feel that they were suppressing their intent to kill.

“What are these Goldwing Swordbirds hesitating for?” Jiang Chen was perplexed. This kind of situation was the most unbearable. It was like feeling the emotions of someone sentenced to death and tied up on the execution ground, waiting for the executioner’s blade.

Except, this blade continuously failed to materialize. It was enough to cause someone to mentally break down.

“You demons in bird form, hurry up if you’re going to do something. What do you intend by continuously flying over this young lord’s head?”

“Hey, can you be more hygienic when you go potty? You almost splashed this young lord’s pants.”

Jiang Chen was seriously at a loss. He cursed for a while and saw that although the Goldwing Swordbirds couldn’t resist putting on a show of force or provoking him, they had no intention of doing anything to him. He became too lazy to pay attention to them.

At this moment, the medicinal effects of the Heavenly Karma Pill had slowly seeped into the meridians and started repairing his injuries.

“Whatever. Since they’re not making a move, I have a chance to heal from my injuries.”

One had to say, the Heavenly Karma Pill truly deserved its name, as it was divine in its effects. As long as the practitioner hadn’t died, any internal injuries could be healed completely from any time within a day to three days.

Of course, with Jiang Chen’s body constitution and the tenacity of his meridians, as soon as the Heavenly Karma Pill started taking effect, his rate of recovery would be faster than ordinary practitioners.

After all, the tenacity and strength of his meridians had been tempered by unique methods. It could be said that they had been tempered hundreds, no, thousands of times, and there were no others like them.

“Awrk!”

A Goldwing Swordbird circling over Jiang Chen’s head suddenly let out a long call. All the other Goldwing Swordbirds started calling out in unison as well.

The Silverwing Swordbirds followed the call afterwards, with the countless Greenwing Swordbirds also joining in as well. In that moment, the calls of birds screaming concentrated into a sharp ocean of sound. It was as if a tidal wave was washing over the scene as the rock walls and grotesque rocks on all sides fell over, breaking and collapsing here and there.

“This...” Jiang Chen’s face changed, knowing that something had happened. Even with his training of “Boulder’s Heart”, he too felt a bafflingly sense of palpitation in that moment.

It wasn’t because of this ocean of sound, nor was it because of the deep impact from all the presences.

It was because a vague, indistinct aura was becoming clearer in the darkness, radiating from a distance to where they were.

“What’s going on? Is a huge and strong monster appearing?” Jiang Chen only felt that his heartbeat was uncontrollably speeding up. Even the suppression effect of “Boulder’s Heart” was unable to control this sense of shock and fear.

Thud thud!

Thud thud thud thud!

Sounds like drum beats vibrated Jiang Chen’s ear drums.

An incredible scene happened next. All the Swordbirds were as if a highly trained army, lining up neatly and facing the west as a whole, expanding their wings like two blades stuck sideways.

At this moment, one row, two rows, endless rows of Swordbirds all made the same movement, forming a square matrix!

This scene was awe inspiring and was a scene not to forget for the rest of Jiang Chen’s life!

Suddenly, Jiang Chen saw two lights like lanterns abruptly appear in the darkness to the west.

An extremely strong sense of presence threaded throughout the flocks of birds and rushed forward afterwards.

This was a strength that had never been felt before, an aura that even true qi masters paled far in comparison to. Even tens, hundreds of true qi masters combined together would be unable to create such an aura!

“Spirit level violent beast?” Jiang Chen suddenly remembered something!

He was immediately enlightened. How were those two lights lanterns? Those were the beast’s eyes!

It was the king of this territory, the dictator of this territory!

Jiang Chen suddenly understood everything, and now understood why these Goldwing Swordbirds had had aggressively fierce postures but still didn’t do anything to him.

It wasn’t that they didn’t want to, but that they were afraid to!

Because, even Goldwing Swordbirds would lower their arrogant heads and humble themselves like slaves in front of this immensely strong violent beast.

This was the posture of submitting their allegiance to this beast!

Continuously increasing his “Boulder’s Heart” until he had raised it to the maximum, Jiang Chen strived his best to restrain his nervousness and fear.

He wasn’t afraid of death, but didn’t want to die in too ugly of a manner and be looked down upon by these alien races.

He could finally see clearly that it was a huge beast that was long and thick in stature. Its head was exceedingly like a dragon, but its body lacked the scales of a dragon.

It had legs, but not dragon claws.

The ground would tremble correspondingly with every step it took.

Thud. Thud thud!

This rhythm, this presence, all vibrated so that Jiang Chen's internal organs were in abnormal discomfort!

The aura of this beast made Jiang Chen's breath quicken. If it wasn't for the fact that he was the reincarnation of the son of the Celestial Emperor, he likely would have long ago been crushed by this aura.

"A human?!" This large beast had finally stopped and even imitated human language!

Jiang Chen was still someone who had seen great occasions after all, and he immediately resumed his normal countenance after holding up beneath this wave of aura. He was about to open his mouth when a thought struck him. He curled his tongue and actually started speaking in the ancient language of the beasts, "Big fella, are you the king of the Boundless Catacombs?"

"Mm?" The eyes that were like lanterns of the large beast couldn't help but blink. It almost doubted itself, as if its ears had misheard. This human could speak the language of the beasts?

And, the highly noble ancient language of the beasts at that?

"I asked you, are you the king of the Boundless Catacombs?" Jiang Chen asked again in the language of the beasts.

"You know the language of the beasts?" The spirit level beast asked in surprise.

"I know a lot, but you still haven't answered my question." Jiang Chen continued in the ancient language of the beasts.

"Interesting, how interesting! To think that there are still humans who understand the ancient language of the beasts!" How would this spirit level beast know that in the millions of years in Jiang Chen's past life, they had been long drawn out and boring. He was widely read on all matters, and there were none that he didn't understand if it was interesting.

"King?" The spirit level beast shook its head. "I'm just the lord in charge of the most outer fringes of this fourth level. I'm not even one of the great lords of the fourth level. King? Heh heh. I don't even have the right to know!"

"Not even the right to know?" Jiang Chen was shocked.

"Indeed! However, how come you, a human, know the ancient language of the beasts?" This spirit level beast also knew a bit of the ancient language, but it wasn't proficient at it, so it was incredibly curious.

Chapter 87: An Unexpected Transaction

"That's my secret." Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

"Secret?" The spirit level beast smiled. "You, a mere human, dare talk to me about secrets while in my territory?"

