

Three Realms 871

Chapter 871: Making a Move with Dominance

The valley was very secluded and hard to find. Two soaring mountains arched towards each other, forming the only pathway into the depths of this misty canyon. The desolate wildlands of fable and legend lay beyond them. To an onlooker from outside the valley, mist and fog surrounded the area, enshrouding the valley in a kaleidoscopic haze all year round. The phenomenon imparted the area with a sense of eerie mystery. Currents of air permeated the valley's entrance, rumbling like bolts of violent lightning. It was clear evidence of a powerful restriction.

"It really is the entrance to the wildlands." Jiang Chen exchanged a look with Huang'er. According to the map they had, at least, they knew they had come to the right place. He Hongshu hadn't deceived them. Witnessing the power of the restriction and its intermittent discharge of air currents of the same thickness as a baby's arm, Jiang Chen had no doubt that the seal was weakening. If it were otherwise, even emperor realm cultivators would be reduced to dust when they tried to enter the wildlands. It was completely out of the question for wandering cultivators.

"The ancient times truly did have remarkable restrictions. It still holds such power after innumerable years. No wonder no one has explored this area, even with the Eastern Kingdom and Darkmoon Kingdom so nearby. Considering the strengths of the cultivators from these two kingdoms, it'd be a problem for them to even get to the entrance, much less explore any further." Jiang Chen did not doubt the veracity of his inferences.

It wasn't even two thousand miles from the Jiang Han duchy, but the road between the two wasn't something that ordinary kingdoms' cultivators could simply traverse. Even origin-realm cultivators would find it difficult to keep themselves safe against the beasts and dangers they would encounter along the way, much less spirit realm cultivators, who were the best that these two kingdoms could offer.

"What're you doing here all shifty-looking, eh? Get outta my sight!" Someone felt provoked by the sight of Jiang Chen and Huang'er walking further in. He appeared in front of the two of them, roaring, with displeasure plain on his face.

Jiang Chen pretended to not notice and gazed at the valley entrance instead. Deploying his God's Eye to the maximum, he began to probe the surroundings. He wanted to know which area of the restriction had weakened and when the crack would appear. He Hongshu hadn't mentioned these details in the information he had provided. He had only mentioned that the entrance hinged on passing through several layers of restrictions and that an antidote pill should be consumed beforehand. The opening in the restriction would close shortly afterwards. If the person who entered wanted to leave, they had to wait until its next opening.

Jiang Chen was a man who paid close attention to detail. He liked to investigate everything thoroughly before taking action. The right to speak came only after a detailed investigation, as did a better grasp on the situation at hand. However, his actions inadvertently further provoked the person who had shouted at him.

“Kid, you deaf or mute? I told you to scram!” The sharp voice from earlier rang out again with heightened anger. He seemed ready to charge into a fight at the slightest provocation.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow, glancing at the person in question. He was standing more than ten meters away from the other fellow. How was he affecting him in any way? But the guy kept barking incessantly like a mad dog. Jiang Chen’s mood was already gloomy, and the commotion only served to worsen it.

“What, is this your house?” Jiang Chen’s tone was frosty. A casual once-over from him revealed a total of five members in their group. Upon closer inspection, he was even a little familiar with them. Jiang Chen exchanged another look with Huang’er. Both of them remembered where the five were from. It had been just after the fall of Regal Pill Palace, and Jiang Chen had taken revenge against Gong Wuji by killing his grandson Gong Qi. At the time, he had entered the Great Scarlet Capital to gather information. It was the first time he had been to the city and the first time he had appeared at the Dragon & Phoenix. That was how he had met these five wandering cultivators.

The Great Scarlet Mid Region and Eternal Celestial Capital’s bounties had just been posted. Their sums weren’t quite as ridiculous as they were now, but it was still five million saint spirit stones, three thousand Origin Doubling Pills, and a single sky rank spirit herb. Moreover, the person turning in the bounty would be entitled to a dukedom of ten thousand miles, bequeathed the Great Scarlet Imperial Medallion, and given the right to found their own sect in the region.

The five of them had first appeared at the Dragon & Phoenix, shamelessly claiming that they were going to capture Jiang Chen and collect the accompanying handsome bounty. He had a strong impression of these people. Their leader was a one-eyed man with a ferocious demeanor and a shrewd mind. They called themselves the ‘Ghost Cave Five’. They were reasonably strong sage-realm cultivators and could be counted amongst the better of most wandering cultivators here. Moreover, they were a company of five close friends. Appearing strong and mighty to the casual observer, they had claimed a fairly large piece of land as their own. The closest cultivator was located over a thousand feet away from them. Four out of the five were incensed; the one-eyed leader was the only one who didn’t register a change in expression. Jiang Chen hadn’t just ignored them—he had dared to talk back! The one who had spoken earlier suddenly stood up. He was a lanky man with a pointed chin. “Kid, you looking to die?”

Although the Ghost Cave Five were wandering cultivators, they were still rather overbearing. However, Jiang Chen wouldn’t be intimidated by them. Even the old Jiang Chen wouldn’t be afraid of any ‘Ghost Cave Five’, much less the Jiang Chen of present. He glanced at the other party coolly. “You’re part of the ‘Ghost Cave Five’? It’s a wonder that someone as arrogant as you is still alive,” he remarked offhandedly.

Huang’er shook her head to herself as well. The only thing they had done to provoke the guy was that they had stood next to him for a brief moment. Any expert worth one’s salt could swat these people like one would a fly. In fact, Jiang Chen could easily exterminate the five of them if he so pleased. His unfriendly tone prompted Huang’er to tug on his arm. “It’s okay, don’t take these guys so seriously.”

Jiang Chen allowed himself a slight smile. Of course he would listen to Huang’er’s words. He nodded imperceptibly, then resumed his journey inwards, walking directly past them.

“Halt!” The one-eyed man who had been silent up until now moved forward suddenly, landing in front of Jiang Chen and Huang’er. “You can’t pass by here,” he waved a hand.

Jiang Chen frowned, angered by the repeated rudeness and provocation from the other party. “You want to pick a fight?”

“I don’t care who you are or where you’re from,” the one-eyed man retorted coldly. “Since you’re here, you need to follow our rules. We’ve already claimed this territory. If you want a place for yourself, you can go somewhere else. We all have another agreement as well—you can’t go past this line. If you go deeper in, then you’ll be breaking the rules we have in place.”

“Rules? Did you make them?” Jiang Chen smirked with disdain.

“Everyone made them together. What, you want to piss all of us at once as soon as you get here?” The one-eyed man was obviously proficient at sowing discord. With but a few words, he had placed Jiang Chen on everyone’s bad side. As expected, the onlookers’ collective gazes gathered towards him. Some were sneering, some questioning, some wary, and some even hostile with a hint of provocation. Still others pretended to be uncaring.

Jiang Chen had planned to take a step back, but the one-eyed man’s malicious intent upset him. Twisting his brow, one side of his mouth smirked upwards. It was a strange smile. He swept his gaze across the Ghost Cave Five’s faces. “You can get out of here. I’m taking your territory over now,” he said suddenly. That the Ghost Cave Five were capable of keeping such a large portion of land to themselves was a testament to their oppressive ways. No one else was willing to even approach them. They weren’t necessarily the strongest nor were they the shot-callers, but their position in everyone’s eyes was clear.

And now, an unassuming, young wandering cultivator wanted the Ghost Cave Five to vacate their territory? This turn of events thickened the previously peaceful air. The bystanders looked on at this show with glee in their eyes. They were evidently happy to see something more exciting happen. Such a boring wait was difficult for all of them. A spectacle was just what everyone needed to spice up their lives and soothe their nerves. Naturally, this kind of liveliness was agreeable to all.

For a moment, the Ghost Cave Five hesitated. Then, the one-eyed man began to cackle. Halfway through the gesture, his eyes turned cold. The two words, “kill them”, spat from his malevolent lips. Killing intent spewed forth like an explosive conflagration. The five were quite experienced and coordinated. They had been brothers for many decades and struck in unison upon their leader’s command, viciously coming at Jiang Chen from many different directions.

Thump, thump, thump. Jiang Chen kicked thrice through the air, and the three fast-moving figures looked as if they had run into the tip of his foot. Like sand bags being used for target practice, they fell in the worst possible way. One after another, they fell so closely together that it was difficult to distinguish who was who.

The remaining two were slightly stronger in terms of cultivation. They were both very surprised at the ease with which Jiang Chen kicked away their comrades, quickly reducing their speed and momentum. Smiling faintly, he wound up both hands with a dextrous twist. He reached towards them in the air, picking up the remaining two with his hands as easily as he would little chicks.

“Scram!” Shaking his arms, Jiang Chen tossed both of them away like sandbags. Attempting to resist further, the two found that they were incapable of doing so. They were entirely paralyzed and unable to move, and their bodies crashed into the earth like weights.

Thump, thump. The impact kicked up dust, which subsequently scattered everywhere. The impact left a gaping hole in the ground. With almost the swiftness of thought, the formerly insufferable Ghost Cave Five were sent flying like dead dogs. It was a horrible sight to behold. The damage was severe enough to keep them on the ground for quite a while. The wandering cultivators bearing witness to the spectacle were conflicted. Some of those with previously calm expressions became far more serious.

Clearly, the people present no longer underestimated the pair of youths before them. The Ghost Cave Five themselves were thrown into disarray as well. They were typically quite aggressive and normally fought tooth and nail when at a disadvantage. But, amidst their present cries, the five no longer dared to even look in Jiang Chen’s general direction. Helping each other up, they crawled into a distant corner without even a single word of hot air. Their eyes were full of aversion and fear. What energy did they have to make a retort with? They weren’t idiots. They knew that they had picked on the wrong person this time.

Chapter 872: The Wandering Cultivator Selling Pills

The Ghost Cave Five had a thuggish reputation, making the typical wandering cultivator give them a wide berth. Jiang Chen was even fiercer and more domineering in this respect, exerting a suffocating pressure on everyone in sight. Many wandering cultivators became fearful of his gaze. They no longer dared look at him directly, examining him with only sneaky sidelong glances and ensuring that no unfriendliness could be deciphered from their actions.

Jiang Chen didn’t let taking care of the Ghost Cave Five get to his head, though. He calmly beckoned to Huang’er, and they sat down in the area that had belonged to the recently evicted group. The Ghost Cave Five had occupied a sizable territory. He thought it was nice that he had enough space to be undisturbed by others. The entrance to the seal was only roughly two kilometers away from where he was seated. From this distance, Jiang Chen could use his consciousness to carefully inspect the opening in the seal

Jiang Chen examined it for a brief moment to discover where exactly the gap was. At first glance, it appeared to be no different than the rest of the seal. But closer inspection revealed that the spirit energy flowing past the opening was slightly slower than that of everywhere else. It was like a chain that contained a misshapen ring within. When the spirit energy within the seal came to this ring, it skipped half a beat.

After looking at the seal a bit longer, Jiang Chen was able to glean some of the principles behind its operation. According to his calculations, the seal still needed another day or two for a man-sized opening to appear. After analyzing the seal, Jiang Chen calmed himself and began to observe his surroundings. He had originally thought that the Ghost Cave Five had a piece of prime real estate, but upon closer examination, that wasn’t really true. Though the spot appeared to be close to the entrance, it was actually a crossroads at a high risk of being contested. When the seal erupted, the spot that the Ghost Cave Five formerly occupied would bear the brunt of activity.

Of the other wandering cultivators scattered around, some had spots that seemed far but were actually more effective. When the opening arose, the front entrance would be quite crowded. The places nearer the wings were probably much better in terms of geography.

Jiang Chen made a note of this mentally after a rough look. "The Ghost Cave Five had a loud bark, but they're not very smart. The cleverer ones have hidden themselves, ready to pounce at the first sign of weakness or opportunity."

This was the frightening conclusion that Jiang Chen came to after his investigation. Perhaps the Ghost Cave Five did have an advantage when compared to some of the wandering cultivators on the outskirts. But, against the ones who'd concealed their strength to the degree of being overlooked, they didn't have a chance at all. They seemed almost fools.

"I guess that explains why no one's contested their territory. It directly faces the seal and will definitely face heavy traffic. It's both dangerous and will be contested. I'm surprised that the Five are still alive, considering their brain power... they must lead a hard life." Despite his thoughts, Jiang Chen wasn't planning on changing spots. Now that he'd so openly kicked out the five from their spot, perhaps others viewed him as a slightly stronger brute. He wasn't willing to correct their mistaken preconception. If others overlooked or underestimated him on this journey, then all the better.

There would be no cause for concern if everyone present was like them. But those who were conserving their strength were clearly different. Some were terrifyingly, even absurdly, strong. For people with even that level of strength to hide their power, the situation must be very delicate. Nobody wanted to stand out. Keeping a low profile was surely the mantra of many people here on this journey. But Jiang Chen didn't want to show off a different side of himself. He intentionally put on a façade of "I'm very strong, so nobody should offend me".

