

Three Realms 841

Chapter 841: Consecutive Moves

Refine the Longevity Pill with different ingredients? Not only was Jiang Chen's proposal fresh and stimulating, it was also very entertaining. It was enough to instantly capture everyone's attention. Even those from Sacred Peafowl Mountain hadn't expected Jiang Chen to come out with such a proposal. After all, the pill recipe Jiang Cheng had gifted to Sacred Pill Mountain was also a fixed recipe. There had been no mention of interchangeable ingredients.

For a divine pill like that, everyone thought that every ingredient and every detail of its refining had been perfected after thousands of trials and experiments by masters of the dao of pills. It shouldn't be possible to alter it at will. Even people from Sacred Peafowl Mountain suddenly felt a little skeptical. Was Pill King Zhen bluffing Pillfire City on purpose? Was he deliberately using a stratagem, because he knew his odds of victory were slim?

Only Great Emperor Peafowl maintained a faint smile on his face. He too was a little astounded by Jiang Chen's proposal, but he didn't let anything show. On the contrary, he vaguely thought that Jiang Chen might perhaps really have something up his sleeve.

Pillfire City's side was at a loss. Great Emperor Pillzenith had never imagined that this insignificant Pill King Zhen from Veluriyam Capital would be this crafty and come up with so many tricks. Pill King Ji Lang bore into Jiang Chen with his eyes, as though he wanted to read the other's deepest thoughts. But it was to no avail. Not a clue could be gleaned from Jiang Chen's face, but Ji Lang could see traces of skepticism from the others of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. The doubt on their faces was enough to spark delight in his heart. This kid is definitely trying to pull the wool over our eyes. Looking at the people from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, they clearly don't know anything about whatever changing ingredients. This is definitely a cheap trick the kid just came up with. Trying to bluff me?

"Sir, is there any use to such sensationalism? The Longevity Pill has gone through a thousand revisions and fine-tuning, where is there any place for alternate ingredients?" Ji Lang said with a cold smile.

Jiang Chen was precisely waiting for those words to come from Ji Lang. His lips slightly curled in a cold smile. "Is this what they mean when they talk about showing your true colors? The Longevity Pill has indeed gone through thousands of revisions and fine-tuning, this much is true. It's precisely because it's gone through so many corrections that we can research many different ways to reach the same result. You say it's impossible to use different ingredients? If I can use different ingredients, will Pillfire City admit to theft from Sacred Peafowl Mountain?"

Each of Jiang Chen's words was interwoven with the others, full of interlinked traps. As long as his opponent fell into one of those traps, he would have to face all the following ones. It was simply impossible to escape from this ever tightening noose, unless they voluntarily conceded defeat.

Ji Lang was unable to answer on the spot when he saw Jiang Chen brimming with such confidence. With a cold smile, Jiang Chen gave him no time to think. "Pill King Ji Lang, your every word exposes your rank amateurism. In fact, this challenge seems entirely useless. I believe everyone already has a good idea of who created the Longevity Pill. It's obvious even with a mere glance."

Ji Lang suddenly frowned. "What a sharp tongue. Are you already proclaiming victory on your own?"

Jiang Chen's returning smile was faint. "Speaking of sharp tongues, if you have an even sharper tongue and can refute my arguments, then I'll concede defeat. What's so hard about it? Sacred Peafowl Mountain is the Longevity Pill's original creator, so I can boldly talk about changing ingredients. Your Pillfire City calls itself the original creator, but do you have the confidence to say the same? You don't, because you merely stole one of the recipes. Meanwhile, Sacred Peafowl Mountain has researched many different possibilities for this recipe. They're all interchangeable. Even some ingredients can be switched around. Can your Pillfire City use an entirely different recipe to refine this pill?"

One stab following another. Jiang Chen's words were even more ferocious than sharp swords, the sting so penetrating Ji Lang actually felt like he couldn't withstand them. Great Emperor Pillzenith suddenly laughed out loud. "Brother Peafowl, this pill king of yours, is he a smart aleck or a pill king? I'm really curious. In a contest of pills, where does so much nonsense come from?"

Great Emperor Peafowl was impassive. "Brother Pillzenith, your words sound a little sulky. To put it bluntly, in this Longevity Pill contest, we need to demonstrate our technique and knowhow for everyone to see. What Pill King Zhen said is entirely related to the core issue of knowledge. I'm certain that the various pill experts we invited didn't come just to see us refine a few pills and call it a day. If the duel were so crude and simple, wouldn't we be letting down the distinguished gathering here? Wouldn't we be letting down everyone who took the trouble to come here?"

The judges thought Great Emperor Peafowl's words to be entirely reasonable. If this duel merely consisted of both sides refining one pill each, then it would be too dull and boring. Everyone wanted to see skill and technique put on display. The higher the skill, the more spectacular the show. The judges chose that moment to speak up. "Your Majesties, we have no intention of favoring either side. But since it's a duel of the very top, then both sides naturally need to showcase their outstanding talent and superiority when it comes to skill and knowhow. That's why we have come to a decision. If you merely refined two pills, then there are too many random factors to truly determine the owner. It would be very hard for us to come to a fair judgment."

"I actually find Pill King Zhen's words rather reasonable. If you're the original creator, then after hundreds of years of research, you should be able to demonstrate higher skill and better technique. To simply refine a single pill would leave too much to chance." It was obvious to see that these judges were fanatics when it came to technique. Everyone wanted to see a spectacular show, so more than half of the judges instantly agreed with Jiang Chen's proposal. The other half didn't express any opinion, but they in fact thought Jiang Chen's proposal to be more reasonable as well.

Jiang Chen struck while the iron was still hot. "Let me first present the esteemed judges with one recipe for the Longevity Pill. Please take a look. I can guarantee that any recipe Pillfire City can come up with is identical to the one provided, because it's the one they stole. I can even declare right now that I'll admit defeat if they can come up with a second pill recipe."

A scroll opened in Jiang Chen's hand with a slight shake. The Longevity Pill's recipe was suddenly exposed for all to see. Only, he had obscured some critical details, so while people could see a rough outline of the recipe, they wouldn't be able to plagiarize it. Many pairs of eyes zeroed in on the scroll in Jiang Chen's hand. They didn't dare blink, as though they were afraid of missing anything. After displaying it for everyone to see, Jiang Chen declared loudly, "If Pillfire City can present a pill recipe different from this one, and successfully refine the Longevity Pill, then I'll concede right here."

"Pill King Ji Lang, what say you?" His tone was aggressive.

Ji Lang had been forced on the back foot with Jiang Chen's repeated attacks. His smile had gone terribly cold, "Pill King Zhen, I'll admit I'm not your match when it comes to grandstanding. Since you're talking about different recipes, how about you show us another one?"

Jiang Chen chuckled with mischief. "If I provide another one, will you concede defeat in the name of Pillfire City?"

Ji Lang's momentum suddenly took a sharp dive.

"You dare not, because you have a guilty conscience! Thieves will ever be thieves! In front of the original, no matter how big your reputation, no matter how great your fame, you'll still hide a guilty conscience!"

Great Emperor Peafowl chuckled slowly. "Brother Pillzenith, on this subject, your Pillfire City is indeed falling behind in momentum. I offer the same terms. If you can show us a different pill recipe, then we'll concede defeat. We can do it, but dare you agree to the terms?" n))Ove**lB**1n

Great Emperor Pillzenith's face was a little dark, but his words still sounded tough. "No matter how many pill recipes there are, doesn't it end up in the same Longevity Pill when all's said and done? I persist in thinking that only the Longevity Pill's quality can determine the winner."

Such sophistry sounded rather weak.

Jiang Chen laughed contemptuously. "You didn't have the guts to take me up on my first proposal. I propose something else, and you still don't have the courage to man up. Is the so-called number one faction sitting at the pinnacle of pill dao really not as much as everyone makes it out to be? Fine, since you keep talking about comparing pill quality or whatever, then let's have that duel first, so that you Pillfire City can be wholeheartedly convinced of your loss."

With that, Jiang Chen cupped his fist in a salute to all the judges. "Esteemed judges, do you perchance have a most ordinary pill furnace with you?"

According to the previous agreement, the pill duel required the use of the most ordinary of pill furnaces and the most ordinary of pill fires. Equipment cheats were out of the question. An ordinary pill furnace was something the judges would naturally have collected a few of. They took out countless commonplace pill furnaces. Jiang Chen waved his hand with poise. "Guests first. Pill King Ji Lang, you pick one first."

Ji Lang told himself to calm down, but after being continuously derided by Jiang Chen's words, his mind was still a little unsteady. Especially since he had to use an unfamiliar pill furnace, and such a mediocre one at that; Pill King Ji Lang was a little uncertain whether he'd achieve the desired result. On top of that, he couldn't even use those outstanding divine fires, but rather the most ordinary pill fire. This was another challenge. After selecting a pill furnace, both sides presented their ingredients. The ingredients went through a strict inspection before finally being handed back to the two of them.

The judges declared, "First round, a refining contest. The one with the higher quality pill will win. If the quality is identical, then the one who finishes refining first wins. If everything is identical, then it'll depend on the success rate of your refining. The one with more successful pills will be the winner..."

The established rules were very detailed, but they were all rules commonly seen in pill contests, the standard rules used all over the world. Both sides proceeded with their final preparations. One could tell that the ever-changing rules of this duel had completely disturbed Ji Lang's arrangements. He had no choice but to stay on his toes to try and catch up.

They didn't have much time to prepare. With an order from the judges, the curtains finally lifted on the pill contest. The ordinary pill furnaces only seemed ordinary to pill kings. But for Jiang Chen, the most ordinary pill furnace wouldn't be worse than the ones he'd used back in the Myriad Domain. The most important thing was that Jiang Chen had never been heavily reliant on pill furnaces when it came to refining pills. He hadn't refined the Longevity Pill too many times in this life, but he'd refined them quite often in his former life.

Add that to his special training in the past few days, he didn't have any sense of unfamiliarity when he received his pill furnace. Warming up the furnace, controlling the fire, the entire sequence proceeded as smoothly as flowing water.

After all, this process was truly too familiar to him, whether in his former life or in his present one. Jiang Chen's vigorous and spirited appearance vanished entirely as soon as he started refining, replaced by a look of utter concentration.

Chapter 842: The Longevity Pill Complete Pill King Ji Lang had studied the Longevity Pill's recipe intensively before coming to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He had especially put a lot of effort into learning how to refine it. Both pill masters had entered their respective zones; it was difficult to discern who was superior in that precise moment. For Jiang Chen, this time was different from before. In all his previous pill battles, he rarely revealed the full extent of his ability. Twenty or thirty percent, used in a very offhanded way, was enough in most cases. This time, his opponent was unimaginably strong. As such, Jiang Chen didn't feel the need to hide his true strength. Refining the Longevity Pill didn't give him room to hide much of anything anyway.

Jiang Chen fully exerting his abilities was terrifying in terms of pill dao skill. His talent did not manifest in a single specific detail; rather, he was a well-rounded contestant, excelling at almost every aspect of the pill-refining process. The formidable memories from his previous life had been compounded with the experiences from his current. Though Jiang Chen's pill dao strength was still lacking when compared to his previous life's level, it was enough to deal with any competition on the Divine Abyss Continent. The gap between his current and previous lives was not due to a lack of experience, rather, it was due to his youthfulness—he needed more practical opportunities.

Compared to the millions of years of experimentation he had performed in his previous life, the current Jiang Chen had much more to practice. It hadn't even been ten years since he had transmigrated into his current body. During these past few years, the only time he had spent refining pills had been after he had entered Regal Pill Palace and after he had come to Veluriyam Capital. Jiang Chen had refined the Longevity Pill many times even during his current life. Moreover, he had entered seclusion for the previous two days in order to further prepare.

With the passage of time, Jiang Chen was completely at ease, and no longer perceived the world nor himself—he was entirely focused on the pill. There was a brief lull. All eyes stared at the two pill kings, spinning around in their sockets. The air was fraught with anticipation. By now, the invited judges had

different attitudes. They had thought that Veluriyam Capital had literally zero chance of winning, and that the Pill King Zhen they had chosen was only there for show. But now everyone could see that that was no longer the case. Every move Pill King Zhen made was meticulously planned and well thought out. Every request was logical and appropriate, making it difficult for Pill King Ji Lang to refuse. The judges finally realized that the battle wasn't going to be completely one-sided after all, like they had previously anticipated.