“Indeed, a secret. I hadn’t planned on leaving here alive anyways. You don’t even need to do anything, those Swordbirds are more than enough to take care of me.” Jiang Chen was utterly shameless.

“Haha, you’re an interesting human indeed. Previously, none of the humans that entered my territory have left it alive, unless I couldn’t beat them. However, you, I don’t plan on killing you.”

“Because I know the ancient language of the beasts?” Jiang Chen asked in a low voice.

“No.” The spirit level beast shook its head. “Because, since you’ve entered my territory, there’s been a certain type of power hidden inside of you, a frightening power. Although I can no longer feel it, I am certain that a terrifying power sleeps within you.”

“Oh?” Jiang Chen was also completely befuddled by the beast’s words.

It was a sure thing to say that he was full of the teaching of the apostles and held a thorough knowledge of scientific and theoretical affairs, but how would he even begin to explain the fact that apparently a terrifying power was concealed within him?

“No need to speculate. You haven’t even entered the spirit dao yet, and have yet to open your spirit ocean. You will absolutely be unable to capture the presence of this power.”

Only when one entered the spirit dao and cleaved through the spirit ocean could one begin to train in spirit qi.

Out of the four accompanying abilities for “Moonshatter Flying Daggers”, one of them, the “Psychic’s Head” was only able to be trained after entering the spirit dao.

“This is to say, that you’re afraid of my power?”

“Heh heh, afraid?” The spirit level beast smiled. “Just as you’ve said, these Swordbirds are more than enough to annihilate you tens of thousands of times over. What would I be afraid of you for?”

“Since you’re not afraid, and I’ve trespassed on your territory, what reason do you have to let me go?”

“Human, do not seek to provoke me. I have been here for who knows how many millions of years. Do you think I will easily be provoked by a human? It’s just that I’ve sensed a type of a mysterious power within you. This power seems to have surpassed the laws of this plane of existence. This power is precisely what my peers have anticipated in their sleep of tens of thousands of years. This is a kind of hope!”

“Hope?” Jiang Chen was even more confused.

“Yes, hope. The hope to depart from this place!” An ancient sense of bleakness, one that had seen the many shifting scenes of life, flowed out from the spirit level beast’s eyes.

“Depart from here? You’re kidding. With your power, isn’t it an easy matter to leave?”

“That’s why I say you’re only an ordinary person right now. You haven’t even trained your spirit power, how would you be able to observe the net from which there is no escape in these Boundless Catacombs?”

“These Boundless Catacombs were created by the divine abilities of a person with great prestige from another plane. They contain an incredibly frightening, forbidden, taboo formation. Those below spirit dao can enter and leave freely, whereas our bodies have been imprinted with a seal that corresponds with the formation. We will trigger the formation as soon as we leave, activating the fires of heaven and earth and dying where we stand.”

“This is to say, that the outside world can enter and exit these boundless catacombs, but those of you inside cannot leave?”

“That’s not entirely true. Those below spirit dao, such as these Swordbirds, can still enter and leave.” The spirit level beast sighed lightly, a bit of loneliness apparent in its eyes.

Jiang Chen also remained silent. He could perceive a sort of desolate bleakness from the beast’s eyes, stemming from endless years of being imprisoned. This was just like how the millions of years in Jiang Chen’s past life were also empty, lonely, and resigned!

“Human, I have spent the vast majority of my time here in slumber because I don’t wish to awaken. Awakening expends both my spirit power and energy. Unless a reckless and brazen alien race blunders in and disturbs us, we prefer to sleep most of the time, as we cannot train in these Boundless Catacombs. Do you know why those who venture in here basically cannot return?”

“Yes, because they’ve disturbed you and wasted your spirit power and energy.” Jiang Chen could understand.

“You’re very smart. Therefore, you’re the only human I don’t wish to kill because I wish to make a transaction with you.”

“Transaction?” Jiang Chen was startled.

“Yes.” This spirit level beast sighed lightly. “I know I’m being a bit senseless, but I truly vaguely felt a trace of a power that didn’t belong to this plane during that moment. Perhaps, some sort of incredible miracle will happen to you in the future? Just treat it as one of my idle dreams. Perhaps it was only a misconception. But, even if it was a misconception, I still don’t want to let this opportunity pass...”

One had to say, the spirit level beast had had the tendency to ramble on because he had been caged for far too long.

“Let’s get to the point.” Jiang Chen had to remind him.

“Mm. This transaction is simple. I can let you go, and even swear allegiance to you, as long as you swear an oath that when you have the ability to release the seal from within my body in the future, you will come save me from this place. You must know that it’s really too depressing staying inside this hellhole. I’d rather be your slave outside than while through endless days in here in agony.”

“Just this simple?” Jiang Chen felt it was a bit unbelievable.

“Just this simple.” The spirit level beast nodded, with an extremely sincere look flowing through his eyes.

It looked like loneliness and emptiness were truly enough to destroy everything, including strong spirits beasts such as this one!



“An oath of heaven’s law is very effective, you must think carefully.” The spirit level beast didn’t forget to remind him.

Jiang Chen smiled. He was the reincarnation of the son of the Celestial Emperor. He was all too aware of the power of an oath under heaven’s law. Even the Celestial Emperor himself would not dare violate an oath under heaven’s law.

The spirit level beast stared unblinkingly at Jiang Chen, obviously a bit anxious for the favor and worried that it would lose it, desperately afraid that Jiang Chen would reject.

Jiang Chen rubbed his stomach and smiled lazily. “If you can find something for me to eat, then we can agree on this matter.”

“Really?” The eyes of the spirit level beast sparkled.

“I can swear, but I can’t guarantee the time period. Because I currently have no idea nor knowledge of the formation and seals.”

“That’s not a problem, we’ve already stayed here countless of years, staying further would be a simple repeat.”

“Alright, I, Jiang Chen, swear in the name of heaven’s law, that if I one day should be equipped with the power to break the seal, I will be sure to... right, what’s your name?”

“I’m called Mang Qi!” The spirit level beast hastily added.

“I will be sure to save Mang Qi from this place. If I violate this oath, then heaven’s law shall smite me.” Jiang Chen swore the oath with a serious genuity.

“Alright, it looks like you’re different from the other humans. I can feel your sincerity. Since you haven’t been perfunctory to me, I, Mang Qi, also swear that if you can save me from this place, I will treat you as my master for the rest of my life and listen to all of your commands! If I violate this oath, then heaven’s law shall smite me.”