Huang'er was an understanding girl. She could tell from the quickest of glances and the slightest of movements what Jiang Chen was thinking, and vice versa. She knew that Jiang Chen was feigning incompetence. After they sat cross-legged for a while, there was a voice from the left. "Friend, can I have a few moments of your time?"

Jiang Chen wiggled his ears, already locking on to the sound's origin. Looking in that direction, he saw a comparatively young wandering cultivator. The young cultivator smiled at him, his eyes belying a strong desire for social interaction. Seeing Jiang Chen's attentive gaze, the youth messaged again. "I swear to the heavens that I mean no harm."

Jiang Chen squinted at the youth, looking him over a few times to make sure there was nothing unspeakable hidden in his eyes. "Come, then," he nodded. The youth raised both hands horizontally, careful not to disturb anyone else, even the ants on the ground. His cautious behavior indicated his nature as a cultivator.

Concerned about any possible misunderstandings, the youth had both arms raised as he walked into Jiang Chen's territory. He flashed a slightly guarded smile. "Hello friend, a little introduction first. I'm Lin Yanyu."

"Hmm, I see. Have a seat." Jiang Chen nodded nonchalantly, then glanced at the youth again. "Don't act so suspicious. If you have something to say, then spit it out."

Lin Yanyu couldn't help but keep nodding. His expression was apologetic. "May I ask your surname?"

Jiang Chen tilted his head at Huang'er. "Huang," he said casually.

"Ah, so Daoist Huang then."

"You came over to make small talk?" Jiang Chen frowned.

Lin Yanyu offered a conciliatory smile. "No, no, not at all. Sorry if it's a little sudden, but I came over here to, ah, market a few products I have."

"Market... products?" Jiang Chen couldn't understand why the youth had come to such a serious place in order to sell things. That didn't quite fit in.

"The desolate wildlands haven't been opened since ancient times. Many Miasmas must have built up without human activity. I am not a man of many talents, but I do take modest pride in my pill refining skills. I came to offer you some antidote pills for your travels."

Jiang Chen exchanged a look with Huang'er, privately amused by the prospect. Someone was marketing pills to him?

Lin Yanyu took his expression as one of dismissal, hastening an explanation. "Friend daoist, I'm a wandering cultivator from Pillfire City. My recipe is exclusive. I just haven't been able to make a name for myself because of the fierce competition there. This is an opportunity for me to prove the quality of my pills. You can put your mind at ease, I only intend to get some testimonials rather than make money. As long as my material and traveling costs are covered, that's enough."

The youth's eyes exuded sincere honesty, mixed with a dash of appeasement. He'd clearly been here for a while, but the results of his marketing bore little fruit. From the faint palm-shaped bruise on his left cheek, he'd even been slapped by someone. Jiang Chen didn't quite know why, but he suddenly felt a little compassion for Lin Yanyu. For a wandering cultivator from a grassroots background, there was the risk of being insulted and beaten even amongst other wandering cultivators, much less when competing with Pillfire City. There were countless people like this in the world of martial dao, Jiang Chen couldn't help but be moved by the look in Lin Yanyu's eyes.

"Let's buy a few, then," Huang'er suddenly spoke up to the side. "Take out your pills. Let's have a look."

Overjoyed by Huang'er's words, Lin Yanyu nevertheless looked to Jiang Chen for further guidance. He knew that this mighty male cultivator was the one who had the final say. Jiang Chen nodded. "Yes, let's see the quality of your pills."

Lin Yanyu took out a pill bottle hurriedly, pouring out aquamarine pills from the vessel. "This pill is called the Eight Treasures Antidote. It can defend against most common poisons and Miasmas you encounter." Lin Yanyu was very proud of his own pills.

Jiang Chen turned the pill over in the palm of his hand. Wandering cultivators from Pillfire City were truly a cut above the rest. This Eight Treasures Antidote was upper rank in both design and quality. It was almost worthy of being called an earth rank pill.

"This pill is pretty good. How much are you selling it for?" Jiang Chen asked smoothly.

“For one pill? Only two hundred thousand saint spirit stones,” Lin Yanyu answered quickly.

Even something like the Longevity Pill could be sold for ten million or more. A pill like this for two hundred thousand was actually quite cheap. Jiang Chen smiled a little. “Give me ten, then.”

“Ten pills?” Lin Yanyu blinked. “You want that many? Friend, there’s no benefit to using several of this pill. The effect is the same whether you consume one or five. I wouldn’t buy so many at once.” Though Lin Yanyu desperately wanted to sell his pills, he was still a very honest merchant. He was willing to inform Jiang Chen of the disadvantages of his product.

Jiang Chen smiled again. “You don’t want to sell? Then never mind, you can leave.”

Lin Yanyu looked as bitter. “Fellow, I’m... I’m just saving money for you.”

“What’s the point in buying just one or two of a pill worth only two hundred thousand?” Jiang Chen said squarely. “Ten or nothing.”

Lin Yanyu could only laugh with helplessness before nodding. “Fine, ten it is. If you feel that you’ve bought too many, you can find me for a refund.”

“You talk too much.” Twisting a corner of his mouth, Jiang Chen tossed the other man a storage ring. “Here’s the money for the pills. Stop nagging and get out of my sight.”

Huang’er knew by now that Jiang Chen was putting on an aggressive appearance. He wanted to trick those observing into thinking he was a mere brute.

Taking the storage ring, Lin Yanyu scanned its contents. He was stunned. The ring held a full five million saint spirit stones. However, Jiang Chen’s hawkish appearance and the prior warning made him swallow the words on the edge of his lips. He did a cupped fist salute instead. “Thank you for your patronage.”

Jiang Chen waved a hand impatiently. “What’s there to be thankful for? It’s a fair transaction.”

Bowing, Lin Yanyu changed from speech to message. “Daoist, you’ve given me more than I am owed. My heart obliges me to tell you a few extra things, and I hope they’re of help to you.

“Firstly, the territory you have now is intentionally overlooked by many experts. Secondly, there are many very strong experts hidden in the people about you. Thirdly, these strong experts seem to have formed a hidden alliance, in order to set down some new rules about this specific expedition into the wildlands...”

Chapter 873: The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain

Jiang Chen’s expression didn’t change even after he’d heard Lin Yanyu’s message. Lin Yanyu transmitted again, “The first two things I’ve told you are absolutely true. I don’t have any hard evidence for the third, but based on my own observations, I am almost certain that it’s true. You can see for yourself later, Daoist Huang, but please don’t say that I’m the one who told you this, or not even having ten lives can save me.”

Lin Yanyu smiled wryly and cupped his hands towards Jiang Chen’s direction. Only then did he carefully walk away. Jiang Chen frowned, but didn’t look at Lin Yanyu’s departing back. Considering how cautious Lin Yanyu was, it must have taken him a great deal of courage to reveal this information. Jiang Chen

sighed inwardly. Everyone has their own way of living. This Lin Yanyu may seem petty and low, but he has his own principles. The spirit stones I gave him was what the Eight Treasures Antidote was truly worth, but not only did he refuse to accept them, he even give me a bit of intel in return. He's an interesting fellow alright. *novel*(1n

To be honest, he was very impressed with Lin Yanyu. Lin Yanyu might not live an unrestrained life—one might even say that the way he lived his life was perhaps a little too cautious—but that didn't mean that he was a person who lacked principles. He refused to take advantage of others even when he was in dire straits. There were many top-rated experts in this world, but Jiang Chen dared say that many of them didn't possess a moral character like his. He didn't need the Eight Treasures Antidote. Both he and Huang'er had refined the Thundercloud Cicada's bloodline and were thus impervious to poison. There was no poisonous fog or miasma that could hurt them. On the other hand, the information Lin Yanyu provided was of great value to Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had figured out the first piece of information Lin Yanyu had provided him with through his own observations. The place he had chosen was a place that no one wanted, even if an expert were to give it up. Jiang Chen had also figured out the second piece through his own observations. There were definitely some experts far stronger than the Ghost Cave Five hiding somewhere around in the area. The third piece he had been given, however, was especially important.

If there really was a secret alliance as Lin Yanyu had claimed, Jiang Chen needed to think through his plan of action thoroughly. Normally, an alliance like this was in no way reliable. Jiang Chen himself had no plans of allying with anyone in the area. However, an alliance like this meant that there clear-cut rules and a set profit distribution system. Bluntly speaking, a small number of experts wanted to claim the pie all to themselves and kick everyone else away from the dining table.

Jiang Chen didn't want to be outcasted by the alliance. He liked the idea that an alliance like this might be stirring up trouble for him in the dark even less. That was why he needed to know more about the alliance. If he couldn't destroy the alliance, he would have to become a part of it. It wasn't like Jiang Chen needed their help, but it wasn't part of his plan to be ostracized like a fool either. While he was deep in thought, he suddenly heard a yell nearby, "Move on, scam!"

Jiang Chen frowned and looked towards the source of the voice. Lin Yanyu's figure appeared before Jiang Chen's eyes once more. He was biting his lip softly and stared stubbornly at the brawny man trying to chase him away. "If you've taken the pill, then you have to pay for it, friend. It's not like you lack the two hundred thousand spirit stones. If you don't want to do so, then you have to return my pill." The person he was talking to was a bulky man. There were also a few cultivators surrounding Lin Yanyu and cackling at him. These cultivators seemed even stronger than the Ghost Cave Five. The place they claimed was also closer to the entrance.

"I'm giving you face and helping your fame by accepting your pill, fool! If it's really as good as you claim, then I'll consider paying you for your troubles after we make it out of the desolate wildlands. Who knows if you're just lying to make some quick money if I pay you now? Don't you think so too, brothers?"

For a split second, the brawny man made the act of claiming another's possessions without providing the necessary compensation seem reasonable. However, this wasn't Lin Yanyu's first day in the jianghu.

How could he not know that these men were trying to take his pills without paying? Their so-called delayed payment was complete bullshit. If they weren't willing to pay him now, would they really be willing to pay him after coming out of the desolate wildlands?

"Friend, I'm doing business on a shoestring, and this is the first time we're meeting. There is no way I'm letting you buy on credit like this. If you aren't willing to pay me, then please return my pills now." Lin Yanyu's tone might have been a little fearful, but he still summoned the courage to protect what was his.

"Are you scrambling or not?" The brawny man's eyes abruptly darkened as he glared maliciously at Lin Yanyu. "Or maybe you'd like to see if I can slap you to death with one move?"

Lin Yanyu's eyes were bloodshot, and a bit of hesitation crept up into his face. In the end though, he shook his head and said, "Give me back my pills and I'll leave immediately."

The brawny man laughed savagely, "You asked for it!"

No one here was unfamiliar with the law of the jungle in the world of wandering cultivators. That Lin Yanyu tried to market his pills to a group like the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was suicidal to say the least. Money? It would already be considered a great feat if he managed to escape with his life. The Ghost Cave Five might appear oppressive and ferocious, but that was all on the surface. The evil deeds the Ghost Cave Five had committed didn't even amount to one tenth of what the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain had done.

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was a famous brigand group that operated all throughout the human domain. They were ruthless and merciless bastards who specifically targeted lone, wandering cultivators. If they were in a good mood, they might kill off their victims immediately, but if they were in a bad mood, they would torture their prey endlessly until they gasped for their last breaths. The fate of women was even worse than that of their male counterparts. Female cultivators who fell into the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain's hands were better off dead than alive. They went on top of their prey in turns and used every kind of disgusting tricks they could think of to torture their prey. The captured female cultivators were often tortured to death before the group eliminated their victims. That was why the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was infamous in the world of wandering cultivators.

Unfortunately for everyone else, the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was both tricky and strong. They had managed to escape several organized hunts and remained free despite numerous wandering cultivators' attempts to hunt them down. In fact, the wandering cultivators who had participated in the hunts were later the victims of revenge, either vanishing without a trace or dying horrible deaths.

Compared to them, the Ghost Cave Five were a bunch of brats who had just learned how to walk. The brawny man Lin Yanyu was facing was the third oldest group member. He was the kind of guy who caused trouble even when none came to him, so he couldn't think of any reason to turn down a fat lamb who had walked right up to his doorstep like Lin Yanyu had.

Lin Yanyu's expression changed when he saw the man approaching him. The man was obviously stronger than him, and he had no idea what he could do to protect himself. He put a pair of gloves on his hands immediately and said, "Don't come any closer. My gloves are filled with all sorts of poison. You'll die if I touch you even once!"

The brawny man laughed, "Trying to scare me, eh? Even if I assume that the poison on your gloves is real, do you really think you can touch me before I crush you like an ant?"

Jiang Chen frowned at the scene and spoke up, "That's enough."

Everyone was watching the spectacle unfold quietly and didn't lift a hand to help Lin Yanyu, because offending the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was a foolish thing to do. Therefore, Jiang Chen's voice came as a surprise to many people. The brawny man abruptly glared at Jiang Chen after a brief moment of surprise. "And who are you talking to?"