Pill King Ji Lang presently held no advantage, at least. Pill King Zhen was young but candid. He also showed no signs of stage fright. In their respective areas, Pill King Zhen and Pill King Ji Lang were both about to enter the most intense part of the refining phase. It was plain for all the judges to see that Pill King Ji Lang wore a solemn expression, his movements full of caution. Pill King Zhen, on the other hand, seemed to have forgotten his very own existence. He almost appeared to be in a state of ecstasy. He was clearly enjoying the process.

As for who was better? That was still unclear.

"Your Majesty, Veluriyam Capital seems to be sufficiently prepared this time around. We may have fallen for their ruse," a confidante transmitted to Emperor Pillzenith.

Emperor Pillzenith was not in a good mood. He had realized as well that although they had prepared as much as they could for the Longevity Pill—one could even say perfectly—there was still a large gap between theirs and Sacred Peafowl Mountain's. Moreover, the emperor was even a little doubtful. "Is the Longevity Pill really the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's original creation? How could this Pill King Zhen have the confidence to propose using a different recipe otherwise? Does the Longevity Pill really have several recipes?"

Emperor Pillzenith didn't believe it at first, but the more time continued to pass, the more he suspected that something was a bit off. If Veluriyam's Pill King Zhen was truly bluffing and being intentionally bluffing, his psychological stability and skill in disguise were beyond exceptional. At the very least, Emperor Pillzenith couldn't see through his bluff. In theory, there was never any confidence behind a bluff. All bluster meant that there was no bite, and there were flaws with such a presentation. But Emperor Pillzenith hadn't observed any such flaws.

"Where did Veluriyam Capital find this young pill king? Whether or not he's bluffing aside, his mental fortitude is still exceptional. This young man's psyche is uncommon in its tenacity." Without realizing it, Emperor Pillzenith had raised Jiang Chen in his esteem.

Some people on Sacred Peafowl Mountain's side hadn't expected much out of Jiang Chen initially. However, they now had the faint feeling that Pill King Zhen perhaps had some real skill after all. Obviously, Pill King Ji Lang was giving it his all in the competition. To be capable of making Pill King Ji Lang do such a thing... finding another pill king who could provoke that same level of effort was impossible at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Thus, they ceased their pessimism and waited with a hint of anticipation, the four monarchs included. "Maybe this mysterious Pill King Zhen will give us a pleasant surprise?"

The Wei father and son duo were far too insignificant in this kind of environment, having to stand behind the Coiling Dragon clan lord. However, though they acted with prudence, unlimited pride welled up in their hearts. No matter the result, the fact of the matter was that Pill King Zhen was currently

representing Veluriyam Capital in a battle against Pillfire City. Pill King Zhen was House Wei's guest pill king; they had been the ones to introduce the young man to Veluriyam Capital. House Wei was the only aristocratic house that was allowed to attend the battle today. This honor alone was enough to grant House Wei a hundred years of fortune.

The other titled emperors from Veluriyam felt unspoken surprise as well. They had recently heard of Pill King Zhen's name in the capital, but the things that Jiang Chen had done weren't particularly important nor earth-shattering. They were, in fact, fairly mundane. After all, he had only intervened in conflicts between clans and houses. His exploits were sensational, but a little gimmicky as well. With the high stakes bet that Jiang Chen had partaken in, his opponent had only been a sixth-level pill king. Someone as insignificant as that wasn't enough to attract the emperors' attention. And so, understandably, the other emperors did not quite understand why Emperor Peafowl had chosen Jiang Chen, an unknown pill king, to represent them. The current situation told them that Emperor Peafowl's eyes were as sharp as ever; they saw further and higher than everyone else's.

Time ticked by, second by second. Both sides of the contest had devoted their full concentration to the task at hand, not daring to be distracted in the least. The Longevity Pill actually required a lot of mental effort. Its nature meant that it was the type of pill that required slow and painstaking work to be put in.

The first time Jiang Chen had refined the pill at the Mt. Rippling Mirage pill battles, he'd spent a lot of mental effort, time, and energy. But the Jiang Chen of the past could not at all compare to the Jiang Chen of the present, whether in pill dao or martial dao. In particular, the level of his consciousness was now on a different level.

At the time, Jiang Chen had only been an earth origin realm cultivator. He had taken a big step up and was now an earth sage realm cultivator. This was a substantial leap. He had found it difficult to refine the Longevity Pill before, but it was now easy for him. The refinement of the Longevity Pill was indeed very complex. Every detail had to be firmly grasped. In particular, the last step of compressing spirit energy was the key to successfully refining the pill. Jiang Chen was currently on this step.

Nine hand seals and nine different forces of spirit energy were gathered together in Jiang Chen's practiced hand. Just because the nine forces had been gathered didn't mean that the refinement process was over, however. The moment that put a pill master's true skill to the test had arrived. Whether the refinement was good or bad determined the quality of the finished pill. A perfect Longevity Pill resulted from a flawless fusion of the nine spirit energy forces. A golden ratio had to be achieved.

Jiang Chen's mind was exceedingly clear. Nine spirit energy forces gathered into a great ocean, like the waters of nine streams. Their paths were etched clearly into Jiang Chen's brain, their twists and turns fully discernible. He had no stray thoughts. As a top-rank pill master, the more important the moment was, the fewer distractions that entered his mind. He abandoned all notions of gain and loss. Only by casting that off could one forget one's own existence and refine a truly perfect product.

Rumble!

Suddenly, the pill cauldron shook rapidly.

The pill is done, finally... a job well done. Jiang Chen was secretly pleased. Everything went according to plan. This refinement was as impeccable as ever. There had been no breaks, no blemishes, and no flaws.

Jiang Chen's cauldron contained six Longevity Pills. In terms of time, he was quite a bit faster than Pill King Ji Lang. The latter was still in the final fusion stage. n-/OverLb1n

The completion of Jiang Chen's refinement elicited visible cheer from Sacred Peafowl Mountain's side. No matter Pill King Zhen's results, his speed was ahead of his opponent's. If the pills' qualities were identical, they would have the advantage.

Emperor Pillzenith's expression was very focused, glancing at Jiang Chen with some interest. The foreboding sensation in his heart heightened. Prior to the beginning of the contest, Emperor Pillzenith had never considered the possibility of Pill King Ji Lang being at a disadvantage when it came to refining. Quality of refinement aside, Pill King Ji Lang was the fastest in Pillfire City apart from Emperor Pillzenith. A man of the emperor's stature naturally could not personally compete. Therefore, Pill King Ji Lang's participation represented Pillfire's highest level of competency. That they had lost to Veluriyam Capital in terms of speed was a great shame for the high-and-mighty Pillfire City.

The good thing was that Pill King Ji Lang wasn't too slow either, having finished the stage in less than fifteen minutes after Jiang Chen did. However, one could make a few conjectures based off of Pill King Ji Lang's frozen expression. This Pill King Ji Lang hadn't really performed well. In truth, Jiang Chen had already spotted the problem from the color of the smoke emanating from his opponent's cauldron. This Pill King Ji Lang must have practiced the Longevity Pill's refinement a lot. Otherwise he couldn't be this fast. But his personal refinement relied particularly on outside equipment. With garbage equipment, a thief like him couldn't fully display the Longevity Pill's true attraction!

Chapter 843: A Decisive Test

Both sides submitted their pills to the judges. Jiang Chen's expression was completely at ease. On the other hand, while Pill King Ji Lang was relatively satisfied with the product of his handiwork, there was still a trace of inexplicable worry in his heart. Today's events had been filled with a strange quality. He had a very bad feeling about something he couldn't quite place.

Both sides' pills were presented before the judges. Jiang Chen's cauldron had six pills, and Pill King Ji Lang's cauldron only had five. From the quantity alone, Jiang Chen was already in the lead. Of course, for pill battles involving refining, the number of pills was never a topic of comparison. Rather, the pill with the highest quality was selected from the two sides, and the battle decided over that.

Jiang Chen's cauldron clearly represented the pinnacle of his craftsmanship. Out of the six pills, three were fully of the supreme rank. The remaining three were of upper rank as well. That is to say, Jiang Chen's six pills didn't even have one of mid rank, not to mention ones of lower rank.

Pill King Ji Lang's five pills, however, had one upper, one lower, and three mid-ranked pills. It had to be said that Pill King Ji Lang was extremely impressive in being able to do this much alone. After all, his recipe had been stolen, and his refining method had come from the Eternal Celestial Capital.

Eternal Celestial Capital's refinement method was already that of an amateur. Without Jiang Chen's personal direction, many details were incomplete. Although they'd pried the recipe out from Elder Yun Nie's lips, but it hadn't been difficult for the elder to conceal a few minute details. Therefore, even though Eternal Celestial Capital's refinement method could make the pills, the small alterations prevented them from refining upper rank Longevity Pills.

After it fell into Pillfire City's hands, the recipe and method were analyzed by countless experts from the city. It was adjusted and improved several times after innumerable trials and errors. Using his own equipment to refine the pill, Pill King Ji Lang was almost always able to obtain upper rank pills, with the occasional supreme rank as well. Of course, the chance for the latter happening was rare.

Regardless of the amount of their research, they lacked Jiang Chen's tutelage. There was an irreconcilable difference between theirs and the truly original Longevity Pill. This time, with only a plain cauldron and an unremarkable flame, the fact that he was able to refine a single upper rank Longevity Pill at all showed an above-average performance from Pill King Ji Lang. n/-OVeIBIn

The judges examined the pills with meticulous earnest. Both contestants' pills were circulated in front of each individual judge. The competing pair waited below for the judges' testing results. Jiang Chen was as calm and collected as ever, giving off a mien of unreadability. Though Pill King Ji Lang retained his grace, a flash of worry occasionally flashed across the corner of his eyes.

Both the factions of Pillfire City and Veluriyam Capital looked expectantly at the judges, awaiting their final verdict. Now that they'd come this far, neither side could fail to notice that Pill King Ji Lang felt threatened by Pill King Zhen, at least in terms of the Longevity Pill. No matter Pill King Zhen's talent, he had the qualifications to strike at Pill King Ji Lang on the matter of the Longevity Pill. This was observable from the intermittent changes in the expression of the Pillfire City representative.

The previously confident Pill King Ji Lang was now completely serious. His attitude of being above everyone else was gone, replaced by one of being faced with a formidable enemy. When compared, Pill King Zhen became the one that seemed sure of victory. His decorum was unruffled.

After careful examination, each judge came to their conclusion. They gathered their opinions together before a more experienced judge stood up, saluting both sides with a cupped fist salute. "Your Majesties, we have evaluated both Longevity Pills. The recipe is the same, and so is the style. However, Veluriyam Capital's Pill King Zhen seems to be a bit more mature in terms of skill, with fewer things to criticize. It's closer to perfection.

The Longevity Pill he provided is of supreme rank. Pill King Ji Lang's Longevity Pill, on the other hand, still has some minor problems in terms of methodology. They are quite hard to notice, and may be missed entirely without careful examination. Moreover, his methodology shows slight signs of stiffness, and the best pill he refined was only upper rank, with the majority being mid and lower. Because of a combination of these reasons, we feel that Veluriyam's Longevity Pill looks more like the original."

The judges were all pill dao heavyweights of the human domain. They didn't need to rely on Pillfire City for their livelihoods. Thus, they had the freedom to give results that weren't biased towards anyone. This was what the pill world was like. Being a judge was an ultimate honor, and anything that would tarnish that status was forbidden. If someone spoke falsehood from the position of a judge, their reputation would be greatly damaged and their standing plummet. This was something unique to pill dao.

Because the judges were unbiased and factual, their justness was unquestioned. Once the judgment was revealed, the entire Sacred Peafowl Mountain side erupted in thunderous applause. There was much cheering and jumping for joy, and they instantly lost themselves in celebration. Even people as lofty as the four monarchs laughed aloud, pleasant surprise plain in their eyes. The Coiling Dragon clan lord

noded incessantly as well, his visage radiating an unconcealed sense of gratification. Jiang Chen's performance solidified his faith that the youth's master would be able to refine the Pinecrane Pill that would save his life.