One human and one beast conducted this odd transaction in these circumstances.

At this moment, Jiang Chen’s stomach started rumbling at this inappropriate timing.

Goldwing Swordbirds very quickly delivered food, a strand of jade green fruit.

“Eat. Only this is of a somewhat higher quality within the caves. The meat is all more disgusting, I think you wouldn’t be able to stomach it.”

Jiang Chen got straight to the point and started munching on the fruit. The fruit was crisp, juicy, and melted in his mouth. A faint wisp of warmth could be felt after swallowing it. It was warm and toasty, giving off an indescribable feeling of comfort.

“Eh? What kind of fruit is this?” Jiang Chen felt a wave of hot air arise from his dantian when he got to the third fruit. It then flowed to the various meridians, as nurturing as the spring rains, making Jiang Chen feel peace of mind and happy of heart.

“This is the Rare Jade Fruit, the spirit fruit that grows in the area I slumber in. An ordinary practitioner can increase his level of training by one level with no strings attached when partaking of a single fruit.”

“Then I’ve eaten three in a row, doesn’t that mean...”

“Haha you think too much. The effects of eating a hundred are the same as eating just one. Eating too much will actually lead to adverse side effects, so I’ve only prepared six for you.”

“Ah? Why didn’t you say so earlier? Then I’m not eating any more, what a shameful waste!” It was as if Jiang Chen had received a priceless treasure as he stored the Rare Jade Fruits into his sack.

This was a rare and precious fruit. Although this would merely be wares by the side of the road for Jiang Chen in his previous life, the times of now were not those of previous days.

This natural spirit fruit was now a luxury item to Jiang Chen.

Mang Qi yawned hugely and smiled, “Looks like I need to give you some space. You must be preparing to break through?”

The Rare Jade Fruit would unconditionally increase one level of training. This wasn’t mere talk.

The spirit power held by this fruit immediately caused the levels of spirit power within Jiang Chen’s body to be abundantly plentiful, miraculously healing all the injuries he had previously sustained.

Three days later...

Mang Qi once again appeared and had a friendly smile on its face. “Congratulations, looks like you have indeed broken through. Mm? Such a young true qi master?”

Jiang Chen slowly opened his eyes, neatly organizing each current of true qi within his body and storing them back into his dantian.

Everything appeared quite incredible.

He had broken through to nine meridians true qi after entering the Boundless Catacombs. Who would’ve thought that after drastic changes, he would find the chance to breakthrough in these circumstances that led to certain death!

And, this time’s breakthrough sent him directly to the ranks of true qi masters!

Ten meridians true qi, true qi master!

True qi masters were the elite apex of existence in the entire Eastern Kingdom!

Except, Jiang Chen was not overly happy. He nodded with a faint expression, “I’ve underestimated the spirit power of this Rare Jade Fruit!”

“Quite normal, but I don’t seem to see any of the joy that normally follows a breakthrough? Oh right, I haven’t seemed to ask your name up until now?”

“Jiang Chen.”

“Jiang Chen... Jiang Chen.” Mang Qi repeated this to himself a few times, as if wanting to deeply imprint this name into his mental consciousness.

“Oh right, Mang Qi, how many days has it been since I’ve entered the fourth level?” Jiang Chen suddenly asked.

“You’ve spent two or three days in a coma since entering, add to that the three days taken for breaking through, should be around six or seven days? It hasn’t exceeded seven days.”

“Hasn’t exceeded seven days?” Jiang Chen was delighted. He had been worried that he had been in a coma for too long and missed the one month deadline of the mission.

Various events had happened when he was hunting the Greenwing Swordbirds previously, and he’d then been delayed quite a few days when he’d encountered the pursuit from the Hidden Hand. Altogether, he had spent roughly seventeen or eighteen days.

Add to that the six or seven days in here, only twenty four or twenty five days should have passed out of a month.

“You have urgent business?” For unknown reasons, Mang Qi suddenly didn’t want this human to leave.

“Incredibly urgent. It has to do with my father and the survival of my family!” Jiang Chen wasn’t being an alarmist. Once the Long family got the upper hand and the Jiang family lost power, it was sure to be a horrifying suppression and slaughter!

#### Chapter 88: Swallowing the Killer Xue Sha

Jiang Chen was also a bit moved when he saw the slight disappointment in Mang Qi’s eyes. He knew that if he just dusted himself off and left like this, it wouldn’t be kind at all.

“I think I can tarry a bit more, at most two days more. During these two days, we can chat about your seal and the matters regarding this formation.” Jiang Chen said.

Mang Qi smiled. “Mm. Jiang Chen, I can finally be certain that you’re a reliable human. However, I know nothing of the seal within my body, and have been unable to find any information. But this formation... I’ve only heard of the lord of the fourth level vaguely speak of it before. I think it’s called ‘The Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement’ something or another!”

“The Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement?”

Jiang Chen’s brow creased faintly, as the memory banks of his past life opened once again. He had studied formations in his past life, and he had definitely heard of this “Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement” before. But the memories within his mind hadn’t been fully unlocked yet, so he couldn’t quite get any leads during this moment.

But how would Mang Qi know Jiang Chen’s secrets?

“Jiang Chen, you don’t need to bother yourself in order to ponder this matter right now. You don’t even need to turn this over in your mind within the next hundred or five hundred years, unless your training is enough to stand at the apex of this world.” Mang Qi sighed lightly.

Jiang Chen actually already knew all of what Mang Qi just said.

“Jiang Chen, take this item.” Mang Qi fished out a hard object that was like jade, but not jade.

“What’s this?”

“Something from my body. To be more precise, it’s one of my teeth.”

Although it was a tooth, its radiance was the same as jade, and it looked quite simple and unsophisticated. It almost looked like it could be one the bones of a god or demon as ancient, strange patterns were on it.

“Don’t think random thoughts, this isn’t a weapon and it can’t defend you. It’s only use is that my mark on it represents me.”

Mang Qi chuckled. “If you ever need help from me, infuse it with your true qi and I’ll receive your message.”

“So what if I need you? Aren’t you stuck within the Boundless Catacombs?”

“I can’t leave, but my troops can.” Mang Qi smiled. “You try imagining millions upon tens of millions underneath the leadership of the Goldwing Swordbirds. Just who would be able to withstand their might within these common kingdoms?”

Jiang Chen trembled from his shock.