Jiang Chen sneered, "I see you have a big head on your shoulders, but your brain must be pretty small."

"Are you trying to interfere with my business and stand up for justice, boy?" The brawny man suddenly cackled and whistled frivolously, "Hey brothers, someone is trying to stand up for justice over here! What a trip!"

The other five cultivators of the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain looked over with unfriendly looks on their faces. A white-haired old man, who was clearly the boss of the group, walked slowly over to their side while holding a walking cane made of a strange type of metal. "It might be better to keep your mouth shut, friend."

Jiang Chen answered in annoyance, "Who's your friend?"

The white-haired old man looked surprised by this. The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was quite infamous in the human domain, so who on earth was this guy to talk in such a way with the alpha wolf of this pack? The wolves behind the old man hooted in anger, "Got tired of living eh, you bastard!"

"Kill him, boss!"

"Even a blind fellow should have a pair of ears. Haven't you heard of the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain?"

Their yells coupled with the clanging of their weapons built up quite a bit of momentum. It was obvious that Jiang Chen's thrashing of the Ghost Cave Five didn't intimidate the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain much at all. The old man commanded quite a bit of respect in the group. He only needed to make a single hand gesture to silence all of them. Even so, they all continued to stare at Jiang Chen with evil eyes that were filled with malice and devoid of any trace of humanity. They looked like a pack of wolves that was waiting for their king's permission to charge so that they could savagely maul their enemies and deal the fatal blow.

"Do you really think that you have the right to call the shots here just because you took out the Ghost Cave Five?" The white-haired old man sneered. The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain were no idiots. They had all seen how Jiang Chen had destroyed the Ghost Cave Five. To be entirely honest, the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain thought nothing of the Ghost Cave Five at all. The young man who had destroyed them, however, would require a little more probing before they could decide whether to attack. They weren't afraid of fighting, but they weren't the only two groups that existed in the area. Only the heavens knew exactly how many experts had established themselves in the surroundings. The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain had come to this place with great ambitions, so although they weren't afraid of trouble, they weren't willing to reveal too many of their trump cards either.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly and cast Lin Yanyu a glance. "I don't care if you use that act on someone else, but this person here is my friend. Are you trying to slap my face by harming him in front me?"

"Friend?" The old man chuckled oddly. "If I remember correctly, you guys have only just met each other. Don't you think it's a stretch to claim that you're friends already?"

"Haven't you heard of the saying, familiarity at first sight?" Jiang Chen's smile was as calm as ever.

The old man's expression froze for a second. Finally, he nodded, "Alright, if he's really your friend then we'll give you some face. We'll pay him back after we return."

Jiang Chen broke into involuntary laughter. "Anyone who makes this type of trade is expected to pay immediately. After all, the customer can claim all kinds of nonsense to avoid paying if the transaction isn't carried out immediately. Plus, who knows if you'll come out alive from the desolate wildlands? Also, the Eight Treasures Antidote is the real thing. I've verified its effectiveness myself. If you dare doubt the pill's effect, then you are doubting my insight. Do you really expect me to tolerate such insolence?"

Jiang Chen purposely threw his weight around like a true troublemaker to the point that he appeared even more tyrannical than the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. Off to the side, the Ghost Cave Five was stunned by the sight. They were clutching their faces and butts while feeling a great deal of shock and regret. This young man was someone who dared to provoke even the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. They were fools to taunt someone like him. The beating they had suffered was completely justified!

Chapter 874: Lin Yanyu's Background *no vE/LB/1n*

Lin Yanyu was a little surprised. When he did business with Jiang Chen earlier, the only impression he got was that this 'Daoist Huang' was extremely overbearing. He surmised that this person was a descendant of one of the great clans or great families, because he carried himself with the strong mannerisms of aristocratic families. A person like him might spare the less fortunate a little money when they were in a good mood, but they would never take the other person's side when they were being threatened by injustice. This was because such actions were utterly beneath them and why Jiang Chen's actions had caught Lin Yanyu a little off guard. However, he was obviously unwilling to involve an innocent person in his own predicament. He went over to Jiang Chen and said, "It's alright, Daoist Huang. I can give up a few pills. It's not like I'd become rich even if they paid."

Jiang Chen snorted coldly, "Now that I've interfered, you'll get those pills back even if you don't want them anymore."

Sheer dominance!

The onlookers watching the spectacle all thought that he had a screw loose in his head. Why was he insisting when the master of the pills himself had given up on pursuing the matter? Did he fancy himself the master of this place and ruler of all or something? The onlookers couldn't wait for the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain to grow enraged and immediately fight Jiang Chen to the death. In fact, the more chaotic the better, and the best—if someone died. Who didn't want a good show and fewer competitors to fight against? Surprisingly, the infamous Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain were unusually restrained today. Everyone could see a hint of killing intent passing through the white-haired old man's face, but not only did he hold himself back, he went so far as to control his restless companions as well.

“Daoist Huang, is it? The young do indeed harbor heroes, and you’re one one with a fiery temper too. If I have to guess, both your background and origin aren’t simple, are they? Fine, I’ll give you a bit of face this one time.” The white haired old man swung his arm and tossed a storage ring to Lin Yanyu, “Keep your eyes open, kid. We won’t be this lenient if you try to sell us pills again a second time.”

Did he just... pay for the pills? The sight stunned everyone who was watching the scene. The white-haired old man wore no expression on his face, however. He simply stared indifferently at Jiang Chen. “The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain never forgets a grudge. The reason we give you face today isn’t because we’re afraid of you, but because we want you to remember that you’ve offended the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. Once we head out of the desolate wildlands, you and us shall settle this grudge once and for all.”

What he really meant was that both their goals lay inside the desolate wildlands, and that there was no point in hurting each other now and enabling others to take advantage of their weaknesses. Jiang Chen shrugged nonchalantly, “I hope you can come out alive too. A reminder, if you will—the Eight Treasures Antidote is the real thing. If you don’t want to be poisoned to death, you’d better consume it now.”

Of course, he wasn’t doing this for the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain’s sake. He was advertising for Lin Yanyu. Humans were strange creatures in that they bullied the weak but bowed to the strong. Jiang Chen’s tyrannical and self-centered behavior intimidated even the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain, much less the other normal wandering cultivators. As Jiang Chen had expected, people began approaching Lin Yanyu to buy pills on their own.

There were a lot of people here who could afford two hundred thousand saint spirit stones. The price Lin Yanyu had priced his pills at really was quite fair. In less than an hour’s time, the Eight Treasures Antidote that no one had wanted to buy just a few moments prior was actually completely sold out. Lin Yanyu had roughly sixty pills before he had met Jiang Chen. He had failed to sell even a single pill despite trying to do so for a couple of days. This was because no one was willing to believe his words and take that first leap of faith.

But Jiang Chen did, becoming the first person to buy his pills. He was then followed by the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. Soon after, everyone else grew tempted to buy them. After all, the desolate wildlands were filled with danger. The price of a mere two hundred thousand saint spirit stones for insurance against one kind of danger one might encounter there was quite fair. While some of the top experts or leaders within the area might possess powerful pills that protected them from the threat of poison, the same couldn’t be said for every wandering cultivator. That was how the pills came to sell like hot cakes.

Even the Ghost Cave Five purchased five Eight Treasures Antidotes before the pills were sold out. This time they were extremely honest and didn’t try to cheat during the payment at all. It was obvious that they had become a lot more obedient after they had been taught a lesson by Jiang Chen. They too were afraid that he would hold a grudge against them, and they bought the pills in an attempt to express their desire to reconcile with him. They wanted to say, *hey, we can’t beat you, and we’re afraid of you, so we’re buying a few pills from your friend as a show of our respect.*

The fact that he had sold out of pills in just an hour bewildered Lin Yanyu a little. He had transformed into a rich man, with ten to twenty million saint spirit stones jingling in his pockets. The cost to make the

pill was relatively low, so his net profits were pretty high. He had earned at least ten million saint spirit stones from today's business. "Thank you for standing up for me, Daoist Huang. I cannot even begin to express my gratitude. I have a few pills left that I would like to gift to you as a show of my thanks." Lin Yanyu truly was a person who refused to take advantage of another person. He was the kind of person who repaid every kindness he received.

Jiang Chen waved a hand and said, "It's fine."

Lin Yanyu fell silent. He wasn't quite sure of how to deal with Jiang Chen's oppressive mannerisms. He wanted to be acquainted with Jiang Chen, but he was also afraid that Jiang Chen might be disdainful of him, which was why he was pacing back and forth around the area in an awkward manner.

"You sold your pills, so why haven't you left yet?" Jiang Chen asked with a frown.

Lin Yanyu smiled wryly at Jiang Chen. Although he didn't reply, his eyes told Jiang Chen that he wasn't planning to leave.

"You're a wealthy man right now. Someone may think ill of your profits. You can stay if you think you're good enough to deal with these greedy robbers." Jiang Chen had spoken out of good intentions. He could see that Lin Yanyu's martial cultivation wasn't as outstanding as his pill dao cultivation. Although he was a sage realm expert, he was only at first or second level sage realm. Cultivators like him were everywhere in this place. Even the weakest amongst the Ghost Cave Five was slightly stronger than Lin Yanyu.

Lin Yanyu knew that Jiang Chen was saying this for his own good, so he sent him a mental message, "Thank you for your kindness, Daoist Huang, but I still wish to enter the desolate wildlands and try my luck. Do not misunderstand my intentions, however. I am not here to get rich or anything... I bear a burden that I cannot speak of."

Lin Yanyu might look like a soft person, but in reality he was quite stubborn. Jiang Chen knew Lin Yanyu must have his own reasons for staying and that it wasn't the sort of thing for him to stick his nose in. Suddenly, he recalled that Lin Yanyu came from Pillfire City. He threw out a careless question, "Do you come from Pillfire City?"

Lin Yanyu nodded with a bit of self derision, "I am from Pillfire City, but their reputation is less of a talisman and more of a burden to me."

"Burden? What do you mean?"

Conflicting emotions roiled behind Lin Yanyu's eyes. He cast a glance at Jiang Chen before saying, "I hope you won't tell this to anyone, Daoist Huang. I may come from Pillfire City, but if I'd had the choice of choosing my own birthplace, I would prefer to not have had any association with that place."

"Why?" Now Jiang Chen was puzzled. Pillfire City was the greatest power in the pill industry and one of the most powerful entities in the entire human domain. Normally, to have been born into a powerful entity like Pillfire City, one would be proud of both their status and origin..

A hint of hatred actually flashed across Lin Yanyu's normally gentle eyes, "That's because Pillfire City destroyed my family and robbed us of the pill formula that's rightfully ours. They killed my clan and destroyed my entire life."

"Huh..." Jiang Chen was speechless for a bit. He never would have thought that Lin Yanyu would have such a tragic past.

"Thirty years ago, when I was still a child, my Lin family was a top-ranked aristocratic family in Pillfire City. One day, my family found an ancient inheritance of three ancient sky-rank pill formulas inside our ancestor's house. After news of the discovery was spread, countless powers set their eyes on my Lin family. Just like that, a family of ancient heritage was wiped from the world. If I hadn't happened to be with my mother paying a visit to her family at the time, even I may have been destroyed along with the rest of my family." A hint of apology passed through Lin Yanyu's eyes before he cut his sorrowful story short, "Daoist Huang, I've never told anyone this secret before, but you aren't from Pillfire City, and you are my benefactor. It wasn't my intention to burden you with such a secret, but... I hope that you won't tell anyone about this."

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded by Lin Yanyu's reactions for a moment. Finally he said, "Relax, I'm not that senseless of a person."

Lin Yanyu nodded nonstop, "I know, I know."

"You're still staying in Pillfire City after your family's destruction?"

"Mm, Pillfire City is huge, and my enemies do not know that I am right within their midst. Pill factions are everywhere in Pillfire City, so I randomly joined one and learned the basics of pill dao at a young age. I did know some of my family's inheritance. That was how I managed to climb to the... half-assed level I'm at right now," Lin Yanyu said a little self-derisively.

Jiang Chen grew some respect for the man. It was rare to find a person who could endure such humiliation and bear his family's mantle for revenge for so many years while still maintaining a heart of gold on the inside. Another person might have already become twisted beyond recognition. "I don't think your pill dao level is half-assed. In my opinion, you're at least at the level of a mid-rank pill king," Jiang Chen gave his assessment.

"That's because my family has a long history in pill dao," Lin Yanyu sighed. "My grandfather and great-grandfather are all ninth-rank pill kings. In fact, my father was once called a genius who could challenge a half-step pill emperor. Unfortunately... it's all gone. It's all gone."

"Your father could challenge a half-step pill emperor?" Jiang Chen looked a little surprised. "He was that great?"

Great pride exuded from Lin Yanyu's eyes when his father was brought up. "It's true. When my father was still young, he was on par with Pill King Ji Lang. However, Ji Lang was lucky to be born in the emperor's direct line of descent. In the end, the sheer amount of resources Ji Lang had access to propelled him to where he currently stands. My father may not have necessarily been weaker than him if he had been given the same amount of opportunities."