It didn't need to be said that the Wei father and son were animated to the point of bursting. When the results came in, they felt the blood in their bodies nearly boil, and their entire beings were aflutter, almost airborne. The gazes coming from all sides had some admiring, some appreciative, some grateful—but all of them were very friendly, and no one treated them as simply a minor aristocratic house. The feeling of being treated with importance almost made the Wei father and son want to bawl and sob. The wrongs they'd experienced for so many years such as being misunderstood, the house falling to the wayside, endless internal conflicts, various other issues... all of that no longer mattered anymore.

When the results came out, Emperor Peafowl's face revealed only a hint of a smile. It was as if this was all within his expectations. The other six great emperors all came over to congratulate Emperor Peafowl. Even Emperor Shura couldn't help but lower his stature to sincerely congratulate Sacred Peafowl Mountain. After all, the victory did not belong to Sacred Peafowl Mountain alone, but the entirety of Veluriyam Capital. Pillfire City's undefeatable myth had finally been shattered! After this battle, Pillfire City was still the foremost heavyweight in the pill world, but their invincible legend was no more.

In stark contrast to Veluriyam's side, Pillfire's side was livid at hearing the results. They'd prepared amply for the battle, and couldn't fathom that this was the conclusion. Emperor Pillzenith struggled to repress the anger in his heart, staring coldly at Emperor Peafowl. "Brother Peafowl, I still do not believe that you are the original creators of the Longevity Pill."

Emperor Peafowl smiled serenely. "There's no need for you to know whether we're the original creator or not. One thing is sure, though, you're definitely not the original either. The fact of the matter is, stolen craftsmanship cannot compare to that of its rightful creator's. True gold is not afraid of refinement by fire, and the fakes will be revealed by the flame."

"Hold on. If I remember correctly, the battle isn't over yet, no? We decided on three rounds beforehand. This is just the first." Pill King Ji Lang suddenly opened his mouth. "Brother Pillzenith, Pill King Ji Lang seems a little dissatisfied still. What do you think?" Emperor Pillzenith was detached. "Naturally, we should execute what was decided earlier."

Jiang Chen was a little surprised. Pill King Ji Lang is clearly no fool. He should know after losing the first round that he has no chance of winning the following rounds, either. Why continue the battle if there was no chance of winning? Was he dissatisfied with his current amount of shame? Or perhaps he thought that Pillfire City hadn't lost enough face today yet? If he was putting his face forward anyway, Jiang Chen didn't mind giving it another vicious slap.

"Pill King Ji Lang, we don't need to do the second round. If you can present a different recipe for the Longevity Pill, and successfully refine a single pill with that recipe, I'll admit defeat. Even a lower rank pill is enough. In fact, we'll count the entire battle yours, okay?" Jiang Chen feigned magnanimity.

Emperor Pillzenith smiled faintly. "In the same vein, can you do it? If you can, what's the problem in me admitting defeat?"

Startled, Jiang Chen immediately realized his adversary's intentions. Knowing that he couldn't win, Pill King Ji Lang was continuing with the mindset of certain loss. His actions were clearly an effort to muddy the waters. How could he not understand Pill King Ji Lang's motive? Jiang Chen grinned coolly. "I don't need to do anything to solidify my victory. If neither of us does anything during the second round, then it's a tie. The same is true for the third round. Two ties and one win is enough for a convincing victory for Veluriyam against Pillfire City, so why should I give you more opportunities to steal my knowledge?"

As shrewd as Pill King Ji Lang was, his expression nevertheless blanked. "Stealing your knowledge? What a joke. Pillfire City's pill dao knowledge is unmatched. Since when did we need to steal from anyone?"

"Then what's with your recipe for the Longevity Pill?" Jiang Chen shot back a retort. "Veluriyam Capital can't prove that the Longevity Pill is its own creation either. According to my knowledge, the recipe for the pill appeared earliest in the Myriad Domain," Pill King Ji Lang smiled faintly.

"Myriad Domain's Longevity Pill was given and inherited from Veluriyam Capital." Jiang Chen showed no sign of relenting. Pill King Ji Lang gave Jiang Chen a profound look, grinning incredulously.

"We'll call it a tie for the second round if neither party wants to compete," a judge interjected. "Are you going to do anything for the third round or not?"

At this point, Pill King Ji Lang knew that they didn't have any more cards to play with for the Longevity Pill. There was no reason to continue the battle. He had wanted to continue in order to test his opponent's bottom line. Did they have another recipe for the Longevity Pill or not?

His opponent hadn't fallen for the ruse, though, so Pill King Ji Lang understandably preferred a ceasefire over battling further.

Emperor Pillzenith knew as well that extending the proceedings would only invite ridicule onto Pillfire City. The entire battle felt stifling, and Emperor Pillzenith was more than a little frustrated. He'd come here with the determination to win. The entirety of Pillfire City uniformly believed that Veluriyam Capital's Longevity Pill recipe must have come from Regal Pill Palace. Both Longevity Pill recipes were stolen, right? With Pillfire's long standing tradition and knowledge, how could they lose to Veluriyam in researching the Longevity Pill?

Thus, losing hadn't been an option or a notion that even registered for this battle. However, the conclusion was just so devastating. They hadn't just lost, they'd lost beyond a shadow of a doubt!

Chapter 844: Pill King Zhen Soars to Fame After One Battle

The competition had fallen into a deadlock in which the second and third round had become rather pointless. If Pill King Ji Lang didn't make a move, then neither would Jiang Chen. Therefore, the second and third round of the bet became irrelevant in one fell swoop.

Jiang Chen had suggested settling their dispute in three rounds to prevent the possibility that Pill King Ji Lang might score a draw from him during the refining round. But Pill King Ji Lang hadn't even managed to accomplish that, so there was no longer any need to proceed to the second and third round. However, Jiang Chen had to admit that Pill King Ji Lang was the strongest pill king he had met thus far.

It wasn't an easy task to refine an upper rank Longevity Pill with a common pill cauldron and pill fire. Moreover, it would seem Elder Yun Nie had purposely misled them in some of the details of the refining

process. But the fact that Pillfire City was still able to improve the formula and refine a Longevity Pill of such quality proved that Pillfire City's foundations in pill dao really were second to none. It was highly unlikely that Veluriyam Capital's accumulation in pill dao even came close to rivaling their opponent.

The fact that this gamble had ended in such a theatrical manner disappointed the judges a little. They really wanted to know if there existed other pill recipes that could form a Longevity Pill. But since neither party had chosen to display their skills, they could do nothing to scratch the itch. The dust had settled, and the judge announced, "The contest for the Longevity Pill ends today. From today onwards, Sacred Peafowl Mountain possesses sole rights to the Longevity Pill. All major powers in the human domain are not to refine the Longevity Pill, or the act shall constitute a crime of plagiarism. Veluriyam Capital reserves the right to demand compensation for the losses they incurred during this process."

These judges were all central pillars of pill dao. Their words were absolute in the human domain. n/-
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The curtains officially fell over the conflict of the Longevity Pill after the judges' declaration. Sacred Peafowl Mountain's side erupted into thunderous cheers. This outcome was the best one for them. From then on, the Longevity Pill and the business associated with it was their sole possession. The Longevity Pill's allure and potential would be a massive impact to the pill market in the human domain. If Veluriyam Capital could capitalize on this opportunity and expand their share in the industry, it would lead to a profound, long-ranging impact.

With the bet concluded, Emperor Peafowl cupped his fist and smiled at the judges, "You have all made a long journey to come here, so you simply must stay at Sacred Peafowl Mountain for a few days and allow me to play host."

"You're too kind. If I may ask, Your Majesty, could I be so bold as to solicit a Longevity Pill for collection purposes?"

Emperor Peafowl cast a merry glance at Jiang Chen. The latter knew that Emperor Peafowl wished to deepen his acquaintance with these pillars of pill dao, so he didn't mind the extra work and replied with a smile, "Your will is my command, Your Majesty."

"Sacred Peafowl Mountain is flattered by your great favor, everyone. We are glad to offer these Longevity Pills for you to share amongst yourselves. If they are not enough, then please stay for a few more days while we refine a few more cauldrons worth of pills for you. We will ensure that you won't return empty handed." Emperor Peafowl longed for these people to spend more time in Veluriyam Capital. These people were all heavyweights and the representatives of many factions in the Divine Abyss Continent. If he could build a solid relationship with them, it would be very beneficial for Veluriyam Capital's future in pill dao.

Naturally, Emperor Pillzenith was extremely displeased to see his rival taking advantage of his victory like that. How could he not notice that Emperor Peafowl was attempting to undermine him? He was using the opportunity to deepen his acquaintance with those people and eventually challenge Pillfire City. However, Emperor Peafowl was the host right now. It was perfectly within the rights of the host to invite his guests to linger for a few days, and it was not his place to interfere. After all, every one of these heavyweights in pill dao represented the top power of their home regions.

Emperor Pillzenith might be powerful and highly respected, but he didn't have the right to order these people around. He immediately chuckled, "Brother Peafowl, I have long since admired Sacred Peafowl Mountain, and it is rare that I find the opportunity to visit Veluriyam Capital. This spar means little in the grand scheme of things, since I am only here to visit an old friend. So why don't you let me admire the radiance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain a little longer?"

It was a rather shameless request to stay in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. On the surface, it was out of admiration for Sacred Peafowl Mountain. But in reality, it was both a supervision and an intimidation tactic. It was a warning to these heavyweights that they shouldn't overdo their interaction with Veluriyam Capital. Pillfire City is still the king of pill dao. This spat over the rights of the Longevity Pill is but minor entertainment.

Naturally, Emperor Peafowl had no choice but to accept Pillfire City's request to hang around for a bit. Technically speaking, Jiang Chen should have been able to leave after accomplishing his mission, but these heavyweights all refused to let him go. They were obviously very curious about this young Pill King Zhen, and wanted to get to know him better. No one present was blind, and they could all see a kind of potential in this Pill King Zhen that one might not encounter even in a thousand years.

Although Jiang Chen didn't really like this type of social mingling, he also knew that these people were all pill dao elites in the human domain. He might have to deal with them in the future. He could not deny face to Emperor Peafowl either, so he had no choice but to remain behind. He refined a few more cauldrons of Longevity Pills and finally managed to appease these judges. Everyone got to take one home as a souvenir. Moreover, these Longevity Pills were all supreme rank pills. No one was better off than the others.

Jiang Chen's generosity won everyone's goodwill. There were even plenty of people who sent him messages in secret to try and recruit him away from Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Jiang Chen naturally didn't agree to their offers. He didn't talk about these offers with Emperor Peafowl either. It would simply make things awkward. He knew very well that the label of Emperor Peafowl had been stamped on him no matter what path he chose to take in the future.

Moreover, after mulling over his agreement with Emperor Peafowl, Jiang Chen had considered the logic within it to be sound. Emperor Peafowl needed someone to bear the great burden that was the inheritance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, and Jiang Chen needed a powerful faction to become his patron. His years of journeying was more than enough proof that fighting alone was absolutely not the right way to go.

The guests stayed at Sacred Peafowl Mountain for five more days before finally taking their leave. But during their stay, Jiang Chen's performance earned Emperor Peafowl significant prestige. This was especially true in the exchange of pill dao, because not even the senior level pill kings of Sacred Peafowl Mountain were able to interject their own opinions in certain subjects. Jiang Chen hadn't taken much of an active role, but was always able to respond fluently and provide a new and original perspective to the subject when he was asked a question. None of his personal views were a clichéd retelling of established theory, and surprised the heavyweights quite a bit.

These heavyweights were all top class pill kings of their respective regions and half step pill emperors. In reality, Sacred Peafowl Mountain's greatest pill kings weren't really on the same level as any of these people. This was especially true when compared to the pill kings from Pillfire City.

Pillfire City's people would sometimes throw in some thorny problems into the conversation on purpose in hopes of embarrassing Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill kings. However, Jiang Chen was always able to resolve them smoothly. His ease at dealing with these problems thwarted all of Pillfire City's attempts to embarrass their rival. Because of this, even the pill kings who were reluctant to accept Jiang Chen before had all wholeheartedly changed their stances.

Even if they were to forget the fact that Jiang Chen had thoroughly trounced Pill King Ji Lang, there was no denying that his presence had kept Sacred Peafowl Mountain from falling into extremely embarrassing situations many times. Even when they, as bystanders, had only barely managed to avoid losing face, Pill King Zhen had resolved all these complications single-handedly without a trace of hesitation. They were all experts in pill dao, and his contributions did not go unseen. Jiang Chen had not only retained dignity for Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but also themselves.

