

Three Realms 881

Chapter 881: Bone Apparitions

Despite the five's change in honorific, Jiang Chen didn't let down his guard. "You guys are pretty fast, huh," he snickered. "Stay away from me if you don't want to get beat up again."

He had no interest in wasting words on them. The five bowed in simpering embarrassment. The one-eyed man nodded several times. "Yes, yes, senior, we shall leave immediately. But we do have one word of advice for you. Don't go west. It's a little dangerous there."

"What kind of danger is there?" Jiang Chen frowned.

"We didn't quite find out ourselves, but we saw the Prince of Shangping head in that direction. It looked like he was setting a formation to ambush someone. There must be something good there." The one-eyed boss wanted to make a good impression.

"Prince of Shangping?" Jiang Chen was not surprised at all. The prince's facade of an honorable appearance could trick normal people, but Jiang Chen hadn't believed a word he said. Jiang Chen looked back at the Ghost Cave Five, sneering with the corner of his mouth. He didn't trust this group either. Something good? Prince of Shangping? Jiang Chen had no interest in them whatsoever, and wouldn't even think about it. He was heading west, and he wasn't about to be stopped by a few words from the Five.

"You should hurry up and leave. Don't show yourselves in front of me any longer." Sneering, Jiang Chen glanced at them a final time before flying away with Huang'er.

"Hold on!" the one-eyed man shouted. "Don't you wanna know something about the friend who sold you pills, Daoist Huang?"

Jiang Chen halted in his steps, coldly gazing at the one-eyed man. "What do you mean?"

The one-eyed man chuckled. "Finally, something you're interested in."

"Speak up. If you lie, I don't mind cutting you down where you stand." Jiang Chen's face darkened.

"You can kill us, but your friend will die for sure," the one-eyed man laughed strangely.

"Get on with it," Jiang Chen frowned.

"Five million saint spirit stones," the one-eyed man interjected suddenly.

Jiang Chen's look was chilly. "I'll give you ten, but if you give me fake news, you're dead."

The one-eyed man cackled. "I can make a heavenly oath. If I'm lying 'bout it and it's not related to that guy at all, then let us all die in the wilderness."

Jiang Chen was very surprised at how readily the oath was made, enough to leave him momentarily astonished. He was under the impression that the one-eyed man was bluffing, but the latter's oath made him think otherwise. He had to treat the matter more seriously. In the world of martial dao, a heavenly oath wasn't something to be trifled with for anyone. Anyone who did only did a disservice to

themselves. Moreover, there were no loopholes in such an oath. The one-eyed man was clearly set on this matter.

"Lead the way." Jiang Chen felt many emotions well up in his heart. He frowned, unable to pinpoint the key. Though the one-eyed man's oath was surety enough, Jiang Chen still suspected something afoot with the situation.

Why had the Ghost Cave Five reappeared so suddenly, and with such relevant news of Lin Yanyu? It was only a few hours since Jiang Chen's departure from the youth. What could have happened in such a short span of time for them to bear convenient witness? That they were able to reach him and Huang'er at all to inform them of this was yet another coincidence. Even if there was a scheme afoot, it was difficult to execute with such perfection.

"Where did you see him last?" Jiang Chen asked suddenly.

"You'll know when you come with us," the one-eyed man smirked. "We won't say before we get the money. Don't ask us anymore, senior."

"How is he now?"

"Very dangerous. Trapped by some kinda man-shaped plant 'n can't get free. I'd guess he can't resist it for much longer. If you're slow, there won't be much of him left."

Nodding slightly, Jiang Chen decided to stop asking any more questions. He took a few more steps before sniffing at the air, remembering something crucial. "Do you people not have a conscience at all? He sold the Eight Treasures Antidote to you, and you're taking money for news of him?"

"Heh heh, we cultivators who live on the edge only care about money. Even if he gave us pills, we still wouldn't do it for free."

"You still have the pill?" Jiang Chen asked suddenly.

The one-eyed man paused, then grinned. "Ate it already."

"How'd it taste?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

The one-eyed man squinted at Jiang Chen. "What kinda taste could a pill have? It's whatever, right. Nothing special." He gave an off-handed reply. The one-eyed man seemed to realize that Jiang Chen was trying to trick him, and stopped giving away further info. Stopping in his tracks, Jiang Chen allowed the hint of a smile to fade away from the corner of his mouth. A cold, murderous intent replaced it.