Pill King Ji Lang was the pill king who had fought against Jiang Chen at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He was said to be second only to the ruler of Pillfire City, Emperor Pillzenith, and was his indisputable successor of pill dao. Before he had participated in the pill battle of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he was said to be undefeated in pill dao. Had Lin Yanyu's father really been the equal of Pill King Ji Lang when he was younger? If this was true, then his talents really were quite incredible.

Jiang Chen smiled, “Do you mean that Pill King Ji Lang who lost to Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s Pill King Zhen not long ago?”

A hint of disgust flashed through Lin Yanyu’s eyes when his name was brought up, “That’s him, that cocksucker. The stories of him being undefeated for his whole life is utter nonsense. My father’s fought him countless numbers of times in pill dao, and they both scored victories and suffered losses, so how can he possibly be undefeated?”

It was clear from Lin Yanyu’s tone that he was extremely hostile towards Pill King Ji Lang.

I’ve always felt that Divine Throne of Primordial Blood’s cover is pretty badass...

Su Chen lost his sight in an unfortunate, unanticipated encounter. He was unwilling to give up despite suffering one of the most tragic fates possible in the human realm, and fought on. Su Chen wants to use his own efforts to create a completely new destiny, both for himself and for mankind!



Chapter 875: Scouting for Information

This was a rather unexpected discovery. Jiang Chen had already burned his bridges with Pillfire City. Whether it was Emperor Pillzenith or Pill King Ji Lang, both of them hated him to the core. It wasn't just because he had caused the Pillfire City to lose the Longevity Pill, but also because Jiang Chen had shattered Ji Lang's undefeatable legend. He had slapped Pillfire City's face and shaken the foundations of the faction's rule of pill dao. To Pillfire City, this was completely unacceptable. Hence, when Jiang Chen heard that this Lin Yanyu was on bad terms with Pillfire City, his interest in the boy grew even deeper.

However, for now, Jiang Chen kept his silence about these matters. Lin Yanyu didn't spot anything strange about Jiang Chen. Clearly, when he thought of his father, his emotions became a little heated. He seemed to finally remember his manners as he flushed with embarrassment. "Daoist Huang, I'm sorry. I forgot myself there."

"Don't worry. It's normal to be emotional when thinking about your family." Jiang Chen paused slightly before asking off-handedly, "If Pillfire City is so invincible, there must be plenty of pill dao geniuses there, no? I wonder if you know how many pill dao geniuses with innate constitutions there are in Pillfire City?"

Lin Yanyu laughed wryly as he replied, "Spirit constitutions are incredibly rare. That kind of genius might appear once in a hundred thousand people. Although they exist in Pillfire City, there aren't many of them. Daoist Huang, why are you suddenly asking about this?" Lin Yanyu thought this was somewhat strange. "Can it be that you want to meet some pill dao geniuses?"

Jiang Chen nodded his head. "I have a friend who's contracted a severe illness. Apparently, only pill kings with an innate wood constitution of high order have a slight chance of saving him. But, it's really not easy to find anyone with such an innate constitution."

"Innate wood constitution of high order?" Lin Yanyu was startled. Still, he couldn't help but nod. "Amongst the high-order constitutions, wood and gold are the hardest to find. Fire constitutions are much more common. However, those who can truly attain a first-class fire constitution of high order are also existences as rare as phoenix feathers and dragon scales."

"Daoist Lin, you're very experienced with Pillfire City. Do you happen to know any geniuses with an innate wood constitution of high order?"

Lin Yanyu subconsciously shook his head. However, he seemed to immediately think of something as his eyes lit up. He spoke up, "I don't know anyone with an innate wood constitution of high order, but back when I was in Pillfire City, I heard some news regarding that constitution."

"Oh? Tell me more," Jiang Chen's eyes also glittered with interest. His questions about the innate wood constitution were naturally to scout out news regarding Mu Gaoqi. As for his supposedly ill friend who apparently needed healing, that was just a front.

Lin Yanyu struggled to recall the specifics for a moment before he replied, "I was really cautious during my time in Pillfire City so my network isn't that big. I only heard someone say that some huge power in Pillfire City bought a bunch of slaves and there was actually someone with a higher order innate wood constitution amongst them. This news caused quite a stir in Pillfire City's gossip mill."

“Something like that actually happened?” Jiang Chen’s face was a mask of shock, but waves of great emotion had begun to roil in his heart. This piece of news definitely referred to Mu Gaoqi. There was no doubt about it. Who would have thought that he’d actually unexpectedly hear about Mu Gaoqi in a place like this?

Lin Yanyu sighed, “The world is wide and full of extraordinary mysteries. That influential power definitely has some great luck. Still, too much good luck isn’t necessarily a good thing. If our Lin family hadn’t discovered those hereditary pill recipes, we might have not been wiped out.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t in the mood to listen to Lin Yanyu talk about his family. Instead, he asked, “Just what influential power has such good luck?”

Lin Yanyu replied, “One of Pillfire City’s secret societies. They’re called the Star Harvesters. They’re one of the top powers in Pillfire City.”

“Star Harvesters?” Jiang Chen silently mulled over this name.

“Daoist Huang, you can’t be thinking of going to the Star Harvesters for medical help?” Lin Yanyu asked.

“Is there some sort of problem?”

“It’s immensely difficult. Pillfire City really looks down on external powers. An ordinary person will have to pay a lofty price to ask anything of the citizens of Pillfire City,” Lin Yanyu didn’t conceal anything.

Now that he knew the name of the Star Harvesters, Jiang Chen’s heart had become more tranquil. No matter what, he couldn’t just abandon Mu Gaoqi like that. Wandering around as someone’s slave would be an immense waste of his innate wood constitution of high order. “So how’re they going to use a slave like him?” Jiang Chen wondered out of curiosity.

“It’s difficult to say,” Lin Yanyu thought for a moment. “Pillfire City won’t educate a slave like him of unclear origins. Well, perhaps they’ll groom him into a puppet pill king who specializes in pill refinement. But they won’t give him very many positions, nor will they impart much knowledge to him.”

“Isn’t an innate wood constitution of high order extremely rare?” Jiang Chen frowned.

“It is indeed rare. To the extent that it’s said that there has been none in the history of Pillfire City. But the world of pill dao is more mindful of the issue of inheritance than the world of martial dao. They care a lot about your background and origin. If a genius comes from an uncertain origin, they’d rather lose him than take the risk of passing their legacy to him. Many incidents have occurred in the past where enemy factions dispatch their geniuses to infiltrate other sects and steal their legacies. This kind of thing has happened too many times, so the pill dao world has become extremely guarded. Do you know why my father never received Emperor Pillzenith’s favor back then, and why that Pill King Ji Lang somehow managed to get promoted?”

“Why?” Jiang Chen seemed to have thought of something.

“Simple. It’s because my family is not in the emperor’s line of descent while Pill King Ji Lang is descended directly from the emperor. Although my ancestors were all from Pillfire City, my family often drifted outside the city and established many branch families throughout the human domain. Hence, in terms

of background, my family wasn't as unconditionally reliable as Pill King Ji Lang was," Lin Yanyu gazed at Jiang Chen with a pained smile. "It's cruel, isn't it? Everything about Pillfire City is this cruel."

Jiang Chen saw that every time Lin Yanyu brought up Pill King Ji Lang, the boy would be seized by some kind of inexplicable hatred. Suddenly, an epiphany occurred to him. "Then, that Pill King Ji Lang wouldn't happen to be the culprit behind your family's downfall, would he?"

Lin Yanyu looked slightly taken aback as he stared at Jiang Chen with a hint of surprise. It seemed that even he had been startled by Jiang Chen's guess. This was clearly the reaction of someone who'd had his thoughts laid out in front of him. "Ugh, Daoist Huang, I've really lost control today. I've always bore this hatred in my heart without showing it to anyone. I didn't expect that you'd see through me." Lin Yanyu's expression abruptly cooled as he fumed with gritted teeth, "There is only one explanation for the downfall of my Lin family. The root cause was Pill King Ji Lang's fear of my father's talent and the threat my father would pose to his future reputation! How could he let an outsider sleep beside his bed? I guess my family is also to blame for discovering this too late. By the time we could react, we were already finished."

"A mountain cannot be dominated by two tigers," Jiang Chen also lamented. The father of this Lin Yanyu was comparable in talent to Ji Lang and had even defeated Ji Lang before. This was definitely unacceptable to the future successor of Pillfire City. Every absolute authority always had a small flaw. It was just like a thorn hidden beneath an emperor's throne, constantly poking at his buttocks. This kind of feeling was naturally unpleasant.

The two chatted for a while longer. Jiang asked a few more questions about Pillfire City but didn't ask anything excessive lest Lin Yanyu become suspicious. Although Lin Yanyu also sought revenge on Ji Lang, Jiang Chen didn't want the other to find out his identity this soon.

Just as they were conversing, a flock of wandering cultivators hurried one after another to their location from every direction. The number of people hurrying to them continued to rise exponentially. When Jiang Chen had first arrived, there were only a few hundred people. After a few hours had passed, that number had already ballooned to over a thousand. From his position, he could see at least a few thousand people waiting for the opening of that gap. This was definitely a bit too many people.

The increase in number of people signalled an increase in his number of conflicts. As latecomers continued to take a fancy to this particular territory, countless struggles erupted. Nonetheless, these disputes were of no concern to Jiang Chen. The moment he'd arrived, he had battled the Ghost Cave Five and then the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. His grisly reputation had already spread. Moreover, any discerning person would likely dismiss the spot he was standing on. Conversely, upon seeing that Jiang Chen was not chasing him away, Lin Yanyu sat down in the former's territory instead of leaving.

When he saw Jiang Chen's calm and collected appearance, Lin Yanyu's thoughts were also a little complicated. This Daoist Huang looked so tyrannical but after they'd spoken, Lin Yanyu could vaguely feel that he wasn't that sort of muscle-headed fool. However, if this Daoist Huang truly possessed insight, he should be able to see what the problem with this territory was. Not to mention that Lin Yanyu had already warned him.

At that moment, Lin Yanyu's was feeling extremely conflicted. When he saw that even the Wolves of Sparrow Mountain feared Jiang Chen, he very much wanted to walk the same path as Jiang Chen.

Internally, he had already vaguely considered himself to be Jiang Chen's partner. If it was like that, then he naturally wanted to give Jiang Chen some advice. But when he gazed at Jiang Chen's aloof exterior, he felt somewhat uncertain. "Daoist Huang, this territory directly faces the gap. Everyone will be vying for this spot. It's really dangerous. If you'll listen to me..."

Jiang Chen chuckled, "I think this is a pretty good spot."

In Jiang Chen's smile, Lin Yanyu could see that the other had a card up his sleeve. He was momentarily speechless and spoke again after a brief moment. "Has Daoist Huang observed anything about that alliance?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "The atmosphere is a little strange. We will act with discretion."

Jiang Chen had realized that this Lin Yanyu hoped to rely on him and for the two of them to be tied together. Perhaps to Lin Yanyu, his strength was enough to carry the boy through this ordeal? If it was anyone else, Jiang Chen would definitely have refused. However, this Lin Yanyu came from Pillfire City. His origins were rather unique. Moreover, he held a grudge against Ji Lang. Jiang Chen was a little intrigued by this person. As the two of them spoke, Jiang Chen's expression suddenly darkened. He quickly stood up and walked towards his right.

There was a short, hunchbacked old man taking some unknown action in the direction he was looking in. "Friend, have you wandered into the wrong place?" This was his territory. Naturally, Jiang Chen would not allow anyone to misbehave in his territory. What was more, his intuition was telling him that whatever this hunchbacked old man was doing, it wasn't anything good.

I've always felt that Divine Throne of Primordial Blood's cover is pretty badass...

Su Chen lost his sight in an unfortunate, unanticipated encounter. He was unwilling to give up despite suffering one of the most tragic fates possible in the human realm, and fought on. Su Chen wants to use his own efforts to create a completely new destiny, both for himself and for mankind!



Chapter 876: The So-Called Alliance?

This hunchbacked old man was as short as a nine-year-old child. His clothes were incomparably ragged and tattered. His face, as wrinkled as an air-dried orange peel, was covered with creases and scars. He looked as though he already had one foot in the grave. However, Jiang Chen did not dare slight him. This old man's appearance was simply too bizarre. Even with his level of consciousness, Jiang Chen had not sensed how this old man had sidled over until he had already invaded Jiang Chen's territory.

When the hunchback saw Jiang Chen walk over, he abruptly pushed himself up with the cane he held in one hand. With a swish of his body, he immediately floated a few hundred meters away. Jiang Chen's expression twisted as he flourished his sleeves.