Jiang Chen could feel an obvious improvement in attitude and friendliness from all parties in Sacred Peafowl Mountain after the guests had been sent off. Even the four great monarchs no longer viewed Jiang Chen as a normal guest pill king. They had also come to realize just why the emperor regarded this young man so highly. His performance in the past few days had conquered everyone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. The other great emperors present in Veluriyam Capital had also gone to Emperor Peafowl to inquire about Pill King Zhen. They all wanted to learn of this young pill king's background.

For a time, a 'Pill King Zhen fever' swept Veluriyam Capital. The citizens blew Pill King Zhen's skills so out of proportion that he was almost a myth. The details of Pill King Zhen thwarting Pillfire City and slapping their faces were described so well and in such detail that it was as if those hearing the stories had witnessed the battle with their own eyes. This fever was an unexpected boon for Taiyuan Tower. It became even more popular than before, as its business kept breaking new records. In a matter of moments, Taiyuan Tower had broken the status quo and became a first rate power.

House Wei had also experienced an enormous jump in status due to their relationship with Pill King Zhen. Not only did they win the Coiling Dragon Clan's commendation, it was said that Emperor Peafowl himself had paid them a visit. This was an unparalleled honor. It was as if someone had painted an invisible sheen of gold onto Taiyuan Tower's reputation, which made them look even better than before. The Wei father and son was as pleased as punch at their current situation. Originally, everyone had considered House Wei to be in decline, and predicted that they would eventually lose their status as a ninth rank aristocratic house. No one could have imagined that they would perform a perfect hundred eighty degree reversal in fortune and show signs of becoming the number one aristocratic house in Veluriyam Capital. It was even rumored that House Wei had the chance of being conferred with the title of a great clan.

Rumors aside, there was no doubt that everyone in House Wei was absorbed in boundless happiness. Nearly everyone except the Wei father and son and the clan elders worshipped Jiang Chen like a god. They knew where they stood very well. They knew that they absolutely couldn't treat Jiang Chen like a normal guest pill king. Right now, Jiang Chen was their savior, benefactor, and the man of fortune they needed to curry favor with. Thankfully, Jiang Chen didn't put on airs just because he'd won a great

battle. He didn't become arrogant, and Taiyuan Tower's modus operandi didn't change despite his rise to fame.

Chapter 845: Dan'er's Emotions

Sacred Peafowl Mountain was brimming with noise and excitement as a result of this battle. The pill dao powers subordinate to other great emperors of Veluriyam Capital sent their men over to learn from Pill King Zhen and absorb some experience. Or that was what they claimed to be doing. In reality, they were simply checking to see if they could share in part of the Longevity Pill's profits as well. Unfortunately for them, the share of interests had been decided a long time ago, so it was impossible for another party to try and take a slice of the pie now. Moreover, those great emperors had done nothing to aid in the fight for the right over the Longevity Pill, so of course they weren't given a piece of the profits.

The great emperors themselves knew this very well. They were relatively certain that they wouldn't luck out with a share of the profits. But trying cost nothing, and Sacred Peafowl Mountain might grant them the authority and pill recipe to refine the Longevity Pill. However, Emperor Peafowl was very resolute on this matter.

No meant no. His stance didn't change no matter who came to persuade him. He knew very well that the Longevity Pill recipe belonged to Jiang Chen to begin with. Now that the matter of ownership had been decided, it was prime time to cash in on the pill. If he were to grant all these powers the authority to refine the Longevity Pill, then they would only be undercutting each other. If that happened, it was no different from undercutting Jiang Chen's profit, the person who supplied the recipe and the main contributor to this battle.

Emperor Peafowl hadn't discarded all of his principles just yet, so he turned them all down even when a great emperor personally came to ask for permission. In fact, every pill king who was selected to refine the Longevity Pill had gone through a meticulous selection process. If there were traitors, he would root them all out.

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Behind a mountain, inside the residence built behind the bamboo forest, Miss Dan'er was leaning against a window and decided to push it open. She took a deep breath in as the refreshing air from the bamboo forest rushed in and felt her knot of gloom and frustration subside a little.

"Are you finished with closed door cultivation, Miss Dan'er?" Servant girl Cui'er hurriedly rushed over from the garden in front after seeing her mistress opening a window. For some reason, she seemed rather joyful and excited at the moment.

"Cui'er, I heard some thunderous cheers from Sacred Peafowl Mountain now and then. What's happened?"

Cui'er's eyes lit up in delight when she saw the opportunity to share her excitement. "It's a shame you didn't see for yourself yourself, Miss. Even Cui'er feels sorry for you. From what I heard, Pillfire City made a huge fuss and came to snatch a pill recipe that belonged to us."

"Pillfire City?" Miss Dan'er frowned slightly, "I heard that Pillfire City is the greatest pill dao power that exists in the human domain. Doesn't that mean... that Sacred Peafowl Mountain is in trouble?"

"Pillfire City is pretty powerful, and everyone thought that Sacred Peafowl Mountain was in deep trouble at first. But later on... guess what happened, Miss!" Cui'er hurriedly replied.

"What happened?" It would appear that the situation had taken a surprising turn, judging from Cui'er's cheerful appearance.

"I doubt that even you can imagine this, Miss, but Sacred Peafowl Mountain won the pill battle! We achieved complete victory over Pillfire City and sent them home with their tail between their legs!"

"We won?" Miss Dan'er looked startled, "Did the emperor take the field himself?"

"Of course not," Cui'er said, "The emperor towers above the rest of us, so he wouldn't act unless it is a very important occasion. Also, Emperor Pillzenith of Pillfire City himself didn't participate in the battle. Pillfire City sent out a genius called Pill King Ji Lang. He's said to be the most outstanding pill dao genius in Pillfire City, second only to Emperor Pillzenith himself. But obviously this Pill King Ji Lang is just a junior compared to Emperor Pillzenith."

"If it was a junior who participated in the battle, then you're correct in that Emperor Peafowl could not take part himself. So who did we send out to face this Pill King Ji Lang? I think I've heard of this pill king as well. People say that he is one of the strongest ever to dabble in pill dao, and that he is inferior only to some pill dao emperors. If I remember correctly, they also say that he is a half-step pill emperor who is destined to become a pill dao great emperor in the future. Is there really anyone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain who can defeat him?"

"Everything you say is right, Miss. But not only was Pill King Ji Lang defeated, I heard that he was beaten straight into the ground!"

"Who was it that defeated him?"

Cui'er giggled, "I doubt you've heard of this person, Miss. His name is Zhen Shi. Everyone calls him Pill King Zhen. He's arrived for barely a year and is just the guest pill king of a ninth rank aristocratic house."

"A guest pill king? Why on earth did the emperor choose him to participate in the pill battle?" Dan'er was completely stunned at this point. "Isn't a ninth rank aristocratic house just a third level power in Veluriyam Capital? They come after a great clan and a great emperor, right?" Miss Dan'er might have lived at Sacred Peafowl Mountain for a couple of years, but she seldom ventured outside and lived a rather secluded life. She knew a little about Veluriyam Capital, but not the greater details.

"Exactly. That's why this pill battle was so legendary. Right now, the most popular person in the entire Veluriyam Capital isn't Emperor Peafowl, but Pill King Zhen!" Cui'er giggled again, "Miss, I heard that this Pill King Zhen is still unmarried."

Dan'er chided her, "You ditzzy little girl."

"Heehee, I'm not ditzzy, Miss, I simply thought that..."

"Thought what?" Dan'er asked with an annoyed sigh.

Cui stuck out her tongue. "I don't have the courage to say it, Miss. I'm afraid that you'll yell at me for it."

Dan'er sighed quietly, "That's for the better. Nothing good ever comes out of your mouth anyway."

Cui'er started complaining, "What? Come on, Miss! Cui'er has only ever thought for you. I think there must be a reason why the emperor regards this Pill King Zhen so highly."

Dan'er pondered for a moment before nodding, "The emperor has just lost his most beloved personal disciple not long ago. Perhaps he is seeking a new personal disciple."

Emperor Peafowl's wellbeing was one of the few things Dan'er was concerned about. Not only had the emperor saved her from her plight, he'd also granted her a huge favor and appointed the Plumscore Monarch herself to educate her child. Dan'er was not a heartless person. She was very grateful to Emperor Peafowl for everything he'd done for her.

Cui'er giggled, "Personally, I think the emperor is choosing a son-in-law."

"Son-in-law?" A moment of surprise caught her off guard, but Dan'er immediately thought of something and blushed. "Oh, you naughty girl. I see you're setting your sights on me again without me noticing, hmm?"

"Miss, the emperor treats you like his own daughter and cares so much for you. You can't always turn down his kindness." Cui'er instantly begged for forgiveness.

"Hah," Dan'er sighed softly. "It is true that I owe the emperor my new life, Cui'er. But still, you should restrain yourself from such nonsense. I'm still a married woman, even if the emperor has such thoughts. I would never accept another man in my life."

"Miss, you always said that you're a married woman, but why hasn't your husband come to see you after all these years? Also, if he really loves you that much, why would he ever allow you to wander by yourself before the emperor found you? How can a man like that possibly deserve your undying love?" Cui'er was an honest and unfiltered person. She was the kind who would speak her mind without any scruples.

But Dan'er's expression froze when she heard Cui'er's words. She stared at Cui'er solemnly, "Cui'er, I hope that this is the last time I hear words of that sort from you. Remember this well: he is absolutely not the kind of man you speak of. He is responsible and ambitious, and possesses a talent equal to none in this world. I didn't leave him because he abandoned me. I left him because I don't want to tie him to my side and keep him from the great future that lies ahead of him!"

Dan'er's face glowed with a divine radiance as she spoke. She wouldn't allow even half a sentence of disrespect for her man. The way she spoke, it was as if the man she had left behind was her greatest pride and joy in this entire world. It was as if he was worth a lifetime of silent sacrifice.

Cui'er had served Miss Dan'er for many years. She knew that her mistress was very easygoing on small things, and she never spoke a word of censure even when Cui'er sometimes failed to perform her duties adequately. However, Miss Dan'er was more stubborn than anyone else when it came to her principles.

It was obvious that this man whom no one knew a thing about was a taboo subject to Miss Dan'er. No one but herself was allowed to tread harshly upon it. Anyone who tried would be met with a stern rebuff. Dan'er hadn't mentioned his name even to Emperor Peafowl himself. In fact, she never talked about her past. Therefore, for all the power Emperor Peafowl wielded, even he didn't know what'd happened to Dan'er before he'd met her.

Dan'er herself was the only one who knew the forlornness, the pride, and the longing she felt every time she thought of the man she missed day and night. She wanted to know where he'd gone after the Myriad Domain had been destroyed. She wanted to know if he thought even a little about her during his idle time when he was wandering outside. Every time she thought a little too deeply, the headstrong Dan'er couldn't help but tear up a little. It was true that she had left that man of her own accord. In fact, he never knew that she'd borne and given birth to his child. But Dan'er never regretted her decision to leave him, even now.

She knew that he would definitely take responsibility if he learned of their child and the sacrifices she'd made for his sake. But Dan'er didn't want to do so. She didn't want to tie him to her side just because she wished to. She thought that it would be very selfish of her if she did something of that sort. This was why she'd left to wander the world alone. It was her pride and her selfless love that had driven her to make such a choice.

She firmly believed that he would understand her feelings one day. If a bond of destiny truly existed between them, the heavens would bring them together. She didn't need to force things if this bond didn't exist. But even then, he was still irreplaceable in Dan'er's heart, even in a place hundreds of times stronger than the Myriad Domain like Veluriyam Capital where geniuses abounded.

No matter how brilliantly these geniuses of Veluriyam Capital shone, they were ultimately incomparable to that young boy she'd met back in the Myriad Domain; the boy who had barged deep into her heart before she'd noticed. For the past few years, Dan'er had neither mentioned him nor attempted to inquire about his whereabouts. She only knew that the Myriad Domain had been destroyed, and she had no idea where he'd gone or how he was doing. But she was absolutely certain that a genius like him wouldn't go down silently just because his sect was destroyed. Even if that man was currently buried in dust, it was only a matter of time before his brilliance would see the light of the world once more. Of this, Dan'er had no doubt at all!