His scalp became numb at the thought of this scene. Once these Greenwing Swordbirds, who numbered enough that they could blot out the sky and cover the earth, left the Boundless Catacombs, it would undoubtedly lead to everlasting disaster.

It was entirely possible that the other neighboring sixteen countries would be embroiled as well, not to mention just the Eastern Kingdom!

This Mang Qi was quite the marvelous character! He’d offered such a large gift obviously to tie Jiang Chen, along with his gains and losses, together.

This was precisely an indication of goodwill, cozying up to him, and playing on emotions.

“Mang Qi, I accept your gift.” Jiang Chen didn’t put on airs. He really did have need of such a great gift at the moment.

“Heh heh, this item also has another function. If I think of you, I only need to move my mental strength, and this item will send energy to your body, alerting you.”

“I’ll have to come see you then, right?” Jiang Chen smiled.

“Heh heh, I won’t come looking for you without rhyme or reason, only as a last resort. Of this you can be assured of.” Mang Qi’s old face reddened as he promised.

After reaching an agreement with Mang Qi, Jiang Chen brought up his intention to leave. Although there were still five or six days left, one thing still weighed on Jiang Chen’s mind.

The killers from Hidden Hand that day had disguised themselves as Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue. Jiang Chen was worried about these two best friends, and he wanted to go scout out the situation.

He wanted to see them if they were alive, and their corpses if they were dead.

“Jiang Chen, that fellow who wants to kill you is still waiting outside the fourth level.” Mang Qi reminded.

“Is that so? They’re all there? I was afraid they’d left.” Jiang Chen’s tone was sinisterly cold.

“I’m afraid you’ll be disappointed. Two of them have already left, while the last one is standing guard there. It seems like he won’t rest unless he’s dead.”

“Long Yinye and Long Juxue have left?” Jiang Chen understood how matters stood after thinking briefly. They wouldn’t linger too long, not with the mission period being one month.

This meant that the person who hadn’t left was the boss killer from the Hidden Hand.

“How about this, Jiang Chen. I’ve decided to send a division of Swordbirds out. They’ll listen to your commands. One division contains ten Goldwing Swordbirds, one hundred Silverwing Swordbirds, and ten thousand Greenwing Swordbirds. If that’s not enough, you can use that thing to contact me at any time.”

Mang Qi viewed Jiang Chen as a treasure now, and didn’t wish for any accidents to befall him. Besides, within his territory, he naturally had the obligation to ensure Jiang Chen’s safety.

Mang Qi’s presence expanded as he gave orders in the beast language. Ten Goldwing Swordbirds flew docilely to Jiang Chen.

“Jiang Chen, be at ease, they will absolutely obey your orders.” Mang Qi promised. “I can’t leave the fourth level, so let my people teach that fellow a lesson.”

Jiang Chen didn’t decline or observe the formalities. He simply left with the division of Swordbirds.

On the boundary between the third and fourth level, the killer boss Xue Sha had already been standing guard for six or seven days.

“The odds are likely stacked against this Jiang Chen, if he doesn’t come out soon.” Xue Sha was also hesitating. “Should I go in and take a look or not? What if his injuries flared up and he died in the outermost fringes of the fourth level? If it’s only a few kilometers, I should be fine if I enter and leave, right?”

Xue Sha comforted himself in this way, but still couldn’t find the courage to actually take the first step into the fourth level.

After all, the legends were simply too frightening. None of the practitioners who’d ever entered the fourth level had ever made it out again.

Even if it was a few kilometers, and not penetrating deeply, Xue Sha was unable to guarantee that he would be able to emerge unscathed.

But the temptation from Jiang Chen's blade was an itch in his heart that was impossible to scratch! He knew quite clearly that if he could obtain that blade, then he, Xue sha, would absolutely be invincible amongst those below spirit dao practitioners. He'd be able to rampage without abandon in these common kingdoms!

This temptation was difficult to withstand.

To enter or not to enter?

"That damned Jiang Chen. If you hadn't entered the fourth level, that precious blade would definitely be in my hands." Xue Sha grew an itch in his heart whenever he thought of the blade.

He also regretted not killing Jiang Chen with the fastest speed possible. If he'd killed Jiang Chen in the third level, how would the matters of today have occurred?

But, he also had to admit that Jiang Chen's strength exceeded his expectations. If it wasn't for the attacks from Long Yinze and Long Juxue's spirit weapons drawing his attention, then his chances of killing Jiang Chen alone would've been even lower.

"Ai, when did such an abnormality appear in the Eastern Kingdom?" Xue Sha cursed in his heart. "Oh right, this Jiang Chen is from the Jiang Han dukedom. The Duke of Jiang Han is only a duke of the second rank. How could he cultivate such a genius as this? Unless... is there some sort of secret within the Jiang Han household? Huh! If I can't get that blade, I must go to the capital of the Eastern Kingdom when I leave, and seize that Duke of Jiang Han. I'll get something out of him at least."

Xue Sha's ears moved when his thoughts traveled down this path, and his nose sniffed faintly he subconsciously raised the bow in his hands.

He almost couldn't believe it because he sensed a faint presence. This presence was the hidden scent that he had left on Jiang Chen's body previously!

"Jiang Chen?" Xue Sha asked this with some disbelief.

"It's me." Jiang Chen's voice sounded remotely from the darkness.

"It's really you?" Xue Sha was agitated. "You're not dead? Very good! Jiang Chen, we can have a chat. I can not kill you and let you leave. The condition for that, is that you leave your blade behind."

"Do you think I would believe your bullshit?" Jiang Chen burst out laughing.

"You have no other choice but to believe me. Otherwise, you can just try going inside again, No one has emerged from the fourth level alive! You mustn't have entered in too far, and were only on the outskirts, right?" Xue Sha asked.

"Was that what I did? Why don't you come inside and find out?" Jiang Chen sneered.

Xue Sha laughed a sinister, cold laugh. "I have no need to enter, I only need to stand guard here. You'll be unable to leave then. Will you leave after handing over the precious blade, or die in the forbidden zone of the fourth level?"

"I must choose one?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

“You must choose one!”

“Very good! I choose that you stay, and I leave!” Jiang Chen muttered a few things in his mouth as soon as he finished speaking.

“What did you say?” Xue Sha was dumbfounded.

Suddenly, Xue Sha’s breathing halted because he saw all sorts of Swordbirds surge out from all corners and all directions — like an overflow of locusts.

Blotting out the sky and covering up the earth, everywhere to be found beneath the heavens!