Psht psht psht psht! The piercing whistle of air echoed around him. The gale summoned from Jiang Chen's sleeves was actually imbued with the power of the Featherflight Mirror that slowed down the flow of space around him. In that space, a few slender, seemingly transparent silver needles were forced to a stiff halt eight meters in front of him, suspended in thin air. Unrestrained rage bubbled within Jiang Chen. This old man had actually dared to ambush him!

He glanced at the ghostly needles and was clearly aware of the fatal toxins contained within them. Moreover, these needles were transparent and invisible to the naked eye. If Jiang Chen did not possess such a strong consciousness, if he had not obtained the Featherflight Mirror, he would have suffered a terrible fate as soon as he'd let his guard down. When Lin Yanyu saw the needles floating in midair, his face had also paled. "Daoist Huang, careful! Those silver needles contain poison."

Jiang Chen huffed coldly as he glared in the old man's direction. But with a twist and turn in the underbrush, the old man had disappeared underground like a burrowing mole. Jiang Chen waved his hand in cold fury. A pulse of dark energy emanated from his palm and shattered the needles. He wasn't particularly afraid of the poison. However, if they had been aimed at his vitals when he'd been caught off guard, he would have paid for his carelessness dearly. Moreover, that old man had no history with him, and yet the first move the other party had made was attempt to murder him. Such vicious methods naturally roused Jiang Chen's ire. He checked the area around him. Apart from the hustle and bustle of the site, he could garner no clues from his surroundings.

"What a crafty bastard." Jiang Chen was silently shocked. His opponent had actually managed to escape so easily under such circumstances. That was no easy feat. When the surrounding people saw the assault on Jiang Chen, they were all inwardly terrified. Originally, no one here had been vigilant against danger. But in an instant, the atmosphere had become riddled with tension. Someone was launching ambushes!

Once this news spread, every surrounding cultivator became nervous. They had assumed that everyone would peacefully wait together for the the seal to open, but such a thing had actually happened! Unexpectedly, it was the victim, Jiang Chen, who swept the area around him with his consciousness. When he found no clues, he chuckled coldly to himself and returned to his original spot. Huang'er asked, deeply concerned, "Are you alright?"

"Heh, what a shameless scoundrel. It's not that easy to take me down." Jiang Chen deliberately raised his voice. "It's just a fluke that he managed to dig himself an escape route. If there's a second time, I'll teach him the taste of regret!" *noVe-lb-In*

Huang'er was fully aware of Jiang Chen's abilities. It would definitely be difficult to hurt him with an ordinary poisoned needle. Lin Yanyu's expression was somewhat perplexed, but he didn't leave. Instead, he sat down with Jiang Chen and Huang'er. After this attack, Jiang Chen fully expanded his consciousness. However, that hunchbacked old man did not appear again. It was as if he had never even appeared at the mouth of the valley at all.

"Are you Daoist Huang? My master has requested for your presence." It was not long after Jiang Chen had sat down that a young man, dressed in black robes, suddenly appeared at the periphery of his territory and spoke cautiously.

"Who is your master?" Jiang Chen frowned.

"The honored Prince of Shangping."

The Prince of Shangping? Jiang Chen furrowed his brows. The human domain was too vast. Jiang Chen hadn't been to that many places, nor did he recognize that many people. Who was this Prince of Shangping?

Lin Yanyu hurried to his side and murmured a few sentences in Jiang Chen's ear. Upon hearing Lin Yanyu's words, a meaningful smile appeared on Jiang Chen's face. He waved his hand, "Show me the way." After he spoke, he turned around and glanced at Huang'er. Huang'er smiled peacefully at him. "Go, I'll be here."

Although Huang'er could not easily make any moves, Jiang Chen was very cognizant of the level of cultivation she had reached. Even Cao Jin, the pride of a first-rate sect, had been easily defeated by her. There was no need for Jiang Chen to be worried for her.

"I'll be right back," Jiang Chen spoke next to Lin Yanyu. "You stay here."

Lin Yanyu had initially wanted to follow Jiang Chen. It wasn't so much that he was curious, but rather that he was afraid that Jiang Chen would be attacked again. However, upon hearing the indisputable firmness in Jiang Chen's tone, he took two steps forward before pausing, "Daoist Huang, be careful. The number of people here complicates things."

Jiang Chen gestured dismissively before following the black-clothed young man. The young man didn't attempt anything as he led Jiang Chen to a forest of apricot trees to the left of the valley entrance. The moment he'd entered the forest, Jiang Chen immediately saw the scenery before his eyes change. He'd actually walked into a formation that had turned into a strange space. Even if the people outside were to walk into this forest, they would definitely be unable to spot this space created by the formation. Jiang Chen didn't stop. As he scanned around the area, he didn't sense any killing intent from the formation.

"We're here." Before they'd walked too far, the black-clothed young man brought Jiang Chen to a stretch of empty land. Large pieces of limestone were strewn messily around the land, forming an irregular forest of stone. A few people were occupying the stone forest. Of them, some were unaccompanied while others had formed groups of two or three. Jiang Chen looked around and calculated that there were around a dozen groups in total.

"Hehe, you are Daoist Huang?" A man donned in elaborately embroidered robes walked out from within the stone forest. His hair was swept into a high topknot, and he kept a thin wispy beard that exuded the aura of royalty.

"Prince of Shangping?" Jiang Chen had heard from Lin Yanyu that this Prince of Shangping was the ruler of a certain territory. Although he was a prince, he had no interest in seizing the throne. Instead, he was extremely passionate about martial dao. In the martial world, this man could be considered to be a little famous.

"Hehe, that is me indeed. A book is not to be judged by its cover. Daoist Huang looks to be full of bravado. Everyone believed you to be an impertinent man with all talk and no action. It seems that they have all underestimated you." This Prince of Shangping seemed to be evaluating Jiang Chen, but his words seemed to carry a strange undertone.

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently, "What are you trying to say?" He had zero interest in listening to the other party's nonsense. He had definitely not been selected from such a large crowd of people and invited here to simply make small talk.

“Just now, Elder Feng Huan acted to assess your capabilities. I trust that my fellow daoist will not take offense?” The Prince of Shangping suddenly smiled at a pile of stone formations.

A figure suddenly emerged from the surface of that stone formation. It was precisely that old man who had attacked Jiang Chen earlier. The old man seemed almost unable to lift open his eyelids. But abruptly, his cat-like eyes opened, and he shot a look at Jiang Chen before snickering at him cruelly. “Do not resent me. I was entrusted by the Prince of Shangping to test your abilities, that’s all. If you want revenge, hold it against him. It has nothing to do with me.” In an instant, the old man had completely washed his hands of the matter.

Jiang Chen arched his brows. “Prince of Shangping, we are not yet acquainted. It seems that this method of testing me is a bit too extreme, don’t you think?” Jiang Chen’s tone was clearly a little unhappy.

Unexpectedly, the Prince of Shangping laughed as he replied, “If you knew of my intentions, you would not blame me. Instead, you might even be thanking me.”

Jiang Chen sneered, “Thanking you for the ambush?”

“Daoist, from another perspective, the ambush on you was to test your qualifications. Only when you’ve passed our test do you have the right to enter this place.” The Prince of Shangping’s tone was even, neither fast or slow; it gave off a sense of full composure.

“Enter this place?” Jiang Chen laughed apathetically. “It’s just a formation designed to confuse. What’s so special about it?” Since he had given everyone the impression that he was a madman, then he might as well act a little wildly.

The Prince of Shangping laughed. “Daoist, I trust that you’ve also seen just how many people there are outside. The desolate wildlands hasn’t opened a single time within the past tens of thousands of years. No one knows what lies within. But so many people trying to rush in all at once will certainly result in major chaos. If they’re not careful, they will run into some powerful spirit in there and drag us, the true heavyweights, into their mess.”

True heavyweights! Jiang Chen smirked as he understood what the other was implying. It seemed that every test had been to determine who was a “true heavyweight”.

At this moment, a middle-aged man walked over from the distance. He appeared rather impatient as he said, “Prince of Shangping, this brat’s potential hasn’t even surpassed sage realm. Surely you don’t need to be so courteous to him? Letting him enter this place is already a show of respect. Why should you indulge him so much?”

“That’s right. Out of everyone seated here, which one of us isn’t at emperor realm? Allowing a sage realm brat to come into this place isn’t even appropriate to begin with.”

Once someone started, the others began to speak up, one after another. Clearly, they did not acknowledge Jiang Chen’s right to walk into this place. The Prince of Shangping didn’t object to these statements either. He only gazed at Jiang Chen with a smile, wishing to see how Jiang Chen would handle himself. Jiang Chen shrugged, “Well, if I’m not welcome then I’ll just go.”

“You’ve come and already you want to leave?” That middle-aged man from just now laughed coldly before speaking to the Prince of Shangping. “If you let this brat in here then allow him to depart, who

knows how his tongue will waggle when he leaves this place? If he starts spouting nonsense the moment he's back out there, he'll stir everyone up. If a few thousand people start to create trouble, how will we handle that?"

"Yes. Since he's here, we can't let him leave."

Jiang Chen's expression darkened as he started to laugh coldly. "What, don't tell me this is the kind of invitation where the plan is to murder the guest?"

The Prince of Shangping waved a hand in dismissal. Then abruptly, his lips curved into a secretive smile, "Ladies and gentlemen, please calm yourselves. Our dear Daoist Huang here might only be at sage realm but the level his consciousness has reached is formidable and comparable to any one of you. We could certainly use some heavyweights with a powerful consciousness on our journey. Moreover, the more of these kinds of people the better."

"Even if his consciousness is a redeeming quality, he doesn't have enough potential. Won't he need us to protect him?"

"Exactly. We'll be lugging around a dead weight. Wouldn't that just create trouble for ourselves?" One by one, they all began to hurl various words of contempt at Jiang Chen with extremely unfriendly tones.

Jiang Chen only sneered. He was more or less certain that this was the alliance that Lin Yanyu had spoken about. They had likely gathered together in hopes of controlling the expedition into the desolate wildlands. "Continue discussing at your own leisure. I have no interest in listening to your nonsense," Jiang Chen said. With a sway of his body, he had already reached the edge of the formation.

The Prince of Shangping was startled. Entering his formation was easy but leaving was not. The exit had been hidden very well. An ordinary person would definitely not be able to find it. This young cultivator had actually fled to the edge of the formation in just a single step! The level that his consciousness and observation skills had reached greatly shocked the Prince of Shangping.

Chapter 877: Those Who Make the Rules

"Please wait, friend." A trace of anxiety fled across the Prince of Shangping's calm face. If Jiang Chen were to step out of this place, their secret alliance would be completely exposed. If the cultivators outside learned of their plans to take control, they would absolutely go ballistic. This was why they couldn't allow this young man to leave no matter what. Plus, considering his temper, he would definitely rile up the crowd.

Jiang Chen smiled, "Do you think you can stop me?"

The moment he'd arrived, he'd already spread out his consciousness throughout the entire area and thoroughly gauged everyone's strength. Although there were a lot of experts here, they were all at emperor realm. He was sure that no one here who could truly harm him. Jiang Chen wasn't being arrogant—it was simply a fact that, with his current level of cultivation and the number of treasures he possessed, no ordinary emperor realm cultivator was capable of suppressing him. Sure, a sky emperor realm cultivator who also possessed an overpowered treasure might cause him to be a bit more wary, but even then he wouldn't be afraid of them.

Some cultivators exuded confidence completely for show, while some others' were entirely genuine. As for the confidence Jiang Chen was currently exuding, his was of the unfathomable kind. In the group's opinion, this young and arrogant cultivator couldn't possibly be all that strong. However, his confidence wasn't simply an act either.

The Prince of Shangping hid a wry smile before shooting everyone a glance. "Everyone, you trust me enough to let me plot our plans and actions. Since this is the case, please stop objecting to my decisions."

Everyone stared quietly at the Prince of Shangping for a moment.

"Alright, I'll give you face, Prince of Shangping."

"Yes, we'll give you face. However, if this kid can't prove himself useful, we won't allow him to stay no matter what."

The Prince of Shangping looked intently at Jiang Chen. "I have a suggestion, Daoist Huang. If you don't mind..."

"Speak," Jiang Chen answered expressionlessly.

"Please understand that everyone here is pretty famous, so their pride is bigger than that of most others, Daoist Huang."

Jiang Chen simply sneered and didn't respond. *Understand, you say? Why should I try to understand you lot?*

"The reason we are gathered here is in hopes of controlling the current situation and setting down some rules to govern the entry into the desolate wildlands." The Prince of Shangping possessed a voice that was naturally magnetic. It made people want to continue listening to him. "You may have noticed already, but the number of cultivators here has been increasing rapidly over the past two days. In fact, I dare say that there are tens of thousands of more cultivators to come. It is, of course, good news if these newcomers are all experts, but don't you think that it's a bit comical that some origin realm or even spirit realm weaklings are showing their faces too? If we don't set some down some regulations and gain control of the situation, who knows just what kind of mess will happen if everyone were to charge into the secret realm all at once?"