Chapter 846: Pillfire City's Secret Letter

There was simply no place left for any other man in Dan'er's heart, because every inch belonged to one man already. Whether it be a superlative genius, or the most handsome man in the world, they were but an insignificant passersby to her. That man was her sky and her earth, her entire world and the source of her happiness.

The feelings that grow between men and women are fascinating like that. It was also Dan'er's nature. She was simply powerless to extricate herself from her feelings. She didn't feel a hint of regret no matter how much hardship she'd suffered. In Dan'er's mind, this man was someone sacred, an ideal that no one could infringe upon. She would never allow anyone to say half a word against him.

The reason why she'd never mentioned him to anyone else was that she didn't want to hear the slightest negative opinion about him. Dan'er had made every decision in her life out of her own volition. He might even be completely unaware that she'd carried his flesh and blood. If he truly was the kind of man to love and leave them, then he would have had the opportunity to do so back when she'd revealed her feelings to him. But he hadn't done so. So Dan'er knew he was a genuine gentleman. She'd never doubted that.

Cui'er was at a loss when she saw the young lady's anger. Her gaze fell to the floor as she stammered, "Miss, Cui'er is in the wrong again. Don't be angry, alright?" The servant girl's tears streaked down her cheeks when Dan'er remained silent. "Miss, if I made you angry, then hit me or yell at me. Just don't hold it inside. His Majesty said that you worry too much, so your worries are buried too deep. You can't keep sulking by yourself anymore, or it'll be bad for your health," Cui'er said while choking down her sobs.

Dan'er heaved a small sigh. "Cui'er, you accused him wrongly because you don't know him, so I won't blame you. Just don't let it happen again."

Cui'er hurried to nod. "There won't be a next time. Miss, you can pull out my tongue if you hear me talking nonsense again."

"Am I that cruel?" Dan'er didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Cui'er broke into laughter despite her tears. "Miss, you're not cruel at all, you're very kind to me. I simply can't express how fortunate I was to have His Majesty choose me to serve by your side. Miss, don't be angry at me, I beg you. If His Majesty thinks my service to be lacking, I will have to leave this place. Cui'er doesn't want to leave Sacred Peafowl Mountain."

On Sacred Peafowl Mountain, even a servant girl was an upper class servant girl. Cui'er's family had ridden her coattails and moved up in the world all thanks to her. If she were to be kicked out from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, her family would probably fall back to their previous station. Such was Sacred Peafowl Mountain's prestige. Even mere servants had unfathomable influence.

"Silly girl, what are you thinking of now? I'm not going to let you go. I would always feel something amiss without you babbling in my ear." Dan'er wouldn't truly be angry at such a honest and outspoken servant girl. She soothed Cui'er's anxiety with a few words and changed the topic. "Alright, Cui'er, now tell me what really went on with that pill battle?"

Cui'er completely forgot her previous anxiety and trembled in excitement. Her gossip nature came to the surface once more as she tirelessly told her tale, the rise and fall of her voice akin to that of a storyteller. After all, this girl lived on Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Though she hadn't the seniority to personally witness the duel, she'd still heard quite a few rumours. The news one heard on Sacred Peafowl Mountain was much more reliable than those in the outside world. And so, she told Miss Dan'er every tidbit she knew.

"So that means that His Majesty's judgment is as keen as ever. There are so many outstanding pill kings on the mountain, but he chose a young outsider over any of them. I'm sure no one understood His Majesty when he came to this decision. They must have doubted him instead, am I right?" Dan'er sighed.

"Miss, your insight is as penetrating as ever. From top to bottom, many people on the mountain truly questioned His Majesty's decision. I heard that out of the four great monarchs, apart from the Cloudsoar Monarch, the other three were all a little skeptical, not to mention the other great emperors in the Capital," Cui'er said, fully animated.

"Yet the facts have proven that His Majesty is still His Majesty after all. His Majesty is still the one standing at the very top in the Capital, the one who sees the furthest. Everyone else is a step, or ten,

even a hundred steps behind.” Dan’er brimmed with adoration when mentioning Emperor Peafowl, a little pride slipping into her voice like a daughter talking about her amazing father.

“Hehe, no wonder His Majesty loves you so much, miss. Sacred Peafowl Mountain is so big, but you are His Majesty’s real confidante,” Cui’er exclaimed in admiration.

“How can I pretend to be His Majesty’s confidante? His Majesty merely chats with me now and then, so I can discern some of his thoughts from his words.” Dan’er was a sensitive girl. She knew that at Emperor Peafowl’s level, his very thoughts were impossible to understand for the average person. Choosing this Pill King Zhen of no fame whatsoever merely emphasized this point. How much courage and resolve had he needed to choose an obscure junior? If this duel had ended in failure, all the criticism and all the blame would have fallen on Emperor Peafowl’s shoulders, rather than on Pill King Zhen.

Shouldering so much pressure, facing so much skepticism, the emperor had nevertheless plowed forward in spite of the adversity, braved the tremendous risk of defeat and challenged a colossus like Pillfire City. Pill King Zhen had reaped all the acclaim, but Dan’er knew that, though Pill King Zhen’s performance was admittedly near perfection, most people had neglected His Majesty’s role as the decision maker and the one supporting him from the shadows.

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Back at Taiyuan Tower. n/-OVeIBIn

Jiang Chen had received many private letters, but he threw them all in the fire without even reading them, reducing them to ashes. Those letters had all been left behind by those pill experts before their departures. Though their words changed, their meaning was still the same. They all told Jiang Chen that, as long as he brought their letter to their territory, he could receive the highest level of treatment. He would definitely receive more honor and prestige than he did in Veluriyam Capital.

In the Capital, everyone had learned that Pill King Zhen was merely a guest pill king in a noble house, just a last minute find by Great Emperor Peafowl. There were no ties of inheritance whatsoever between them. For that reason, everyone had seized an opportunity to lure him away. That was why every single one of these pill experts kept sending him confidential missives, to try to pry him away to their own factions.

If they’d known that the Pill King Zhen they wanted to rope in had already refused Emperor Peafowl several times already in private, they likely wouldn’t have done something so pointless. He’d even refused an invitation from Emperor Peafowl to become his personal disciple. Why would he even consider theirs? So, these secret letters all ended in the fire.

“Hm? Even fire can’t burn this particular letter?” Jiang Chen took one letter from the fire and observed it from every angle, but he didn’t see anything unusual.

“Who gave this to me?” Jiang Chen couldn’t remember off the top of his head. He’d received several dozen letters and casually put away all of them without keeping track of which one was whose. Most of the letters were already ashes, so it was even more difficult to tell now, unless he opened it.

When he tore it open, it was actually Pillfire City’s emblem that appeared, a divine pillfire alternating blue and red, giving off a striking visual impact. “It’s from Pillfire City?” There weren’t too many words

written on this missive, merely a few lines telling Jiang Chen that, as long as he was willing to leave Sacred Peafowl Mountain and seek refuge with Pillfire City, Pillfire City would forget about today's matter, and would bestow him with countless riches, as well as the highest treatment for a pill king in Pillfire City. If he failed to appreciate this kind gesture, he was bound to meet with a tragic end someday soon...

The tone between the first and last parts of this letter was quite at odds with each other. There didn't seem to be any sincerity to their offer, while the threat was painted in quite vivid details. It was very difficult not to be provoked. With a laugh, Jiang Chen was about to crumple this letter and destroy it when his eyes suddenly flashed. With a yelp of surprise, he carefully put this letter in front of him and looked at it for a long while. The closer he examined it, the more his brow creased. By the time he was done, his expression was as dark as an approaching thunderstorm.

Bam!

Jiang Chen slammed a fist into the wall beside him, gaze fixed into the distance as he ground out from between clenched teeth, "How ruthless of you, Pillfire City! You sound like you want to rope me in, but in fact, you want to bury me six feet under!" He looked at this letter and the unique grain of its paper. There didn't seem to be anything unusual about this letter at first glance. Only, his sight was exceptionally keen. He could see that the paper had a particular texture to it. The grain actually contained a lethal poison.

Definitely a lethal poison! Jiang Chen had been a pill grandmaster renowned throughout the entire heavens in his former life. The letter's paper was made from a certain type of snake skin. It was one of the most poisonous things in the world. Were it not for Jiang Chen's vast knowledge, he would never have spotted it. In particular, this snake skin would exude ten times the toxicity when burned or encountered heat. It would drift in the air, poisoning a man's body through his lungs, or failing that, even through the pores of the skin.

"Pillfire City!" Jiang Chen put down this letter, a strong murderous aura flashing in his eyes. He never imagined Pillfire City would be so sinister. This secret letter was clearly a scheme against him. The so-called offer was pure hogwash. The stern threatening words in the latter part were designed to anger him. Furthermore, his enemies had clearly planned this in great detail. They'd wanted to anger him, to provoke his wrath, so that he would act in fury.

If Jiang Chen had crumpled the paper in his hands and used pill fire to destroy this letter, then the toxicity from the snake skin would have been ten times more violent. Even a powerhouse at the peak of the emperor realm would probably suffer from such a ferocious poison. Even a great emperor might suffer quite a bit if they'd entirely let their guard down.

"Pillfire City, you really don't show any mercy when clamping down on your opponents. It looks like Pillfire City's position as leader of the pill world has been maintained thanks to these shameless methods!" Jiang Chen seethed with anger. It had merely been a single challenge for the Longevity Pill, but now Pillfire City wanted to directly send him to the afterlife. This instantly ignited the flames of Jiang Chen's wrath!

If ya like the story of an average Joe just minding his business, a college graduate, suddenly getting swept up artifacts, supernatural abilities, and fantastic beasts... Come check out Sundering Nature! Is

this part of a prophecy from the Heavenly Laws? Or is he supposed to be the very opposite of the prophecy...?

Chapter 847: Momentous News

It had to be said that Pillfire City's ruthlessness knew no bounds; they would stop at nothing when attacking outsiders. Furthermore, there was no way to prove this crime once the item had been destroyed.

"Good, good, very good!" Jiang Chen ground his teeth. "It seems I need to add one more name—Pillfire City's—to my blacklist."

Jiang Chen was never one to be trampled on. "Since you want to kill me, then you should be mentally prepared for the possibility of you being killed instead!" He was absolutely enraged. Victory and defeat were common in pill competitions, but very few would actually resort to immediate murder after being defeated.

"Pillfire City's vicious move is probably not only due to the disgrace of this loss, but also so that they can preserve their domination in the field of pills. They won't tolerate even the slightest threat. So it turns out that Pillfire City's philosophy as a hegemon is just that simple and cruel." Jiang Chen was greatly dissatisfied. He wouldn't be too surprised if such a matter happened to someone else, but once threatened, he wasn't one to be trifled with. He had already made Pillfire City a target of his vengeance despite its colossal status. It wasn't in Jiang Chen's nature to let an attack go unanswered.

He would remember this grudge well, but was in no rush to return this favor. It'd be inviting trouble for himself if he retaliated without consideration. Pillfire City's strength was at least on par with that of Veluriyam Capital, or maybe even greater. He had to be cautious if he wanted to seek revenge against such a behemoth. It wouldn't do to fail in the counterattack and suffer a loss instead.

"It was a great stroke of fortune that I'd refined the golden cicada's bloodline and gained immunity to all poison before all this. Otherwise, I might've been poisoned even without burning the letter with pillfire. Pillfire City, you think so highly of me, eh? So highly that you would resort to such treacherous methods!" Jiang Chen proceeded to dispose of the secret letter with due caution.

He wasn't afraid of the poison in the snake skin at all, but that likely wasn't the case for other people. Thus he had to meticulously eliminate all traces of the poison. Afterwards, he destroyed the remainder of the secret letters. He had little interest in them.

His mood had been utterly ruined by Pillfire City. With a great deal of effort, he managed to calm himself before emerging from the secret chamber and heading over to the Ling father and daughter duo's residential area. The father and daughter duo were finally able to sleep soundly at night and enjoy some peaceful days at Taiyuan Tower.. Ling Su had always been on edge as they had wandered the outside world and could be said to have suffered all kinds of torment. He was truly glad now that they had found a safe haven.