The thickly dotted Swordbirds were so concentrated that one didn’t even have room to lift their feet.

Countless Swordbirds rushed out without fear of death. Their violently sharp beaks and feathered wings were as sharp as knives as they cut through the air, cut through the rock walls — cut through anything and everything.

Xue Sha’s face changed, as his eleven meridians true qi continuously raged outwards, attempting to withstand them for a moment.

However, in such narrow quarters, and under the condition of being surrounded, the area in which he could deploy it truly wasn’t much.

The power of an eleven true meridians true qi master was powerful indeed. Swordbird after Swordbird was shot by the true qi and fell in a meaty mass of blood rain.

However, he could kill ten or a hundred Swordbirds this way, but he was still limited by what he could do in the end.

One division of Swordbirds had tens of thousands of birds. Including the Swordbirds on the outskirts, nearly twenty thousand Swordbirds had surged out this time. They had filled the space within five kilometers.

A golden shadow suddenly streaked towards Xue Sha.

Following that was another golden shadow, and another...

Ten golden shadows in a row started attacking Xue Sha with the intimidating aura of thunder and creeping rubble.

The Goldwing Swordbirds had finally made their move.

Each Goldwing Swordbird was the equivalent of a true qi master. Ten true qi masters plus countless numbers of regular practitioners that were unafraid of death.

This confirmed one saying — “random fists will beat the master to death!”

No matter how strong you were, you’d be unable to face the tactic of a sea of humans if you didn’t have overwhelming power.

This wasn’t the tactic of a sea of humans, but a sea of birds.

Pfft!

Golden colored wings cut across Xue Sha's arms, hands, back, and thighs...

Another round of attacks came.

Xue Sha wailed like the ghosts crying and wolves howling, "Jiang Chen, save me! We'll escape together!"

One had to say, people would always verbalize some utterly ridiculous, very naive words when they were in desperate circumstances.

Jiang Chen smiled remotely, "Xue Sha, I will leave shortly, but I'm not escaping. Have you woken up to the realization yet that the Goldwing Swordbirds seem to really like your flesh and blood?"

Xue Sha cried out and sobbed, and then his voice grew smaller and smaller until it disappeared.

After a short while, only a skeleton, a pile of random strands of hair, many scraps of cloth, and a randomly scattered precious bow and quiver of arrows were left.

Even a mighty eleven meridians true qi master would only be able to make slightly bigger waves when compared to and surrounded by the tactic of a sea of Swordbirds.

Chapter 89: Fatty Xuan's Bizarre Encounter

Jiang Chen kicked the bones aside and took the precious bow and quiver of arrows.

"And I'd been thinking of how to find a precious bow for Xue Tong. This Xue Sha was a man bearing gifts." Jiang Chen was someone who could tell good from the bad. He knew that this bow was uncommon.

After finishing Xue Sha off, Jiang Chen didn't linger and walked outside.

At the same time, he communicated with the division of Swordbirds in the beast language, having them search for Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue from the first to the third level.

Apart from the Goldwing Swordbirds, who could just barely understand Jiang Chen's words, the other Swordbirds could only be reached through the commands of the Goldwing Swordbirds.

Jiang Chen didn't idly sit around, he too started searching in every corner.

"Fatty Xuan, nothing better have happened to you." Jiang Chen knew that Fatty Xuan and company had actually suffered from undeserved misfortunes. If it wasn't for the others wanting to make a move against him, they would have never targeted Fatty Xuan and the others.

There were still five or six days left until the end of the allotted time for the mission. Jiang Chen was in no hurry to leave.

The number of heirs left in the Boundless Catacombs in the last couple of days had noticeably decreased. In addition, traces of combat could be seen all over the Catacombs. One could also see that this time's trials were very bloody and that the fights between the various heirs had been quite serious.

"These are the sins of the Long family. These heirs have most likely all suffered from undeserved calamities." Jiang Chen sighed lightly.



The traces of the Long siblings manipulating this time's contest were very evident. Looking at the corpses, some of them were close to the Long family, while some weren't close to the Long family.

It must have been the seizures and fights between the two camps.

It looks like the rate of loss during this time's competition would exceed at least thirty percent.

For the kingdom, this was truly a higher rate of loss. One had to know that the rate of loss in previous examinations and trials wouldn't exceed ten percent.

Anything over ten percent would count as heavy losses.

"Internal friction, this is likely the bad consequences from the result of internal friction? The Duke of Soaring Dragon is using these methods to build his power. Even if he replaces the royal family and controls the entire kingdom, the kingdom's vitality would be greatly sapped. Besides, how will these dukes voluntarily submit to him?"

Jiang Chen shook his head. At the end of the day, he actually didn't have the slightest interest in the power scrambles of common royalty and nobles. However, the flow of the greater picture had brought him to stand on the side opposite to the Duke of Soaring Dragon.

The fact that the Duke of Soaring Dragon had hired killers this time had also thoroughly enraged Jiang Chen.

"Duke of Soaring Dragon, I, Jiang Chen, will one day make your Long family clan disappear from the domain of the Eastern Kingdom!"

Jiang Chen had been truly angered this time.

He made no progress on the first day. He neither found Fatty Xuan nor located Hubing Yue!

Under these circumstances, no news was actually the best news.

Having not found them meant that they might still be alive!

The next day, the heirs that were left in the Boundless Catacombs had basically all withdrawn. Jiang Chen still didn't find any clues.

"Can it be that they haven't died and they have already left?"

Jiang Chen wasn't willing to give up. He decided to search for another day. If he still found nothing on the third day, then he would leave the Boundless Catacombs.

There were still two or three days left, there was still enough time to make it back!

It was on the third day that a Goldwing Swordbird found a trace of a clue. There was the breath of a living person in one of the random patches of bog on the second level.

Jiang Chen immediately rushed over and discovered that there truly was a live person in the bog. A great part of his body had been sucked in by the bog, but this person was tightly gripping a branch, unable to climb up or retreat. He had sunk into a coma, but his hands were still curled around the branch in a death grasp.

“Fatty Xuan?” Jiang Chen was stunned when he saw this person’s face clearly.

He hastily ordered the Goldwing Swordbirds to save him.

Fatty Xuan was quickly hauled to safety, he was incredibly weak and feeble. Jiang Chen fed a medicine pill to him and massaged him for a bit.

Fatty Xuan awoke leisurely, his lips white. “Brother Chen, am... am I not dead?”