His words made a lot of sense. The desolate wildlands was a place that had been sealed away for at least a hundred thousand years, and during this time no humans had ever set foot there. Therefore, who could say what was inside? There was no doubt that a place that had remained untouched for one hundred thousand years would contain many precious treasures, but could they say that the desolate wildlands only contained loot and no powerful divine spirits? Could anyone say that it was completely devoid of any great powers that could potentially threaten their lives?

Of course not!

In addition, the desolate wildlands was where the demon race had been sealed during ancient times. Who could say that the sealed race hadn't made a comeback during the past one hundred thousand years? Nothing was known about the desolate wildlands. No one could give a sure answer. Therefore,

the idea of regulating the amount of explorers inside the desolate wildlands was actually quite sound. After considering the present situation for a brief moment, Jiang Chen accepted these words.

The Prince of Shangping brightened up after seeing that Jiang Chen's face had loosened up a little. "And so, the reason why I've gathered everyone here today is to pool all of our wisdom for our mutual benefit. Of course, the rulemakers must also have the necessary strength required to uphold their rules. If you wish to join us, then you must prove your abilities.. If you do, then there is no reason for us to reject you, is there? What do you think, Daoist Huang?"

His logic was sound, but Jiang Chen refused to accept his entire proposition. If he were to act according to these people's wishes, he would be falling into their rhythm and playing their game, both of which he had no intentions of doing. "Number one, I have no interest in making any rules. Number two, I don't need anyone to acknowledge my worth. Number three, if your rules do not exclude me from the explorations, then everyone gets a happy ending. But if they do, then I'm sorry to tell you that I won't play by them."

The Prince of Shangping frowned, "You put me in a very difficult position with your unwillingness to cooperate, Daoist Huang."

Jiang Chen smiled, "In that case, pretend I never came."

The Prince of Shangping said hastily, "Wait. I'll opt for another compromise—You only need to show that your consciousness is at a powerful enough level to be on equal footing with the rest of us. By doing so, I guarantee that no one will reject you with malice."

Jiang Chen thought for a brief moment before asking, "How?"

The Prince of Shangping said, "Simple. You only need to tell us where the entrance and kill zones of the formation are to pass the test." He looked at everyone as he said this to see if they were okay with his idea. Although they were reluctant to allow a sage realm cultivator to join their alliance, the Prince of Shangping was worth giving face to.

"If that is what you wish, then so it shall be."

"We support your idea, Prince of Shangping."

"I'll give you face, but if this kid still refuses to cooperate, don't blame us for being unkind."

The Prince of Shangping smiled and looked at Jiang Chen, "You have seen our sincerity, Daoist Huang. If we had thought that you were unworthy, we wouldn't have bothered to notify you in the first place and would have gone about our own business, don't you agree?"

Jiang Chen's response was noncommittal. He lifted his eyelids slightly and said, "The place I'm standing on right now is the only exit that exists in this place. There is a kill zone thirty meters to your left, another one over there, there, and... five kill zones in total. Am I correct?"

In fact, he had found a total of seven kill zones in this place. Moreover, he was sure that there existed only seven kill zones in the entire formation. The answer of five was a purposeful deceit. He didn't want to put himself in so high of a position that everyone would be on their guard against him. Right now his current treatment was exactly the kind of treatment he wished to receive. Although these people

showed him a mask of acceptance, they were in fact utterly disdainful of him. This was most advantageous to him.

The Prince of Shangping looked slightly startled, "Are you sure, Daoist Huang?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "I'm sure."

The Prince of Shangping rubbed his palms and smiled, "You've all witnessed Daoist Huang's level of consciousness and perception. It is not any weaker than any of yours, is it?"

The rest of the group's original looks of disdain switched to looks of assessment and inquiry. They couldn't deny the fact that Jiang Chen had identified the secrets of this place—the entrance and kill zones—almost flawlessly. In fact, there were many emperor realm cultivators who weren't sure if they could do the same in such a short amount of time. For a time, no objections were raised towards Jiang Chen joining their ranks.

The Prince of Shangping was all smiles. "It is great news to have Daoist Huang and his powerful consciousness in our ranks. I believe that no one will object to your participation anymore."

Jiang Chen looked calm and collected. He showed no excessive gratification towards the Prince of Shangping's praises.

"Alright, now that another person has joined our ranks, our plans will have an even higher chance of succeeding." The Prince of Shangping surveyed his surroundings once before saying, "Nothing can be done without some basic rules. If my calculations are correct, we can allow no more than five hundred people into the desolate wildlands. The situation will spiral out of hand if this number is exceeded."

"Five hundred? Isn't that number a little too small?" Someone asked.

"Yeah, tens of thousands of cultivators have journeyed to this place. If we allow only five hundred people to enter at a time, I'm sure that trouble will arise."

"Trouble?" The Prince of Shangping's face turned cold. "In the world of martial dao, the rules are set by the strong. Why have we come together as an alliance? It's because we wish to set the rules and maintain them so that others can't start any sort of trouble. If they do, then we'll stop them by force if we have to!"

"I support the Prince of Shangping. Those ants are all miserable wretches who won't leave the area unless we show them something to be fearful of."

"I support him as well. We have to play the role of the villain or else, if ten thousand people were to enter the desolate wildlands all at once, the situation would be uncontrollable. Even worse, we might be forced to clean up their shit."

"Yeah. If they were to accidentally upset some powerful beings, we would be dragged into their mess!"

"Godlike opponents aren't scary, but stupid teammates are the devil incarnate. We absolutely cannot allow those average wandering cultivators to enter the desolate wildlands."

The Prince of Shangping nodded, seeing that almost everyone was agreeing with his suggestion. "Then it is decided. The number of entrants shall be limited to five hundred people. There are about thirty

people here. If we are to bring our subordinates with us, the total number will reach about four hundred people. We will allow the powerful sage realm cultivators to fight for the remaining one hundred or so spots. By the time they finish fighting each other to the death, in their eyes we might not even be considered the villains in the end.”

“Yeah. Once we set the standard, they’ll do the killing all by themselves. We may not even need to do anything and have them fight each other for the spots.”

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded by the opinions that had been voiced. Although he also agreed with the sentiment of not opening the floodgates, he never once thought to plot against so many cultivators. It was becoming apparent that working together with these cultivators was a bad idea no matter how strong they were. If they could sacrifice others with so little regard at present, then they could sacrifice Jiang Chen just as easily during a critical moment in the foreseeable future. People like them were destined to be self-centered.

“Do you have anything else to add, Daoist Huang?” The Prince of Shangping seemed to utter this question on purpose.

Jiang Chen answered indifferently, “You set the rules. I just want a piece of the pie.”

The Prince of Shangping smiled, “We’re partners now, aren’t we? As a member of this alliance, it’s only natural that you contribute your strength as well, right? I just want to know if you’ll help us if we’re forced to suppress those wandering cultivators.”

It was an extremely tricky question. Jiang Chen shot the Prince of Shangping a glance, “You’re all experts, aren’t you? Do you even need someone at my level?”

His answer dissatisfied one of the alliance members. “Are you planning to reap all the profits and contribute nothing in return? There’s no such thing as a free lunch in this world, kid!”

“I’m strong enough to get in and out of the desolate wildlands. I doubt that your bite is as strong as your bark though,” Jiang Chen responded faintly.

Chapter 878: The Experts Set the Rules

Some rules were finally agreed upon after a series of incessant arguments. The first rule stated that every faction present was allowed to bring three subordinates with them. It didn’t matter if this faction was made of a lone cultivator, a pair, or a whole team. They all counted as one ‘faction’, and the number of subordinates allotted to each of them were the same. This particular rule was heavily debated for a very long time. In the end, there were more solo-wandering cultivators present than paired or grouped cultivators. Therefore, the minority had no choice but to concede to the majority.

Jiang Chen could understand the need for this rule. Those who came in groups already started off with an advantage in numbers. If they were allowed to bring even more subordinates with them, the difference in strength between cultivators who came in pairs or groups and cultivators who came alone would grow too big. It would skew the balance of power a little too much in favor of the larger groups. After all, this was not a friendly collaboration between brothers—everyone here was on guard against each other. No one wanted to see another’s power grow so large that it broke the balance. This

particular rule didn't bother Jiang Chen. Huang'er and Lin Yanyu would be using only two of the three allocated slots. Therefore, three slots were more than enough for him.

The second rule stated that the total number of entrants, inclusive of everyone present along with their subordinates, must not exceed five hundred people. Five hundred was the absolute limit. The third rule stated that everyone must put the rules into effect and that they could use force to enforce it if necessary.

The fourth rule stated that, after entering the desolate wildlands, everyone could choose to cooperate with each other or work alone if they so desired. The alliance wouldn't restrict anyone's choices.

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There were quite a few more major and minor rules that came after the fourth rule, but Jiang Chen didn't care much about them. He could imagine that the ordinary cultivators outside had no choice but to submit, since these rules were going to be enforced by so many emperor realm cultivators. There was no doubt about that at all. Out of all these rules, what really concerned him more was the fourth rule.

After entering the desolate wildlands, everyone could choose to cooperate with each other or work alone if they so desired. The alliance wouldn't restrict anyone's choices. There was an underlying meaning behind this rule. What the rule really meant was that they were no longer on the same side after they entered the desolate wildlands. Since they no longer shared any relationship with each other, anyone could fight another to the death if they both ran into something valuable. No action would be considered 'too foul'. In short, the law of the jungle applied after they went inside.

Jiang Chen understood this rule very well. The group dispersed after the rules were set. Just as Jiang Chen was about to make his way back to his territory, a magnetic voice suddenly rang from behind, "Please wait, Daoist Huang."

Jiang Chen might not have been present for long, but he had already grasped everyone's characteristics. He knew immediately who was calling out to him the moment he heard the voice. A cultivator dressed in a scholarly appearance walked swiftly towards Jiang Chen. His attire made him look more like a scholar who was rushing to the capital for the imperial exams than a cultivator. "May we speak somewhere privately, Daoist Huang?"

Jiang Chen remembered the fellow. His name was Lu Shinan, one of the few cultivators who didn't display any objections or hostility towards him. This didn't mean that Jiang Chen would let his guard down around this person, however. The two walked to a secluded corner before Lu Shinan smiled. "I am very impressed by the strength of your consciousness, Daoist Huang."

"You can save the pleasantries and get to the point, Daoist Lu."

Lu Shinan showed no anger towards Jiang Chen's interruption. He smiled, "There is indeed something that I would like to talk to you about."

"If I remember correctly, you and I share no relationship with one another, so what exactly do you wish to talk about?"

"We may have been strangers previously, but we can be friends later, can't we? You might have a bit of a hot temper, but I still find you more trustworthy than those devious fellows."

Jiang Chen didn't take this praise too seriously. After all, pretty words came at no cost.

"It's like this. I noticed that you were able to deal with Ole Feng Huan's ambush confidently earlier, so I'm guessing that your true strength is not weaker than us emperor realm cultivators. Why don't we join hands after we enter the desolate wildlands?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "You want an alliance? Give me a reason to trust you."

Lu Shinan said, "I came alone, so I'm sure those people will look down on me, and you even more so. If we don't ally with each other now, the moment we enter the desolate wildlands we will definitely become their first target. As the saying goes, misery loves company, so I thought that we should join hands and keep each other safe."

Jiang Chen had to admit that Lu Shinan's suggestion made a lot of sense. Unfortunately for him, Jiang Chen had no interest in allying with anyone right now. He couldn't trust a complete stranger either. "I'm sorry, but I have companions of my own already. Please find yourself another helping hand, Daoist Lu." Jiang Chen returned to his territory after turning down Lu Shinan's offer to work together.

He was away for only a short period time, but the number of cultivators outside had obviously increased. Huang'er looked around her with a bit of worry. "More and more people are starting to gather."

Jiang Chen let out a soft sigh. Their arrival was pointless, for they were destined to be barred from entry into the desolate wildlands. The alliance of emperors had already been formed, and the rules had already been made. "Don't worry," Jiang Chen patted Huang'er's hand softly. "Most of these people are just random bystanders. They don't qualify to enter the desolate wildlands anyways."

Huang'er looked curious, "Do you have news already?"

Jiang Chen nodded slightly and mentally transmitted everything to Huang'er. Although Huang'er found the moral character of these emperor realm experts to be a little disagreeable, she thought that the rules were quite sound. When she recalled the sight of many zealous cultivators continuously making their way towards the desolate wildlands, for some reason her instincts called out to her in warning. It made her slightly suspicious and worried about the situation at hand. However, she couldn't explain why she felt this way.

"The rules will be announced tomorrow morning. Let us wait until then."

Huang'er nodded thoughtfully and grabbed Jiang Chen's arms gently. The duo leaned closely against each other.

Even more wandering cultivators showed up overnight, and the space before the valley entrance grew noisier and even more crowded. When morning arrived, a sea of heads filled Jiang Chen's vision as he looked around. There were at least ten thousand people gathered outside the desolate wildlands now.