He wasn't actually afraid of the hardship, but he couldn't bear to see his daughter suffer. This was especially true for this naive and innocent younger daughter of his, who knew so little of the ways of the world. He was relatively unworried about his wandering elder daughter, Ling Bi'er, despite the lack of communication between them. After all, she possessed outstanding talent, wisdom, and knowledge regarding the ways of the world. Even if she was still wandering outside, Ling Su was confident she'd be able to overcome any and all hardships. On the contrary, he was much more worried about the younger

daughter he always kept nearby. The lass was somewhat naive, insensitive, and was too expressive of her likes and dislikes. She had a tendency to stand up for the oppressed despite her mediocre talents which, needless to say, would get her into trouble from time to time.

Ling Su had to maintain constant vigilance along the way out of fear that Ling Hui'er would cause trouble. He could only find relief after they had arrived at Veluriyam Capital and entered Taiyuan Tower. After seeing the status of both Taiyuan Lodge and Jiang Chen, Ling Su knew that the Eternal Celestial Capital wouldn't dare act wantonly even if they came to Veluriyam Capital. He also noticed that the several surviving disciples from the Regal Pill Palace had also walked out from the shadow of their sect's destruction. They were all quite spirited since they now had a common goal to reestablish the sect. Their mental attitudes and outlook had been completely renewed.

Ling Su couldn't help but gasp in amazement at Shen Trifire's progress, adding to his recognition and admiration towards Jiang Chen. He was now completely convinced. He also suspected that Ling Hui'er's had fallen for this youth who had saved her life. Ling Su was previously concerned that this man would take advantage of the two sisters' feelings of gratitude and deceive them.

Recalling that, Ling Su felt quite embarrassed about his worries. It wasn't that Jiang Chen had deceived the two lasses, but rather, his daughters had been the ones to fall in love with him instead. In fact, Jiang Chen already had a beautiful lady in his company and didn't exhibit any special feelings even towards her. The thought of this made Ling Su slightly depressed. But he knew that as a father, he could do little to help in the matters that ensued between youngsters. He knew, at least, that Jiang Chen was an honest man and would never do anything inappropriate to his daughters.

Looking at the mysterious Miss Huang'er beside Jiang Chen, he found that her temperament, manners, and self-restraint all shone with the qualities of a well-raised lady. She had treated Ling Su with due courtesy and showed not the slightest bit of indifference just because he was the father of a love rival. Even towards Ling Hui'er, she was still just as friendly as a next-door neighbor.

The simple-minded Hui'er had also begun addressing her intimately as elder sister after only a few days of interaction. Ling Su felt that the situation was both funny and rueful. He knew both his daughters were admittedly outstanding, but neither of them had any advantage when compared to this Miss Huang'er. If one were to discuss appearances, even the well known beauty Ling Bi'er was somewhat inferior before Huang'er.

In terms of temperament, Miss Huang'er exuded the traits befitting a lady of noble heritage, while his child exemplified that of a beautiful daughter from a humble family. The two were of a completely different nature. When it came to social interaction, one of his daughters was cold as ice while the other innocent and naive. It could only be said that his daughters had their own characteristics, but held no obvious advantage over Miss Huang'er's poised and dignified manner. *noVe(lb)1n*

Most importantly, it was quite obvious that the relationship between Jiang Chen and Huang'er was that of lovers. Although they weren't yet betrothed, it was easy to see the affinity they had for each other. Thus, whenever he saw his daughter Ling Hui'er getting along so well with Huang'er, Ling Su was at a loss for whether he should be happy about his daughter's broad-mindedness or if he should grieve for her naivety.

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Jiang Chen was completely unaware of Ling Su's concerns, nor did he have the time to analyze them in detail. He greeted Ling Su briefly and inquired after the latter's well-being. Jiang Chen also told him that he should recuperate in peace at Taiyuan Tower and that he could choose to do some work for the Tower in the future if he so wished. In any case, the Taiyuan Tower was now easily capable of supporting idle people.

Ling Su couldn't help but like this Jiang Chen after seeing his generosity. He had once thought the young geniuses of Regal Pill Palace were quite talented. But now, none of them felt up to par when compared to Jiang Chen. Shen Trifire suddenly walked in while they were talking, "Senior brother, Pill King Lu Feng has arrived and claims he needs to see you urgently for an important matter."

Pill King Lu Feng had left in high spirits after receiving a large number of Deviant Pill Faction recipes from Jiang Chen last time and hadn't shown any signs of activity since. How did the mad old man find the time to visit him? Those Deviant Pill Faction recipes were quite sufficient enough for him to study for several years. Not much time had passed since then. Jiang Chen actually quite admired the old man. He had overheard the old man secretly cursing and spitting at the Majestic Clan the day of Taiyuan Lodge's reopening. He knew that this old geezer had been following him with genuine sincerity. Jiang Chen naturally had to reciprocate since the latter was so devoted.

"Master, something big! Something big has come up!" The excited Pill King Lu Feng was positively beaming when he saw Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had long since grown accustomed to his crazed manner, "What seems to be the matter? Don't tell me you want more pill recipes?"

Pill King Lu Feng laughed loudly, "Master, those pill recipes are enough to keep me occupied for three years at least. I don't need anymore for the time being. I shan't bite off more than I can chew. This time, I came to report something really important."

"What's this important matter? Pray tell," Jiang Chen smiled. "There'll be no more recipes for you in the next ten years if I find you raising a false alarm."

Pill King Lu Feng smiled smugly, "Is there a reward if the information is useful?"

"What kind of reward do you want?"

Pill King Lu Feng laughed mischievously, "I only want master to designate me as a successor of Deviant Pill Faction and publicly announce that I'm your disciple."

The old man's demands had always been quite odd. He'd taken such a young pill king as master despite his advanced age. Normally people wouldn't want such a thing to be known and would choose to stay low-key while reaping the benefits. But this old geezer almost seemed afraid that everyone wouldn't know that he had taken Jiang Chen as his master, insisting that they announce this matter to the world. This vexed Jiang Chen quite a bit.

"Tell me the news first. What's it about?" Jiang Chen didn't want to be pestered endlessly.

"I just received news regarding the Requiem Wood," Pill King Lu Feng approached mysteriously and whispered with all seriousness.

“What?!” Jiang Chen jumped up in surprise, “From where did you get this news? Why haven’t I heard of it?”

Elder Shun had previously left an enormous reward for any news regarding the Requiem Wood. This reward would activate automatically as long as any relevant clue was found. Jiang Chen had also mentioned this to the Coiling Dragon clan lord before. The clan lord would have notified Jiang Chen immediately if this reward had been activated and news of the Requiem Wood appeared.

“It wouldn’t be valuable news if everyone knows of it. I learned of this news by accident, and it’s still a secret even now.” Pill King Lu Feng smiled bizarrely.

“Oh?” Jiang Chen was fully intrigued by now. If the Veluriyam intelligence networks had learned of this, Elder Shun’s reward would’ve been activated, and the situation would’ve become complicated with the intervention of multiple factions. Who knew when the elder would return to the Upper Eight Regions? If the elder had indeed gone back to Myriad Abyss Island and was preoccupied there, then he might not return. Wouldn’t the reward be an empty promise in that case? Then the Requiem Wood might not fall into Jiang Chen’s hands, as the latter had no ability to offer up Elder Shun’s reward.

Chapter 848: A Hint of the Requiem Wood

Elder Shun left the sixteen kingdom alliance a few years ago, entrusting Huang’er to Jiang Chen’s care. Jiang Chen deduced that the elder had first travelled to the Regal Pill Palace, then come all the way to Veluriyam Capital, and finally travelled the length and breadth of the Upper Eight Regions. He’d also left behind an incredibly high bounty. The bounty offered a great emperor’s relic for the Requiem Wood. At the time, this bounty had sent waves throughout the entire Upper Eight Regions.

If it hadn’t been for Pill King Lu Feng back then, Jiang Chen wouldn’t have learned that Elder Shun had once visited the Upper Eight Regions and Veluriyam Capital before. A bounty with a great emperor’s relic as reward was enough to stir the interest of everyone in the human domain. Jiang Chen thought carefully and seriously for a moment, “Ole Lu, this isn’t something to joke about.”

Seeing how serious his master was, Pill King Lu Feng immediately lost his irreverent attitude and answered in a rare, serious tone, “I can’t guarantee this matter is one hundred percent true, master. But I do think that the source of this news is likely reliable.”

“Explain it to me carefully.” Jiang Chen didn’t dare take this matter lightly. The Requiem Wood was tied to Huang’er’s life, so naturally Jiang Chen was very concerned about it.

“A wandering cultivator came to my store yesterday. You could say that he has made quite the name for himself in the community of wandering cultivators in Veluriyam Capital for the past few years. He and I have always gotten along well, and he often does business with me too...” Pill King Lu Feng responded. The pill king didn’t leave Jiang Chen hanging. He relayed everything he knew in full detail. “When he returned this time, he had an extremely bizarre wound. He sought me out immediately and even dragged me out of seclusion, asking for my help to treat his wounds. However, his wound is so strange that even I, a highly skilled first rate physician, could do nothing about it. He wasn’t willing to tell me the truth at first when I asked him how he got the wound, but when he felt that he was likely to leave the world, he struggled to make arrangements for after his death. He asked me to take care of his young

son. The price he's willing to pay for my aid is a piece of intel regarding the Requiem Wood. For now, only a few wandering cultivators know about this..."

"Is he dead already?" Jiang Chen was moved when he asked this.

"Not just yet, but almost. If I am not mistaken, he only has less than three days left to live. He probably knows that no one in Veluriyam Capital can treat his wound, which is why he didn't try to seek out other reputable physicians to save him. He plans to just lie at my place and wait for his death to find him."

Jiang Chen hastily said, "Take me so I can take a look."

Pill King Lu Feng looked surprised, "Master, you wish to give it a try yourself?"

"I wish to know if his claims about the Requiem Wood is true or false. If it is a lie, then this person doesn't deserve to be saved."

"A lie? Why would he lie to me?" Pill King Lu Feng shook his head. "We've known each other for tens of years, so I know how he is. He is a somewhat arrogant man, but he is not someone who speaks off-the-cuff."

"What if he told you a white lie so that you'll take care of his young son?" It wasn't that Jiang Chen thought that this wandering cultivator was a bad person, but it was better to seek confirmation since it was a matter of great importance.

Naturally, Pill King Lu Feng supported Jiang Chen. He and that wandering cultivator were good friends with each other, so he didn't want to give up on his friend's life if there was even a sliver of hope of saving it. "What are we waiting for then, master? Let's head to my place right now. I feel that he's already at the end of his rope. Every minute we delay means that he's a step closer towards death."

Jiang Chen didn't dilly dally. After briefly informing Taiyuan Tower's people and letting Huang'er know, he set out with Pill King Lu Feng immediately. No progress regarding the Requiem Wood had been made thus far, so naturally Jiang Chen wasn't going to tell Huang'er about this new discovery. If this turned out to be false news, then he would only be disappointing her. n(-o--v./E.(l//B(/l/-n

As a ninth rank pill king, Pill King Lu Feng was a man of high status even though he had no powerful patrons in Veluriyam Capital. His home was located at a very prominent area in the Farmer God Market.

"Master, this is the first time you've come to my place," Pill King Lu Feng looked very delighted.

Jiang Chen waved his hands, "Just in case, don't let your subordinates know too much."

Pill King Lu Feng chuckled, "Don't worry, master. Of course I'll make sure they stay out of the way while you're here. We can't have them spoil your visit, can we? They are all your diehard fans now, so it will be a problem if they try to keep you here upon learning of your arrival."

Pill King Lu Feng might look the way he did, but even he didn't work without obeying a set of guidelines. At the very least, he managed to keep everything in his pill king residence neat and tidy. Jiang Chen followed the pill king inside and went straight for the private rooms.

The wandering cultivator was staying at a room at the backyard. He looked a little startled when he saw Pill King Lu Feng leading a young pill king into his temporary lodgings. He was writing a letter and put it

away upon seeing an unfamiliar face. He looked at Pill King Lu Feng, "Brother Lu, who is this? Is he your new disciple or something? He sure looks like a talented person."

Pill King Lu Feng's face turned green when he heard this, "Ole He, you musn't say such careless things! This person here is my master."

This wander cultivator is called He Hongshu. Although his relationship with Pill King Lu Feng didn't run so deep that they would risk their lives for each other, it was still a pretty strong relationship. He Hongshu looked blankly at Pill King Lu Feng when he saw his expression, "Your master?" It was obvious that he didn't believe this claim, at least not at the moment.