“Damn fatty, I really thought you died. Have you seen Xiaoyue?” Jiang Chen asked.

“No... I haven’t seen him. I was freaking unlucky. I sank into this bog on the third day of entering this place. I called out day and night, but no one heard me!” Fatty Xuan complained.

This patch of bog was exceedingly isolated, it was pretty impressive that Fatty Xuan had made it to this forsaken place.

Jiang Chen was also secretly rejoicing, good thing you sank into this bog. Otherwise, your way would be fraught with grim possibilities.

“Ai. Brother Chen, I’ve taken a tumble this time. I haven’t collected a single green spirit pearl. Damn it to hell, even this bog bullies fatties? I’m just a bit heavier is all. My qinggong is not too shabby, why did I sink in?” Fatty Xuan self deprecated.

Jiang Chen was speechless and he flicked a glance at Fatty Xuan. He smiled, “You’re not entirely empty handed. Look at your body fat, most of it has gone.”

Fatty Xuan was flabbergasted and looked down. His originally skin tight clothes were flapping emptily, like stolen clothes.

The waist that had been thicker than a pail was pretty much on the level of an ordinary person’s.

After almost one month of not eating or not drinking, if it wasn’t for the fat on his body, he probably would’ve long since starved to death.

“Brother Chen, I... I dieted successfully?” Fatty Xuan leapt up as his eyes sparkled. “Haha, I really dieted successfully? This is to say that when I pick up chicks in the future, none of them will complain that I lean so heavily on her that she can’t breathe?”

Jiang Chen was completely speechless. Fatty wasn’t just in an ordinary good mood. He’d only used one sentence to talk about failing the exam, and in fact, he had started thinking about picking up chicks.

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen had collected enough green spirit pearls from the bodies of the dead heirs on his way back.

Even after adding together the amount required by his mission and Fatty Xuan’s mission, there was still more than enough left.

After resting in the catacombs for a half day, Fatty Xuan slowly recovered some of his vigor. He immediately became curious, “Brother Chen, what’s happened? How come all these Swordbirds listen to you?”

“Fatty, we’re brothers, so don’t ask about these matters. The more you know, the worse off you’ll be.” Jiang Chen knew that Fatty Xuan was destined to not have any particular martial dao achievements in his life. It was better that he didn’t know of these matters.

“Alright, no matter what, you’re still my most admired Brother Chen.” Fatty Xuan didn’t ask further.

“Brother, how many days has it been?”

“27 or 28 days?”

“Is it 27 or 28 days?” Fatty Xuan was depressed. “If it was 27 days, then the army would still be outside the mountain valley. If it’s 28 days, then the army will have left and we’ll have to go back alone. If we don’t have fast horses, how will we make it in time?”

“Don’t worry about this, right now I’m worried about Xiaoyue.” Jiang Chen sighed.

“Xiaoyue is eight meridians true qi. What could possibly happen to him?” Fatty Xuan asked carelessly.

Jiang Chen spread out his hands but didn’t say anything.

If Hubing Yue died, whatever the reason, Jiang Chen would be sure to make the Long family pay a price, a price that was hundreds and thousands of times more than his death!

After resting another night, roughly sixty to seventy percent of Fatty Xuan’s injuries had recovered. After the two walked around in the Boundless Catacombs for a few hours, they finally walked out of the Catacombs!

It was blue skies and a bright sun outside, the trees making a pleasant shade.

Fatty Xuan tilted his head up to the sky and breathed in, yelling out loudly. “Is anyone alive? It’s great to be alive! The air of the outside world is damn good to breath in!”

Walking out of the mountain valleys and coming to the place where the army had been originally camped, it was a scene of disorder. Everyone had long since left.

“We’re truly late after all?” Fatty Xuan was a bit shamefaced. “Brother Chen, I seemed to have dragged you down again.”

“Stop your nonsense.” Jiang Chen looked around the area. “Judging from these tracks, they should have only left a day ago. This means we have two days to make it back.”

“Then what are we waiting for, let’s set out immediately!” Fatty Xuan said hurriedly.

“No rush.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly and murmured some words in the beast language. The ten Goldwing Swordbirds immediately left the shrubbery and flew over.

“I want to go back to the capital and need to borrow your wings.” Jiang Chen instructed.

He arranged for six Goldwing Swordbirds to take turns carrying the two of them. The other four were in charge of leading the Swordbird army.

Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t take the Swordbird army to the capital. He settled them deep in the mountains several kilometers from the outskirts of the capital.

A distance of several kilometers was the work of five minutes with the Swordbird's speed.

With this flying army, Jiang Chen felt a lot more reassured in his heart.

Within the capital, a great furor had also been raised these days.

The rate of loss for this time's trials had reached thirty percent. Out of a hundred heirs, only seventy to eighty had emerged.

And out of these seventy to eighty, almost half of them bore injuries.

The rumors of the heirs of Soaring Dragon manipulating the competition spread throughout the capital, shocking the entire Eastern Kingdom!

If it was said that the conflict between the Duke of Soaring Dragon and the royal family had been conducted in secret before, then manipulating the competition was almost a public provocation of royal authority.

Although there was nothing in the rules of the Hidden Dragon Trials that mentioned manipulating the competition, the moves of the heirs of Soaring Dragon, that of "those who adhere to me ascend and those who defy me die", were a blatant pressure of forcing other dukes under their banner.

This was forming a clique to pursue their own selfish interests!

A duke had started forming his gang publicly. This was the precursor to rebellion!

Of course, this was only one sort of public opinion in the capital.

There was another rumor exactly opposite this version. It said that Jiang Chen from the Jiang Han dukedom was the one manipulating the competition.

This saying made Jiang Chen out to be the person behind the scenes manipulating the competition. The reason for the internal strife within the heirs was pushed onto Jiang Chen.

In addition, this rumor also mentioned an exceedingly sensitive intelligence, that Jiang Chen had attempted to ambush the Long siblings and usurp the rank of first duke from the Duke of Soaring Dragon!

The two versions represented the two contending powers within the capital!

Although the first version was obviously more persuasive and closer to the truth, but out of the 108 dukes in the capital, over half had already silently admitted to Soaring Dragon's strength now.

Therefore, although this version was closer to the truth, it was slowly oppressed.

As for the second version, because of the disappearance of the person in question, Jiang Chen, it snowballed. This also represented that, on a certain level, the scales were slowly tipping towards Duke Long in the conflict between the royal family and Soaring Dragon.