It was at this moment that Prince Shangping's disciple came over to invite Jiang Chen to a gathering once more. Every expert who had participated in yesterday's alliance meeting had gathered together in one place. The Prince of Shangping, the appointed leader of the alliance, stood on a higher elevation and forcefully spread his aura to the surroundings, pressing his palms downwards. He spoke resolutely, "Please be quiet, everyone!"

The mighty aura of an emperor realm cultivator surged into the surroundings like a storm. Powerful astral winds whipped out in every direction, as if enormous tidal waves had suddenly sprung into existence. Every cultivator within a thousand meters of the Prince of Shangping was knocked off balance by these winds. Some weaker cultivators even spat out blood and staggered on their feet. Jiang Chen knew that the Prince of Shangping was setting a forceful example with his display of strength.

“I would like to say a few things, everyone.” His tone was apathetic, but contained within his timbre was the unmistakable might of an expert. “I don’t care where you come from or what you plan to do inside the desolate wildlands. I simply want to say that the desolate wildlands isn’t a place where everyone can venture into.

“In order to secure everyone’s interest, the greatest experts of this place have gathered in a meeting and set up a few rules. I am now going to announce them to you all. Once the rules have been proclaimed, I hope that those who understand them will leave on their own accord. Those who do not may choose to stay, but will not be able to take a step further into the desolate wildlands. If you still wish to intrude into this forbidden land by force, then death is the only outcome!” Either way, they were going to play the villain’s role, so the Prince of Shangping spared neither pretenses nor pleasantries in his speech.

The moment he said this, the entire area was engulfed in an uproar.

“What?! Are my ears deceiving me? What rules, and who set them?”

“Yeah, who do you think you are? Do you think you’re the leaders of the entire human domain? Why should we obey the rules you’ve set?”

“F*ck you, we’re all wandering cultivators here, so why are you pretending to be all high and mighty?” These wandering cultivators were all brutish and rebellious fellows, so the first thought that came to their minds upon hearing this was that of immediate refusal. Even if they were only given their butts to use as heads, it was clear as day that these rules were disadvantageous for them. They knew that these so-called rules were just a way for the minority to protect their own interests and prevent others from taking a piece of the pie.

Several beams of light appeared from behind the Prince of Shangping right after the shouts cut through the air. The beams immediately pierced into the crowd as terrifying attacks that accurately pinpointed the loudest complainers, blasting them away. Bloodcurdling screams rang out at almost the same time as the withdrawal of these beams. The wandering cultivators who had just been jeering at the Prince of Shangping a moment prior vanished into thin air, leaving behind only pools of flesh and blood. This cruel scene caused the wandering cultivators who were surrounding the victims to turn pale and back away rapidly. None of them wanted to be caught within that terrible intent. The emperor realm cultivators behind the Prince of Shangping smiled apathetically. “Please continue.” The Prince of Shangping wore an equally expressionless face as he continued, “I will not repeat this twice. Anyone who dares interrupt me while I’m speaking will be met with the same fate as them.”

Those people had been killed to set an example. For a time, the scene was so quiet that even a falling pin could be heard. Every wandering cultivator appeared ashen-faced and frightened despite the anger they felt towards the unjustness of the rules. The might of an emperor realm cultivator was something that everyone here simply had to respect. But now, a whole group of them was standing in front. It was

obvious just how powerful and intimidating they were. Jiang Chen was inwardly dumbfounded by the scene that had just unfurled before him, but even he couldn't stop it from happening. *noVe-lb-In*

The Prince of Shangping swept his chilly gaze across the entire place before continuing, "The desolate wildlands have been a forbidden land since ancient times. Although news of its opening hasn't been publicly spread, there are still at least tens of thousands of people around here. If we allow everyone to go in at once, it is inevitable that the situation will dissolve into great chaos. Someone may even accidentally bring great trouble upon us. Therefore, we've decided to limit the number of entrants to five hundred people only. We have reserved three hundred of these slots, and we leave the remaining two hundred for you to choose amongst yourselves.

"Remember, don't complain about the rules, and don't try to cause trouble. If you're truly capable, then you'll naturally emerge as one of the qualified entrants. But if you aren't, then you'll die even if we allow you to enter the desolate wildlands. And of course, it should go without saying that we won't allow anyone useless to cheat their way into the place." His tone was as ruthless as cold steel. No one dared to refute his points.

Chapter 879: Entering the Desolate Wildlands

Not including the cultivators who were still streaming in, more than ten thousand people had already arrived. When they heard that only two hundred slots had been allocated to them, the atmosphere instantly turned very strange. Everyone was incensed, but no one dared to erupt first, because they all knew that if they lost control, they might become the focus of these emperor realm cultivators' aggression. They would be turned into the second batch of sacrifices, slaughtered to serve as an example to the others.

The Prince of Shangping's voice rang out again, "Those who have reached sage realm are qualified to enter. For those who have not, we will make further selections from those at the peak of origin realm. Once the two hundred slots have been filled, the selections will automatically end. If those who have not qualified don't leave at that time, we cannot guarantee your safety."

The sage realm threshold barred the paths of the majority of cultivators present.. After all, news regarding the desolate wildlands had yet to spread widely. Not many people were aware of its imminent opening. Any well-informed cultivator who knew of the news and wished to try their luck would already be here. When the sage realm cultivators heard this news, their initially rebellious mental states were immediately put to rest. When they put everything into careful consideration, this rule seemed beneficial to them. Comparing the entrance of five hundred people to the entrance of ten thousand people into the desolate wildlands, it was crystal clear which was more advantageous. Hence, every sage realm cultivator stood up one after another. Their attitudes had undergone a complete change, shifting in support of the Prince of Shangping and the other emperor realm cultivators. In this way, the tension hanging in the air dissipated further.

The cultivators in emperor realm were considered to be at the top of the food chain. They made the rules. As for the sage realm cultivators, they also stood near the top, exerting power over the rest. Both of these two parties supported the recently-established rules. On the other hand, the remaining people were all at the bottom of the food chain. Their hearts were completely unable to accept the situation at hand, but their thoughts were as fleeting as smoke—they had no say at all.

Since two hundred sage realm cultivators would be chosen out of the three to four hundred sage realm cultivators present, all of them thought their chances were rather high. Hence, there were no sage realm cultivators who rose to oppose this rule. Jiang Chen sighed internally. This plot was as clear as day but still extremely effective. The Prince of Shangping had thoroughly segregated those at the scene. As long as the sage realm cultivators were segregated, how could the remaining people have any say?

Truth be told, the cultivators who were below sage realm but had still hurried here regardless were really just jumping on the bandwagon. If they tried to enter the desolate wildlands, the endless mysterious fog alone would wipe out at least half of them. However, under the intense magnetic attraction of the treasures that might lie within the desolate wildlands, none of them could think straight. They trusted that honor and wealth lay amidst danger. Their chance for a breakthrough was right before their eyes. The ground inside must be littered with endless gold, ripe for the picking.

Whether these people agreed with the rules or not, the selection had begun regardless. It was very easy to single out two hundred people. Most of the people's positions could be decided based on strength alone. The remaining cultivators duked it out amongst themselves for the few spots left. After two hours, the two hundred spots had been completely filled. The two hundred people who had been chosen were beside themselves with excitement while every one of those who had failed were utterly dismayed. Their eyes flickered with silent thoughts of wanting to stir up trouble, but no one was brave enough to be the first person to act out.

After all, the ones who had created and benefited from the rules were undoubtedly superior when it came to their level of power. Even just those few emperor realm cultivators could absolutely massacre everyone else at the scene. After the selection, the Prince of Shangping said calmly, "One hour. The safety of those who have not left within an hour cannot be guaranteed."

This was both a warning and a threat. Some of the more timid cultivators sighed with despair but left unwillingly. With their weak cultivation levels, they knew that staying was pointless so they had no other choice. The minority of sage realm cultivators who had failed the selection were still somewhat hesitant. They had heard that each emperor realm cultivator could take three others with him into the desolate wildlands. Although these spots were tight, many of them were reluctant to part with this opportunity.

Jiang Chen had also helped in creating the rules. He left one of his spots for Huang'er and another for Lin Yanyu, much to the latter's immense delight. With his strength, there was a seventy to eighty percent chance that he would not have made it past the selections. "Daoist Huang, I really owe you greatly for this."

Jiang Chen smiled tranquilly. "You are deserving of this." n(-0)E1BIn

From Jiang Chen's perspective, Lin Yanyu had created this opportunity himself when he'd warned Jiang Chen about the existence of the alliance. Lin Yanyu chuckled before solemnly swearing to Jiang Chen, "Daoist Huang, I definitely won't drag you down."

Jiang Chen did not take this kind of posturing statement too seriously. Once they entered the desolate wildlands, Jiang Chen didn't even have full confidence in himself. Even if Lin Yanyu didn't drag him down, things might not be as easy as he was expecting them to be.

“Excuse me senior, may I ask if you have another spot? Can you sell it to me?” Suddenly, a sage realm cultivator shakily approached Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen shook his head indifferently, “Not interested.”

The only reason he was bringing Lin Yanyu was because he felt that the boy had some purpose. He could be used in the future. Jiang Chen had no interest at all in bringing anyone else with him. This wasn't some sightseeing trip. An additional unfamiliar face meant an additional potential source of danger. Another unknown factor. No matter how much money the other party might offer to him, Jiang Chen had zero interest. When that wandering cultivator saw how decisively Jiang Chen had rejected him, he seemed to grow a little afraid. He hurried away dejectedly without a single argument. After that, wandering cultivators turned up one by one to ask him for a spot, but Jiang Chen rejected them all.

The hour was soon to be up. The remaining wandering cultivators finally did not dare linger any longer and left the area with gloomy expressions. Although they clearly harbored resentment, they did not dare misbehave. After all, the Prince of Shangping's overbearing course of action had been sufficiently intimidating. Since he'd given them an hour leave the area, if they stayed past the time limit, death might just come knocking at their doorsteps. Even if gold grew from the ground in the desolate wildlands, it wasn't like they could collect it if they were dead. Worst case scenario, they could look for opportunities after these heavyweights had entered.

Even though the remaining cultivators were in the midst of leaving, they were unwilling to go too far away. They either stopped at a few dozen miles away or, for the more timid, at a few hundred miles. Clearly, they were unsatisfied with leaving in such a fashion. The Prince of Shangping and the rest did not seem too mindful of all this.

“Everyone, those that remain are the cream of the crop of this expedition. You will all receive the right to enter the desolate wildlands. However, I have a few ugly words that I must say beforehand. After we enter, every one of you must know your place. In particular, don't be too curious if you run into anything too strange or unique. Moreover, you must take special care not to alarm any powerful spirits in the wildlands. Refrain from coming into contact with anything that is obviously out of bounds. If you really stir up any major trouble, no one here can shoulder the consequences.”

Unexpectedly, the Prince of Shangping's words carried no trace of selfishness. Everything about the desolate wildlands was completely unknown. If one wished to enter an unfamiliar place to poke and pry around everywhere, one would die a very swift death indeed. If just a single person died, no one would mind. But if any sort of major trouble were to arise, everyone would suffer the same tragic repercussions. The people here had to be warned against such a possibility. Otherwise, if someone who wasn't aware of the consequences lost himself to greed in the wildlands for just an instant, it could spell disaster for everyone.

A chill ran through the listening audience. Even Jiang Chen found himself agreeing with the Prince of Shangping. There must be a reason behind why the desolate wildlands had been labelled as a forbidden area since the ancient era. Extra care had to be taken in a place where demons had been sealed.

The Prince of Shangping rattled off a few more rules that no one objected to. “Alright, that should be all. Everyone here is intelligent enough to understand the situation at hand, so I will not say too much. The gap in the seal will soon enlarge. When the time comes, all of us will attack together to force it wider.

Once we enter, we'll immediately seal the gap back up to prevent the remaining people from returning to this place."

This suggestion was met with even more approval. Since five hundred people had already been selected, they definitely couldn't let anyone else enter. The entrance of more people would only result in the reduction of everyone's benefits. This was something they all clearly understood. They did not have to wait long. Approximately two hours later, that gap started to expand at a speed visible to the naked eye. The surrounding air crackled with divine violet lightning that writhed through the air like dragons. Although it looked as violent as ever, the gap soon showed no further signs of expanding.

"Let's move!" With the sharp command from the Prince of Shangping, every cultivator readied their weapons and struck at the gap. Numerous streaks of light rays of various sizes collided uniformly with it. After a few dozen collisions, a gaping crack was finally opened where the gap had been. The restraining forces around the crack were like yin and yang, constantly threatening to fuse back together. But from the looks of things, the crack would not close for a good while.