"That's right, he's my master," Pill King Lu Feng nodded affirmatively and without any hesitation, "Hear me out, Ole He. If there's anyone left in Veluriyam Capital who can save your life, then that would be my master."

He Hongshu's complexion was ashen and ugly. Rather than looking overjoyed at Pill King Lu Feng's claims, he smiled wryly. "Ole Lu, I'm a dying man, so can you not make a joke like this? I'm writing my will right now, and I'll give an account of everything I have. Who would have thought that I, Ole He, a wandering cultivator who has moved unhindered throughout the human domain would be met with such a terrible death? In the end, you are the only person I can entrust my son to."

Pill King Lu Feng waved his hands impatiently, "Hold your horses, will you! Now that my master has arrived, allow him to inspect your condition before you say such things. You might even find yourself unable to die in his presence even if you want to."

Seeing that Pill King Lu Feng bring up his 'master' again and again, He Hongshu couldn't help but cast Jiang Chen a few extra glances. He noticed that that young pill king was smiling and showing no indications that he was going to deny Pill King Lu Feng's claims. His expression was also completely free of any reverence or restraint. He really didn't look like Pill King Lu Feng's junior.

Can this young man really be Pill King Lu Feng's master? Does he look as young as he was because he's skilled in the art of maintaining his looks? But He Hongshu had met countless people in his life. He couldn't shake the feeling that this young pill king really was as young as he looked. A moment later, he asked hesitatingly, "You really aren't making a joke at my expense, are you, Ole Lu?"

Pill King Lu Feng cried out, "Where would I find the mood to make a joke at your expense when you're about to die?! You and I may not be brothers on a battlefield, but we have known each other for more than ten years. Out of so all the people I've seen in Veluriyam Capital, you are one of the few who actually deserve my attention. I'll be frank with you, if you were anyone else I would not have purposely invited my master over and trouble him like this. You may yet survive this predicament now that you have met my master."

"H-he really is your master?" He Hongshu was finally starting to believe Pill King Lu Feng's claims a bit after hearing this emphasis over and over again.

Pill King Lu Feng might have a comical temperament that made him a stubborn old man at times, but he wouldn't lie about something that he had stressed repeatedly to be true. "Of course! Do you really think that taking masters is a joking matter?" Pill King Lu Feng responded impatiently.

"I er... may I ask your master... master's name then?" He Hongshu immediately felt less confident than before. He was equals with Pill King Lu Feng, so technically speaking he should treat Ole Lu's master as his senior.

"Ole He, you may not have heard of the recent big news in Veluriyam Capital since you're traveling outside all the time. You know about Pillfire City, right?"

"Pillfire City and Veluriyam Capital are the northern and southern powers that reign supreme in the Upper Eight Regions. Of course I've heard about them," He Hongshu answered carefully.

"Then you probably know about the challenge Pillfire City issued to Veluriyam Capital as well, right?"

He Hongshu thought for a moment and nodded, "I've just returned, but I did hear of this when I passed through the streets. It actually sounds like Veluriyam Capital had the upper hand this time, am I right?"

"What do you mean upper hand? Complete and utter domination are the words you're looking for! We destroyed Pillfire City so thoroughly that they had to run home with their tail between their legs without even a loincloth to cover their shame!" Pill King Lu Feng's tone was exaggerated, and his spittle was splattering all over He Hongshu's face. The old man was even dancing for joy with an absolutely thrilled expression on his face.

He Hongshu knew how Pill King Lu Feng was, so he simply wiped away the spit on his face wryly and didn't try to interrupt his friend's fun. "In that case, do you know what kind of character this Pill King Ji Lang of Pillfire City is, Ole He?"

"I often visit Pillfire City territory, so I do know about him. Pill King Ji Lang is Pillfire City's half-step pill emperor, and his talent is said to be second only to Emperor Pillzenith. Emperor Pillzenith even once proclaimed that Pill King Ji Lang's pill dao talent exceeds his, and that the reason the pill king hasn't exceeded him yet is because the latter is still too young and has yet to achieve his full potential. However, he is certain to exceed Emperor Pillzenith one day. Although it is likely that Emperor Pillzenith is creating some momentum for Pill King Ji Lang, it is true that Pill King Ji Lang is the nominal successor of Pillfire City. He's more important than many other important elders." He Hongshu lived an adventurous life and often travelled to a lot of places. That was why he knew the gossip happening all over the human domain very well.

"In that case, do you know how badly this Pill King Ji Lang lost to us at Sacred Peafowl Mountain?" Pill King Lu Feng asked while chuckling.

"I had heard some, but there are too many details and too many versions of the story. I'm not sure which one's the one to listen to," He Hongshu answered honestly.

"Allow me to tell you the real version then. Pill King Ji Lang was trounced by my master himself. My master crushed him so hard that Pillfire City had to capitulate before him before they ran back to their mamas while covered in dirt!" Pill King Lu Feng looked so pleased it was as if he was the one who defeated Pill King Ji Lang.

Realization flashed through He Hongshu's mind, and the wandering cultivator stared at Jiang Chen and exclaimed in astonishment, "You... you are Pill King Zhen?" The deaf aside, who in Veluriyam Capital hasn't heard of Pill King Zhen? His legendary feats were the talk of the town wherever one goes. The pill

battle of Sacred Peafowl Mountain was a battle that had turned the three words 'Pill King Zhen' into a new legend, achievement and popular figure in Veluriyam Capital.

Chapter 849: A Leaf From the Requiem Tree

It hadn't been long since He Hongshu returned to Veluriyam Capital, but he wasn't deaf. How could he be ignorant of all the rumors about Pill King Zhen? Only, he'd never imagined that this pill master who was so famous in the Capital and throughout the human territories would actually turn out to be Pill King Lu Feng's master! This relationship was completely beyond belief. He Hongshu actually had a little trouble wrapping his head around it. He looked at Jiang Chen, then at Lu Feng. This pair actually did look like master and disciple, were their roles reversed. However, to have the young man as the master and the one with white hair and white beard as the student instead was rather head-scratching.

Lu Feng didn't think of it as a shameful matter. It was a source of great honor for him. "Hehe, Ole He, normally I wouldn't even tell anyone. I tell you because of our relationship. How about it, is my master qualified enough to treat you? If you really don't want to, then forget about it."

He Hongshu's face turned green before words spilled from his mouth in a torrent, "I'm willing, I'm willing! To have someone as famous as Pill Master Zhen treat me is nothing less than the accumulation of good karma from several lifetimes!" He indeed had a way with words, as expected of a seasoned traveller of the jianghu.

Jiang Chen hadn't uttered a word yet, but he'd been paying close attention to this He Hongshu, silently examining him. He suddenly asked, "Sir, do you perhaps feel as if countless ants are crawling through your veins? Do you feel fidgety all over, like you'd rather be dead than alive?"

He Hongshu froze. He looked at Lu Feng, thinking that Lu Feng had already mentioned his condition. However, shock was written all over Lu Feng's face. He immediately looked at Jiang Chen reverentially. "Master, you can see what's wrong with him with just a few glances?"

He Hongshu was shocked when he heard Lu Feng's exclamation. Judging from his tone, it seemed Ole Lu hadn't told his symptoms to Pill King Zhen? If so, being able to discern his problems with a simple glance, it seems this Pill King Zhen's reputation was truly well deserved.

"It's easy. Look at the surface of his skin, you can see that his veins seem to be throbbing. In turn, that causes all the hair in his pores to stand erect. An abnormal condition like that wouldn't be too surprising if it only happened now and then. But this condition persisted from the moment I came inside, so it was easy to pick out."

He Hongshu and Lu Feng shared a look, a trace of admiration flashing through their eyes. Lu Feng spoke, his voice full of respect, "Master, I'd always thought that you were only lucky enough to have met a good teacher who taught you some theory. Now I realize how short-sighted I've been. Even with a good teacher, obtaining so much ability is thanks to your unsurpassed innate talent. Otherwise, why would your teacher take a fancy to you and teach you so many formidable techniques, when they'd never taught anybody else? Your keen insight and your ability to get things done, that's definitely your own talent, and not something a master can teach."

It wasn't flattery, just an expression of the deep admiration that rose from the bottom of his heart. Jiang Chen gave a slight nod and didn't contradict him, instead looking at He Hongshu. "Sir, I presume you won't mind if I take your pulse?"

He Hongshu hurried to say, "I would be honored."

Without further ado, Jiang Chen took the patient's wrist and inspected him in great detail. He spent a long time taking his pulse, a full half-hour. Only after a long time did he release He Hongshu's wrist with a shallow nod.

He Hongshu had long been resigned to his death. He'd found serenity after making peace with the idea. Though his eyes were inquisitive, he didn't lose his composure. Unlike him, Lu Feng looked restless and impatient. He sidled up to the duo anxiously and asked, "Master, how is it, is there still hope for Ole He?"

Jiang Chen heaved a soft sigh. "Ole He, is it? Would it be rude to call you so?"

"It's not rude at all, it's not rude at all. Pill King Zhen, calling me Ole He would be my honor," He Hongshu hurriedly replied.

"I only want to ask you one question. Where on earth have you gone to?" Jiang Chen frowned. "There's not only a demonic yin deep within you, but also parasites. You don't have a single affliction, but two of them."

"What? Two of them?" Lu Feng was also startled. He'd only found one. Jiang Chen was as composed as ever, his eyes flashing with an authoritative aura that brooked no question. Lu Feng's smile was a little awkward. "If master says there are two afflictions, then there must be two of them. My judgment can't compare to yours, master."

Lu Feng wasn't being falsely modest in this regard.

He Hongshu sighed, "I travelled very far this time. I went southeast, through the Myriad Domain, all the way into the desolate wildlands."

Lu Feng was taken aback. "You went into the wildlands?"

He Hongshu nodded with a wry grin. "I did."

"Then what about what you said yesterday about going to some hidden realm? Were you lying to me?"

He Hongshu looked ashamed. "Ole Lu, I did lie to you. Only, I didn't lie to harm you, but to save you."

"Bullshit, what kind of monkey logic is that?!" Lu Feng flew into a rage.

He Hongshu rushed to explain, "Ole Lu, old friend, I'm already at death's door, so why would I try to cheat you? I just wanted you to look after my youngest son in my stead, so I didn't want you to face danger. That's why I told you about some fake place. Otherwise, maybe you would have been tempted by a treasure like the Requiem Tree. But that place is definitely somewhere no one can return alive from!" He Hongshu's face was full of terror at the mention of that place, as though he were recalling some terrifying memory. His eyes fairly brimmed with dread.

Lu Feng stared at He Hongshu for a long while before finally nodding. "You really didn't deceive me on purpose?"

"I lied to you, but I absolutely didn't do it out of ill intent. If I lie about this, may my whole family die a wretched death!" He Hongshu was becoming a little anxious.

Jiang Chen didn't breathe a word, instead watching them coldly. Whether or not this He Hongshu had really come across the Requiem Tree was a matter of great importance. If he hadn't come across the Requiem Tree and mentioned it on purpose in order to survive, then his character would be questionable. He wouldn't be worth saving.

Lu Feng seemed to guess Jiang Chen's thoughts and asked again, "Then what you said about the Requiem Tree, is it true or false? Don't lie this time."

"It's real. Only, I can't be sure whether it's a genuine Requiem Tree or not. But with my experience, my judgement tells me it should be the Requiem Tree." His expression seemed a little lost in memories. "The situation was very dire back then, so I only caught a glimpse of it and didn't manage to examine it in detail. Out of the wandering cultivators who'd gone with me, eight had perished for no reason. The rest all ran madly away. I don't know how many made it out in the end. Oh, that reminds me." He Hongshu suddenly slapped his head and took out something. "Back then, I took this leaf in passing from the tree. I don't know if it's the Requiem Tree. Ole Lu, see for yourself." n))@--V).e--1)(B--1(/n

Lu Feng roared in anger, "You hid that from me as well?"

He Hongshu said, a little embarrassed, "I was afraid that you wouldn't be able to sleep after seeing the Requiem Tree. I didn't want you to lose your appetite after becoming obsessed with it. That's why I didn't give it to you. If something happened to you, then what about my son?"