Although Jiang Feng could stabilize the situation in the internals of the Jiang Han household, he was powerless to halt the rumors in the outside world with his influence.

After all, Jiang Feng's foundations were shallow. He didn't have one tenth of the Duke of Soaring Dragon's power within the capital.

Another way of saying it was that once the royal family was withdrawn as a backer, Jiang Feng would become utterly isolated with no mass support. The entire Jiang Han household was like a lone canoe in the wild seas, facing the violent impacts from the Duke of Soaring Dragon and his accomplices alone.

The situation in the capital became more and more delicate.

Within the Soaring Dragon household, Long Zhaofeng was full of high spirits. The thorn in his side, Jiang Chen, had finally been removed at last. Although the Long siblings had been unable to see Jiang Chen's death with their own eyes before leaving the catacombs, Duke Long was quite at ease. Jiang Chen had barged into the fourth level, the openly acknowledged forbidden zone. Once he entered, he would be dead without a doubt!

Therefore, in Duke Long's eyes, Jiang Chen was undoubtedly already a dead man.

Chapter 90: Surrounding the Jiang Han Manor

"Yinye, Xue'er, describe once again the matters of the day." In order to ascertain Jiang Chen's death, Long Zhaofeng spoke again.

Long Yinye describes the circumstances once again, with Long Juxue filling in the details.

"Mm, according to this, Jiang Chen is dead without a doubt." Even the usually cautious Long Yi nodded. "Your Lordship, with the death of Jiang Chen, the Eastern family's pawn is gone. They are without moves all of a sudden. Why don't we..."

Long Zhaofeng smiled faintly, exuding more and more the confidence of one in a superior position.

"Yinye, didn't you say that this Jiang Chen ambushed you in the Boundless Catacombs? This is Jiang Han's provocation towards our own Soaring Dragon. As the foremost amongst dukes, how can we allow the defiance of an inferior duke to pass by like this?"

The so-called ambush was naturally something that they had made up.

However, Long Yinye's comprehension was high, and he immediately understood his father's overtones. This was him wanting to make a big fuss out of matters in order to find an excuse to start something with the Duke of Jiang Han, and take a step forward in testing the royal family's attitude!

At this time, the royal family's attitude was ambiguous.

If Jiang Chen was dead, was this Jiang Han dukedom worth Eastern Lu's strong support?

Long Zhaofeng wanted to test Eastern Lu's bottom line. If Eastern Lu continued to support the Jiang family, then Long Zhaofeng could absolutely wax eloquent on the matter of the conflicts between the various dukes to one up Eastern Lu.

This title of first duke was bestowed by your Eastern family. If an inferior duke wasn't punished for defying the first duke, then wherein lay the purpose of the laws of the kingdom?

If Eastern Lu chose to give up on the Jiang family, then he, Long Zhaofeng, could take advantage of this opportunity to eliminate the Jiang family. For one, he would be able to remove one of the royal family's pawns, and secondly, he could suppress the royal family's prestige. He would make an example of the Duke of Jiang Han to terrorize those dukes who had yet to flock to his Long family's banner!

As heir to the Duke of Soaring Dragon, Long YinYe immediately grasped the twists and turns of what this entailed.

His face displaying joy, "Father, that Jiang Chen ambushed your son. He represents the Duke of Jiang Han and is insulting the golden banner of our Soaring Dragon manor. Your son will lead a troop of elites and demand an explanation from that Jiang family!"

"Mm. The Jiang family is a small man intoxicated by success. For him to be so impudent, we must have an explanation. Long Yi, you accompany YinYe!"

Long Yi was the first amongst all the Long family guards. He was an eleven meridians true qi master both in reality and in name! His training was even close to the level of Duke Long himself!

"Your subordinate obeys!" Long Yi bowed as he accepted his orders.

In that moment, the elite troops of the Long family immediately set out under the leadership of Long YinYe and Long Yi. These three thousand soldiers descended upon the Jiang Han manor with a threatening manner.

When those dukes who had pledged allegiance to the Long family heard of this news, they also found similar excuses as they all sent out squadrons of their personal guards to meet up with the elite troops of the Long family.

In the span of a moment, the troops that had been formed to denounce the Duke of Jiang Han exceeded more than twenty thousand!

In the capital, who other than the royal family dared to deploy twenty thousand troops?

Therefore, when the twenty thousand troops appeared on the streets, the entire capital once again sank into endless chaos as everyone's hearts were in a state of turmoil.

Although this band of troops were raising the banner of denouncing the Duke of Jiang Han, everyone knew that deploying so many troops within the capital was already a flagrant overreach of ducal authority.

The Duke of Soaring Dragon's motion was an unmistakable provocation of the royal family's authority!

Within the palace, Eastern Lu also found it difficult to sleep and eat these days.

More than thirty percent of the heirs had been lost in the trial, this time around. Although Eastern Lu was shocked, but he wasn't too discomforted.

However, the most important thing was that Jiang Chen still hadn't returned.

What did it mean when he didn't return at this time? This meant that Jiang Chen was very likely murdered at the hands of the Long siblings!

“Long family!” Eastern Lu’s face was dark. He was depressed and didn’t know which way to turn. The sudden emergence of the pawn that was Jiang Chen had obtained quite a bit of extra time for him during this period.

But now, during this critical moment, Jiang Chen had vanished, and he was most likely already dead!

This meant that all his plans were abruptly at an impasse. Just like a chain that had suddenly been broken, unable to rotate .

Additionally, with the current situation in the capital, many of the dukes were now frightened. Several of the originally neutral dukes had all flocked to the Duke of Soaring Dragon for various reasons.

Over these past couple of days, the influence of the royal family had waned and it had become extremely passive.

Not only was he at a disadvantage with regards to the greater picture, but Eastern Lu’s heart also ached for his daughter. If Jiang Chen died, who would he go to for his daughter’s illness?

“Jiang Chen ah, Jiang Chen. Why couldn’t you hold out for a bit longer?” Eastern Lu was extremely vexed. If it wasn’t for these reasons, he wouldn’t care at all about Jiang Chen’s death.

But, the situation in the capital needed Jiang Chen.

With Jiang Chen present, at least there’d be someone to hold the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s attention and maintain the impasse a bit longer.

Because Jiang Chen was dead, this balanced impasse was broken. There was nothing preventing the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s mind from running off. Perhaps he would move the decisive battle ahead after this time’s Hidden Dragon Trials concluded!