"Go!" The Prince of Shangping took the lead as he rushed inside at lightning speed. Jiang Chen and Huang'er exchanged glances before they also dashed inside at similar speeds. Lin Yanyu felt his body being lifted as Jiang Chen grabbed him. Wind abruptly howled past his ears and he could barely open his eyes. Wisps of astral wind danced past his face. Claps of thunder assaulted his ears. In the span of a few breaths, the whistling of wind and rumbling of thunder finally stopped.

Lin Yanyu opened his eyes to find himself in an entirely new space. Ancient trees towered upwards towards the sky. Each was so wide that a few people were needed to encircle a single tree. The forest seemed to sprawl on beyond his field of vision. It was as if he had entered a world made for giants. The trees and vegetation that greeted him appeared at least twice as big as those in the outside world. Even Jiang Chen clicked his tongue in wonder at the view before him.

The Prince of Shangping raised his voice, "Don't be distracted by admiring the view. There'll be plenty of time for that later. Repair the formation first. The ones left outside have definitely not given up yet."

Everyone hurried to help out with these instructions. After repairing the gap, the Prince of Shangping applied a few more changes to it. His deep knowledge of formation techniques was evident. After roughly an hour, a new formation had completely taken shape.

"Even if we've repaired the gap, those who dare to take the risk can still enter. With my formation blocking this entrance, anyone who enters will die. They can forget about coming in." The Prince of Shangping smiled calmly as he surveyed the area around him. "This formation cost this prince over a million saint spirit stones. Don't you all think that you should show a little appreciation?"

He was demanding to be reimbursed! From what Jiang Chen could see, the Prince of Shangping was simply taking the initiative to extort the others. He had been silently observing this formation all along. It cost at most two hundred saint spirit stones and yet the moment the prince opened his mouth, its price had risen to a million. *How shady.*

Nonetheless, Jiang Chen didn't expose him. At any rate, when divided amongst everyone, this measly sum amounted to just twenty thousand saint spirit stones per person. This kind of small fee was a mere trifle to him. There was no need for him to offend the Prince of Shangping over such a minor issue. The

others seemed to agree that paying up such a fee was within their expectations. Moreover, twenty thousand saint spirit stones was nothing to those who had gathered there.

Chapter 880: Untouched Spirit Herbs All Over The Ground

After receiving the money, Prince of Shangping chuckled. "Alright. Since we've entered, all of you can either split up or travel as a group according to our previous agreement. Let me just remind you again that we have all struggled to gain access to this place. It would be best if there were no fatal conflicts. All of you will have a chance to obtain something from the desolate wildlands. Do not impose on others." His words flowed as gracefully as water. But of course, no one really believed him. Some present were privy to what Prince of Shangping was usually like. No matter what flowery language flowed from his lips, when they were truly faced with something valuable, he might be the first one to turn on a teammate.

Jiang Chen was clearly not interested in forming a group with others. In fact, before Prince of Shangping had even finished speaking, he had already shot Huang'er a meaningful glance and swiftly left the area with Lin Yanyu. After walking for a while, Lin Yanyu hastily asked, "Daoist Huang, why didn't you take the Eight Treasures Antidote?"

Jiang Chen snickered. "How do you know I didn't take it?"

Lin Yanyu laughed wryly. "This Eight Treasures Antidote has a very strong smell. There will be a kind of odor fifteen minutes after you consume it. You'll know it the moment you smell it."

Jiang Chen laughed. "Let's go. We'll be fine without the Eight Treasures Antidote."

Words of advice remained on Lin Yanyu's tongue but Jiang Chen and Huang'er had already hastened their steps, shooting ahead at a lightning pace. Lin Yanyu hurried after them. However, their speed was completely off the charts. It took all his energy just to trail weakly after them.

"Wait for me, Daoist Huang!" Entering this strange new world had eaten away at Lin Yanyu's confidence. After a short while, the various parties that had entered the desolate wildlands had scattered like five hundred carps in a mighty river. Not even a ripple was left to be seen. Indeed, the desolate wildlands were vast to the extent that even five million humans would achieve the same effect. The sheer scale of the wildlands dwarfed even the human domain by more than ten times.

A short fifteen minutes later, there was no one left at the entrance. However, a moment later, a silhouette suddenly reappeared. The figure glanced around before they swiftly retrieved something with a hand and tossed it violently at the flags that marked Prince of Shangping's formation.

Booom! A series of rumbling explosions rapidly destroyed the formation base. The moment the base was destroyed, the formation was completely ineffective. After this person blew up Prince of Shangping's formation, they expanded their consciousness, retrieved more treasures and smashed them repeatedly against the gap on the outer boundary.

The gap that had previously been repaired was quickly replaced by another giant crack. Then, the figure stood to examine his handiwork for a split second before vanishing instantly. After about an hour, the cultivators who had originally left the scene wandered back to the valley entrance one after another. The hope in their hearts had not yet been extinguished. The valley entrance was deserted. These

returning wandering cultivators approached with utmost care, afraid that Prince of Shangping and the rest would pop up suddenly to massacre them all. With a quick glance, they discovered that the restrictive gap had already been cracked open and those five hundred people had already entered the wildlands.

“Damn it, they went inside but we’re not allowed to? On what basis?! We’ll go in after them. Who’s with me?!”

“What’s there to be scared of? The worst that can happen is that we’ll die. But if we don’t, we’ll be set for life! Let’s go.”

“Wait a moment. Don’t you see that this gap is a little suspicious? If they already entered, why haven’t they repaired it? I don’t trust this. There might be a trap waiting for us inside.” Many people grew alert at these words.

However, there were still the fearless ones who shouted, “The hell is a trap? All of them entered because they want to get rich. Who will be so free as to set such a trap? You think they’re really working together? In the end, aren’t they still a bunch of backstabbing, selfish bastards?!”

“Right! Let’s go and take a look. Even if there is a formation, there’re so many of us that we should be able to shatter it.”

“Not necessarily. We’re all familiar with Prince of Shangping. His skill in formations is truly abnormal. If he set a formation inside and we rush in carelessly, then the only fate that’ll await us is death.”

“Scram if you’re not going! Stop dumping cold water on the rest of us. If you’re a man, then let’s break in together!”

“That’s right. We’ll go together! Whoever’s left behind is a bastard. If we die, we die together. If we make it rich, we make it together.” More and more people gathered at the valley entrance. A bunch of firstcomers had already agreed that upon their shout, everyone would rush towards the gap.

The first batch entered, then a second, a third... Quite a while later, batch by batch, there were at least another twenty to thirty groups who entered. With the exception of those who had not dared to return, these cultivators who had initially left all made their way into the wildlands. Those inside, Jiang Chen included, remained in blissful ignorance of what was happening at the entrance.

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Jiang Chen and Huang’er stopped at a fork in the road, waiting for the heavily panting Lin Yanyu to catch up.

“Daoist Lin, this is where we’ll part ways. Let’s meet up in seven days. Whoever arrives first will wait here, but only for three days. If we still haven’t met up by then, just leave.”

Lin Yanyu had just caught up to them before he heard the news that they were splitting up. He couldn’t help but become dispirited, “Daoist Huang, this junior is sincere about following you...”

“We need to handle some important matters. It’s dangerous. There’s no need for you to take the risk. Moreover, you’re not suitable for the job.” Jiang Chen got straight to the point without beating around the bush.

Lin Yanyu was a little dejected. But after considering things, he still nodded. "That's fine then. I'll be back after seven days. Daoist Huang, I wish you a smooth trip."

"Take care." Jiang Chen believed that a seasoned cultivator like Lin Yanyu would definitely have his own means of survival. Otherwise, he wouldn't dare to enter the desolate wildlands so rashly. Hence, he was relatively unconcerned about Lin Yanyu's wellbeing. To tell the truth, they were still mere acquaintances. If the boy's fortune was truly so scant that he could not surpass this obstacle, then it was also impossible for him to stay by the boy's side as a nanny. That wasn't realistic.

After splitting ways with Lin Yanyu, Jiang Chen and Huang'er followed the map left to them by He Hongshu. They travelled relatively undisturbed along the designated path.

"Huang'er, take this pill." Jiang Chen retrieved two pills, swallowing one before handing the other to Huang'er. He had personally handcrafted these pills as a precaution against the Wood Demon Parasites. Every single one of the ingredients that had gone into this pill was intended to repel the parasites. Moreover, he had integrated Dragonwhisker Water, an excellent defensive measure against the parasites. At least, taking this medicine could prevent a sudden assault of the Wood Demon Parasites.

Although he didn't know how He Hongshu had been attacked by the Wood Demon Parasites, nor did he know where that man had been targeted, Jiang Chen followed the principle of 'it pays to be cautious'. Taking precautionary measures was definitely necessary. After taking the pill, the two people sat down to refine it for a while before they continued on their way.

The greenery in the desolate wildlands was very lush. Vegetation covered every surface, leaving no clear trace of a trail. This was not unusual. Tens of thousands of years had passed without human intrusion. Naturally, there wouldn't exist any kind of pathway. At any rate, with a map in hand, Jiang Chen wasn't too worried about getting lost.

"Brother Chen, look! Over there." Huang'er suddenly pointed at something.

Jiang Chen looked along the length of her arm before he spotted a stalk of spirit herb. Twice as big as an ordinary spirit herb, it appeared extremely sturdy, filled with exuberant vitality. His eyes flashed as he rushed over and circled this spirit herb twice. After examining it, he spoke in an awed voice, "This is... a sky rank spirit herb!"

Huang'er nodded. Her appraisal ability wasn't bad. She could naturally distinguish sky rank spirit herbs. Only great emperors were qualified to use them. Even the empyrean experts on the Myriad Abyss Island mostly only used sky rank spirit herbs. After all, anything above sky rank could be classified as divine rank, true items fit for the gods. It was immensely difficult to a divine rank spirit herb. Even the Myriad Abyss Island didn't possess many of them. Although they did exist there, it wasn't to an extent that they could be thoughtlessly used by any person. This was why Huang'er was so shocked to encounter one in this place.

Jiang Chen surveyed his surroundings, ascertaining that there were no signs of danger. However, his instincts were screaming at him to leave this stalk of spirit herb alone. He lingered for a split second before he grabbed Huang'er's hand. Gritting his teeth, he said, "Let's go."

Huang'er seemed a little startled that Jiang Chen was not harvesting this herb. She shot him an astonished glance.

“Trust me, there’s definitely something wrong here. My instincts are very rarely wrong. If I remove it, there’ll definitely be trouble brewing on the horizon.” Jiang Chen wasn’t really afraid. But he did not want to stir up any unnecessary ruckus before they found the Requiem Wood. When Huang’er heard his words, she nodded. She was a woman who didn’t think much of material goods in the first place, and was indifferent to fame or gain. As someone who possessed a vast repertoire of knowledge, she pondered briefly upon listening to Jiang Chen and came to a similar conclusion that this seemed rather strange. Hadn’t they just entered the desolate wildlands? If they were to be able to find sky rank spirit herbs a mere five hundred miles in, then the desolate wildlands must be too abundant with priceless treasures. If that was the case, it’d be much more attractive than the Myriad Abyss Island.

Along the way, the two of them ran into various kinds of spirit herbs of both earth and sky rank. Nonetheless, Jiang Chen refused to gather them and staunchly ignored the possibility of gathering the later stalks. He resolutely quashed any tendrils of greed. Whether it was sky or earth rank spirit herbs, he was certainly not lacking in them. The only thing he needed right now was the Requiem Wood.

When Jiang Chen and Huang’er’s silhouettes disappeared into the distance, a tremor suddenly ran through that stalk of sky rank spirit herbs before it began to glow with a bizarre emerald light. These emerald rays of light slowly coalesced a ghostly figure. It flickered in and out of sight, sometimes solid, sometimes an illusion, giving off an ephemeral sensation. The figure clicked his tongue. “Tsk tsk. A human cultivator actually resisted the temptation of sky rank spirit herbs? Could it be that my transformation wasn’t realistic enough?”

That ghostly figure wavered abruptly, dissolving into an emerald tinted breeze and vanishing where it had stood. Amidst the endless desolate wildlands, its movements appeared incredibly bizarre. Jiang Chen and Huang’er remained unaware of what happened behind them. Their goal was very clear: the Requiem Wood.

The two of them continued to pick up their pace. Then, while they travelled, they suddenly heard an unusual voice travel from the undergrowth beside them. Unexpectedly, Jiang Chen stopped in his footsteps. His God’s Eye shone a beam of golden light towards the source of the voice.

“Eh? Why is it them?” Jiang Chen’s gaze penetrated the vegetation and landed on five figures. It was the Ghost Cave Five! These five guys had previously passed the selection and somehow snuck into the valley as well.

When the Ghost Cave Five brushed away the bushes to see Jiang Chen and Huang’er, their expressions were somewhat embarrassed. The one-eyed man who led the group chuckled awkwardly, “Ah, it’s you, senior.”

Senior? When Jiang Chen heard this, he couldn’t help but laugh silently. This Ghost Cave Five really knew how to grovel! Previously, they had called him “brat” the moment they opened their mouths. And now, he’d suddenly risen to the rank of senior?