He Hongshu seemed to understand Lu Feng very well. He knew that Lu Feng was impulsive, and wouldn't be able to sleep if he came across something like that. If he'd told Ole Lu about the tree, Lu Feng would have searched high and low for it. Lu Feng was about to take the leaf when Jiang Chen slapped his hand away, berating him, "Have you lived all these years in vain? Haven't you wisened up at all?"

Lu Feng blinked, then vaguely understood something. He looked at Jiang Chen, flabbergasted, and stammered, "Master, could there be a problem with this leaf?"

He Hongshu was also startled. "It can't be, can it? I took this leaf from the tree, is there a problem with it?" Jiang Chen couldn't reach an immediate conclusion on whether the leaf was part of the problem. However, He Hongshu had escaped from such a dangerous place. Jiang Chen would be rather skeptical if anyone claimed that there was nothing wrong with the leaf. He gestured with his chin. "Ole Lu, get a jade plate to hold the leaf first."

Jiang Chen's mind was surging like a stormy sea. Through the appraisal of his God's Eye and Evil Golden Eye, this leaf seemed no different than a leaf from the Requiem Tree. In other words, there was a ninety percent chance this leaf had truly come from the Requiem Tree. To begin with, it was an extremely peculiar tree, with leaves shaped in a strange way. The veins on the leaves were filled with a mysterious aura, resembling the characters inscribed on a talisman.

Such a shape was a distinctive characteristic of the Requiem Tree. It was impossible for ordinary plants to obtain such an appearance. However, although the Requiem Tree's leaves shared the same effect as the Requiem Tree, they simply couldn't replace the tree itself. Jiang Chen wanted to obtain the Requiem Tree itself. A simple leaf wouldn't cut it.

After putting the leaf on the jade tray, Jiang Chen examined it for a long time before finally confirming that it indeed came from the Requiem Tree. Happiness welled up in his chest. He'd searched everywhere in vain, but he accidentally obtained news of the tree today. And from the looks of it, the news didn't seem fake.

The next question now was how to deal with this Ole He. He had to give Ole He a big enough enticement if he wanted to know the whereabouts of the tree. And for the present, the greatest temptation was his life.

However, Ole He's condition wasn't so easy to handle. Jiang Chen had some confidence in his success, but it was a very thorny issue. And, the most important thing was to make sure Ole He wouldn't randomly run his mouth after being cured. Otherwise, as soon as the news of the Requiem Tree spread, countless powerhouses would certainly rush there no matter the danger, even if they had to break open their own skulls. This issue also increased the difficulty for Jiang Chen.

A great emperor's relic was all one needed to purchase this kind of information, and it would cause a frenzy if it did leak. For that reason, Jiang Chen needed to save He Hongshu, and also seal his mouth. Seeing Jiang Chen remain silent, He Hongshu carefully asked, "Pill King Zhen, is there hope for me?"

Lu Feng also looked at Jiang Chen. "Master, if possible, please save him at all costs. I don't even have a wife or children myself, do you think I'm in the mood to take care of his child? I'm not a nanny."

Jiang Chen thought for a moment before nodding. "Your issue is very tricky, I don't have complete confidence either. That said, I have a few conditions if you want me to save you." He didn't want to beat around the bush when it came to the Requiem Tree.

Chapter 850: Terrifying Poisonous Parasites

Life was the only thing precious to a person nearing death. Everything else was as transient as the fleeting clouds. He Hongshu didn't even frown after seeing Jiang Chen preparing to state his conditions. "Pill King Zhen, please state your terms. No matter what they are, I won't hesitate to fulfill them as long as they're within my power."

Ole He was willing to part with anything other than the lives of him and his son at the moment. He'd realized on death's door that only life was the most valuable possession and that all forms of material wealth were expendable.

"I don't want any payment from you. I only want a map, a detailed overview, and a promise." Jiang Chen replied in all seriousness.

He Hongshu was startled. "Pill King Zhen, are you planning to search for the Requiem Tree?"

Jiang Chen didn't deny this and nodded softly. He Hongshu spoke with great concern, "Pill King Zhen, Ole He has absolutely no doubts regarding your pill dao talent, but I suggest you stay away from that

place. The Requiem Wood is a valuable item, no doubt, but that place is simply too eerie in far too many aspects. It's hell on earth. Any living being that goes in will find it difficult to escape with his life."

"Didn't you escape just fine?" Pill King Lu Feng suddenly cut in.

"I was able to walk out alive but I currently have one foot in the grave, as you can see."

"Nonsense! With my master here, you'll be hard pressed to die even if you wanted to."

He Hongshu repeated with a pleading look in his eyes, "Pill King Zhen, I'm not simply saying this because you're about to save my life—I'm saying this from the bottom of my heart. That place is simply too dangerous, an absolute nightmare for human cultivators."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Ole He, I understand your good intentions. But my conditions for saving you remain unchanged. Do consider them." He didn't insist on this matter, but neither did he want to go to great lengths to persuade He Hongshu. n(-o/.v)-e/)l-/b/)l/-n

He Hongshu sighed helplessly after seeing Jiang Chen's stance, "Pill King Zhen, you're a person of great skill and courage. You're also Ole Lu's master by right. I fear I'd be harming you by giving you this map."

"You'll have harmed yourself if you don't give it to me," Jiang Chen smiled indifferently. "Since I have a method to treat you, I naturally have methods of overcoming the dangers you speak of. The person dearest to me will die without this Requiem Wood. Ole He, what would you do in my stead?"

He Hongshu was stupefied. Indeed. Would he go there if his own son was in mortal danger and required the Requiem Wood for survival? He knew he would still go without hesitation despite being aware that it was the place of nightmares.

He Hongshu immediately nodded at this point, realizing that there was no way to dissuade the other party, "Pill King Zhen, I'll give you a map and a detailed written record of my experiences. But, please do heed my words. That place is far too terrifying. If Pill King Zhen insists on going, I suggest you bring some helpers and venture there only after sufficient preparation."

Jiang Chen nodded, "I'll be sure to make the necessary arrangements."

"Very well. I assume that the promise you spoke of is for me to keep quiet about the Requiem Wood. You can rest assured regarding this aspect. I swear to the heavens and earth that, apart from the three of us, Ole He won't reveal the location of the Requiem Wood to anyone, not even to my son. May the heavens strike me down should I violate this oath."

Swearing a heavenly oath was the most efficient method. Pill King Lu Feng glanced anxiously at Jiang Chen after witnessing Ole He's pledge, obviously looking forward to Jiang Chen displaying his abilities.

"Ole Lu, bring me brush and paper. I'll list a few spirit herbs. You go and prepare them with haste. I'll also need a spacious location to lay down a formation. This treatment procedure isn't one to be trifled with. Any mishaps will lead to endless trouble."

"Endless troubles?" Pill King Lu Feng appeared puzzled. "Why is that?"

Jiang Chen replied solemnly, "Incorporeal poisonous parasites crawl through Ole He's blood vessels. An epidemic would ensue if we let them scatter after they break out of his body."

“Poisonous parasites?” Pill King Lu Feng’s facial muscles twitched hard. “Such a thing really exists?”

“These things aren’t normal parasites either. When removed from their host, the normal ones die after losing their breeding grounds. But these formless parasites grow within blood and are virtually invisible to the naked eye. They’re smaller than a speck of dust while their numbers are nearly countless. The bugs will continue to rapidly increase in number once their growth cycle reaches maturity as one gives birth to ten and ten to a hundred. The first parasite will continuously absorb the essence of its descendants and eventually become a queen parasite. Once such a parasite evolves, its replication abilities will increase by thousands of times. The outcome would be inconceivable at that time...”

Pill King Lu Feng and He Hongshu felt their hair stand on end after hearing this explanation. That terrifying?

“The most terrifying aspect of these bugs isn’t their replication rate, but rather, their ability to hide. It’s quite difficult for a normal person to detect them growing in their blood. The victim might not even know it was the work of parasites even after all his essence had been sucked dry and his life extinguished. The growing bugs would then search for new hosts and the disaster would spread continuously.” Even Jiang Chen would have no way to know of this, were it not for his experiences from his past life. He had seen old records of such parasite infestations during his past life, the symptoms of which were all clearly exhibited in He Hongshu’s body.

Pill King Lu Feng felt his skin crawl with horror as he stammered, “Master, according to what you just said, wouldn’t it be very difficult to control them once the bugs break out?”

“Indeed. There have been ancient records of human powers at their peak deteriorating into ghostly domains in a matter of months.”

“And these parasites are the cause of all this?”

“Yes,” Jiang Chen nodded. “The heavenly law is fair. Cultivators think themselves the rightful rulers of the world just because they can contend with the heavens and earth for life. They never realized that many stronger species exist amongst the numerous living beings of this world. Any one of them could potentially become a natural predator to the human race.”

In fact, many planes weren’t ruled by human cultivators. But he couldn’t tell them such things at this point. Such information would likely be too terrifying for them. After all, the scope of the Divine Abyss Continent’s knowledge simply stopped there. Speaking of the other planes would surely exceed the limits of their comprehension.

“These bugs... master, you do have methods to deal with them right?” Pill King Lu Feng’s normally wacky behaviour had been replaced by a cautious demeanor.

Jiang Chen replied grimly, “The best method is to destroy them along with the host.”

At the mention of this, He Hongshu’s body twitched and his expression froze involuntarily. It never occurred to him that he had inadvertently invited such a potential calamity. He’d thought that death would be the end of it. But it appeared that the scourge would spread and harm many others, even after his death. So much so that, the whole of Veluriyam Capital might be thrown into disorder because of him. He Hongshu felt anxious at the thought of this. He was worried that Pill King Zhen would choose to

euthanize him out of consideration of the greater good. Pill King Lu Feng also asked timidly, "Master, we... we're not planning on being so ruthless, are we? With master's brilliance and might, you surely have another way, right?"

"I asked you to prepare brush and paper. Why haven't you gone yet?" Jiang Chen replied unhappily. "The more you delay, the greater the risks."

Pill King Lu Feng's expression changed after hearing this and he immediately tore off in search of writing utensils. Jiang Chen made a list with due haste after brush and paper were prepared, "Gather all of these items within two hours."

Pill King Lu Feng replied hurriedly, "I'll set out immediately."

He also knew that this wasn't a trifling matter. If he didn't hurry, they might not be able to save Old He and would likely be forced to euthanize him instead. Pill King Lu Feng didn't dare tarry as he thought of this. Firstly, he didn't want He Hongshu to encounter a mishap and secondly, he would have to take in Ole He's son should the latter pass away. From then on, he'd have to walk the inevitable path of a foster father. His scalp went numb when he thought of this, and he wanted nothing more than to have Ole He live tens of thousands of years like a turtle.

Ole He felt a large knot of emotions in his heart after he saw Pill King Lu Feng depart. He stole glances at Jiang Chen through the corner of his eyes, hoping to glean some clues from his expression, but Jiang Chen's expression was wooden, as if he were pondering something. Suddenly, his eyes flicked towards Ole He and said indifferently, "Ole He, stop being so surreptitious. Just say what you want and ask what you will."

He Hongshu laughed ruefully, "Pill King Zhen, if I can't be saved then please put me down. I, Ole He, am not afraid of death. I just don't want to be cursed by everyone after my passing."

"I'll certainly follow this method if I truly fail to save you," Jiang Chen's tone was insipid. "Ole He, whether your words are sincere or just those of someone putting on an act, I'll have to take such an action should things reach that point. I hope you understand."

He Hongshu nodded, "I completely understand. Oh yes, I'll go draw the map and record my experiences now. I hope it'll be of some assistance to Pill King Zhen." He was quite humble at present.

Jiang Chen didn't stop him. He wasn't intentionally trying to frighten the old man. Although he was confident, he wasn't one hundred percent certain. He'd be forced to thoroughly destroy Ole He along with the parasites inside him if he couldn't control the situation. It was obvious that the matter had more or less affected Ole He. His expression was changing constantly as he drew the map. This period of waiting was clearly quite tormenting for him.

"Ole He, don't think too much. I don't dare ensure complete success but I'm still seven parts confident. I'm just telling you these things in advance to prepare you for the worst case scenario."

He Hongshu nodded repeatedly, "I understand, I understand."

Jiang Chen had no idea if he really did understand or not.

Pill King Lu Feng hurriedly returned with the prepared materials before two hours had passed and proclaimed, "This time, it can be said that Ole Lu has gone all out! I cleared out the larger half of all the stores at the Farmer God Market. I didn't bring shame to the mission!"