Eastern Lu was quite depressed. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to suppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon, but with the situation at hand, he didn’t have the surety or the right timing to do so.

“Your Majesty, something big is happening!”

Just as Eastern Lu was utterly exhausted from anxiety, one of the eunuchs came running in hurriedly, panting heavily. “We’ve just received an urgent report from Lord Tiandu saying that the Duke of Soaring Dragon and some other accomplices have mustered troops of twenty to thirty thousand and have already surrounded the Jiang Han manor under the banner of punishing the Duke of Jiang Han!”

“What?” Eastern Lu was the king of the nation, but was also astounded when he heard this news.

Made his move?

In that moment, he almost thought that the Duke of Soaring Dragon had made his move and already rebelled!

But logic told him that it was not yet the best timing for the Duke of Soaring Dragon to rebel.

“What is their reason for sending a punitive expedition against the Duke of Jiang Han.”

“Their reason is that Jiang Chen ambushed the Long siblings during the trials in the Boundless Catacombs. They say that an inferior duke has insulted the face of the first duke. It is against the laws of the kingdom if he isn’t punished severely.” The eunuch was also quite nervous.

“We know now. You are dismissed.”

The eunuch was perspiring heavily as he backed away. Princess Gouyu came rushing in as soon as he had left.

“Royal brother, is Soaring Dragon declaring war?” Princess Gouyu’s jade features were angry, appearing quite infuriated. Whether for public affairs or private matters, she didn’t wish for Jiang Han to be assaulted.

“Gouyu, you’ve come, I am very troubled.” Eastern Lu could expose his heart only in front of his younger sister.

“Royal brother, the Duke of Soaring Dragon can absolutely not be allowed to behave as he will in this matter!” Princess Gouyu’s attitude was quite firm.

“Ai, Gouyu. The bigger picture is most important.” Although Eastern Lu’s attitude was ambiguous, Princess Gouyu still discerned something.

“Royal brother, are you giving up on the Duke of Jiang Han just like this?” Princess Gouyu exclaimed, shocked. “Have you thought of what the neutral dukes and other dukes loyal to you will feel if you even give up on a loyal subject such as the Duke of Jiang Han?”

“However, Gouyu, have you thought about the fact that the Long family is raising the banner of the kingdom’s laws now. They have a good pretext for making trouble. If we protect the Jiang family, the Duke of Soaring Dragon can make an issue of this and coerce me. Finally, they can still raise the banner of the law and make me personally move against the Jiang family. If matters develop this way, wouldn’t it be showing our cards before the time is right and fighting the Long family earlier?”

“Then fight we will. Royal brother, you always think too much. If we had suppressed them earlier, then how would Long Zhaofeng be where he is today?” Princess Gouyu’s tone also became urgent.

Eastern Lu snorted, “Fight? It’s easy for you to say. The elder grandfather is in closed door cultivation right now, and will need two more months before he emerges. Why don’t we just hold up underneath it all until the elder grandfather emerges. When the spirit dao practitioner appears, which duke dares cause trouble beneath the heavens? The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting, to cease warring and suppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon without causing civil war. Would it not be to the populace and nation’s benefit if we don’t expend the country’s resources?”

Eastern Lu was the king of a nation and considered the gains and losses of a country. If he could avoid civil war, then he would avoid civil war.

After all, once civil war began, countless numbers would be depleted and the strength of the nation would be greatly affected. Even if the royal family won this battle, it would be a pyrrhic victory!

The costs of a pyrrhic victory were high. The internal strength of a country would decrease and strong enemies from other countries would be sure to eye them covetously.



A slight move in one part may affect the situation as a whole!

“Royal brother, soldiers are a weapon for murder, the saints only resort to them when they have no alternative. But, the way of being a monarch is one of not lightly deploying troops and not purposefully avoiding conflict. If you only consider the strength of the nation, if you only consider this and that and don't have the resolve to fight, then I'm afraid that when you wish to fight, you will discover that you have none who will fight by your side.”

Princess Gouyu wasn't exaggerating things to scare Eastern Lu. Lacking the courage to fight as the ruler of a nation, how would you ask those beneath you to follow you steadfastly?

There was a general feeling of insecurity, and in fact this situation had already appeared.

Why had the situation tilted endlessly towards the Duke of Soaring Dragon lately? It precisely had to do with Eastern Lu's attitude. As the ruler of a nation, he continuously failed to bring out appropriate measures to counter the domineering aura of the Duke of Soaring Dragon. How would the dukes and subjects view him. Moreover, how would they submit to him?

Eastern Lu was silent without a word. Princess Gouyu was his blood sister and only she would plainly speak of such things to him.

Except, he still thought that without Jiang Chen, the Jiang family wasn't worth him fighting the Duke of Soaring Dragon now.

He needed time. He needed to wait until the elder grandfather emerged!

Two months, he only needed to wait for two more months.

“Royal brother, you cannot hesitate any longer. If you continue to hesitate...”

Eastern Lu lifted his head, his gaze resolute. “Gouyu, I know you admire Jiang Chen. But now, Jiang Chen is no longer present. The strategic importance of the Jiang family is of no consequence now. My decision is made, I will have Tiandu withdraw his troops. This is a grudge between the dukes and they should resolve it between themselves!”

Eastern Lu had sent the Tiandu army to take up residence near the Jiang Han manor to protect them.

This command to withdraw troops meant that Eastern Lu was giving up on the Jiang family.

Gouyu's heart ached incomparably, her face starkly white as she looked at Eastern Lu in disappointment. “Royal brother, is this your final decision? You're that certain that Jiang Chen really died?”

“Whether he's dead or not is insufficient to prevent this matter from happening. I need time. I don't wish to expend the strength of the nation to fight a decisive battle right now! Gouyu, you know, as soon as the elder grandfather emerges, all will be resolved...”

“Enough!” Princess Gouyu could listen no longer as her charming features flushed red. She said angrily, “I'm not listening! Royal brother, I've heard enough of these words. Elder grandfather, elder grandfather. You're the ruler of the nation, if you need to rely on the elder grandfather for everything, then what does it matter who sits on the throne!”

Princess Gouyu stomped her foot and walked huffily out after speaking her words.

Eastern Lu's expression was ugly as it turned green and white. He was as dumb as a wooden chicken. He hadn't thought that even the sister who respected and supported him the most would have had this sort of attitude at this moment.