"What?" The one-eyed man frowned. "No way you're unsure about anything after our oath, right? But if you aren't going, nothing I can do."

Jiang Chen nodded. "There's no need for that. We can stop here."

"Here? What for?" The one-eyed man couldn't understand.

"Here, I'll send you off to a place where all of you belong." With a flurry of hand signs, Jiang Chen drew the Ghost Cave Five into a freshly-activated formation. The surroundings were instantly filled with magma. Countless volcanoes ringed them in the sweltering heat.

"What... what're you playing at?" The one-eyed man was genuinely panicked.

Looking directly at the one-eyed man, Jiang Chen enunciated each word clearly. "You disguised yourselves well, so well that I almost couldn't tell the difference. If you had hid your putrid air a little better, if you could point out the slightly pungent scent of the Eight Treasures Antidote, then your act would've been perfect. What a shame... you're just a bit off."

Huang'er's pretty eyes spun upwards, her mind moving with them. When Lin Yanyu told them to use the Eight Treasures Antidote, he said that there would be a pungent scent that was easily distinguishable within fifteen minutes or so of consumption. Yet, none of the Ghost Cave Five had mentioned this detail. She inspected the five with renewed interest. Simultaneously, she was secretly impressed by Jiang Chen's alacrity. His seemingly thoughtless questions were filled with hidden depth. He'd found holes in their story with only a few words.

Putrid air? Her expression became more wary. Jiang Chen, on the other hand, had already leaped to action. With a turn of the Featherflight Mirror, one ray of light split into five, scattering themselves towards the Ghost Cave Five. Beneath the light's radiance, Jiang Chen summoned the magnetic golden mountain. Its shimmering peaks and ridges bore down from above like a divine apparition, descending with a weighty rumble. The light from the mirror, the scorching heat, and the pressure of the mountain caused the Ghost Cave Five crack open. Their bodies shifted and morphed. Suddenly, the five screamed in unison, their bodies splitting open in a flash of black light. Their bodies had turned to piles of bone. The bones seemed to have life of their own, and endlessly struggled against the weight of the Goldmount. However, their strengths were hopelessly unmatched.

"Die." Jiang Chen pressed down with his palm.

Boom! With a flash of golden light, the crushing weight of the mountain pulverized the bones into dust. There was a resounding shriek within the formation, dissipating only after a long time. If he hadn't been a martial cultivator with a wealth of experience, the mere sound of the shriek would have struck fear into his own bones.

Huang'er looked on at the scene with alarm. "They're not the Ghost Cave Five?"

"I was almost fooled," Jiang Chen shook his head. "They're not the Ghost Cave Five, but ghostly apparitions. The transformation of bone is a method that belongs to the demon race..." He was very grave. It hadn't taken long at all for them to encounter the demon race, and not even a Wood Demon, at that. Bone apparitions certainly wasn't theirs.

From the evidence, the Wood Demons weren't the only demon race in the desolate wildlands. There were other branch races as well. It complicated Jiang Chen's feelings on the matter. There had always been legends about the demon race in the human domain. Even Emperor Peafowl had kept tabs on them. He'd been able to detect traces of their imminent return to the world with his All-Seeing Eyes. Despite the various indicators, Jiang Chen hadn't thought it would be this soon. It seemed now that the emperor hadn't been needlessly pessimistic. Rather, Jiang Chen and every other cultivator of the human domain had been too optimistic. In fact, most in the human domain were numb to this threat. Though there was a latent danger, they didn't want to face it head on because of their natural fear of the demon race.

"No wonder they made a heavenly oath as soon as they spoke," Huang'er murmured. "They weren't actually the Ghost Cave Five, after all."

"Yes, that was the genius part about their plans." Jiang Chen was relieved after the fact as well. When it came to situations like this, he only had instinct to rely on. He only found flaws in their story after slowly digging for them. Without the cleverness of his ruse, it was impossible to tell they were false. However, Jiang Chen recalled yet another thing. Clearly Huang'er did as well, because their faces colored at the same time.

"They didn't know the details about the Eight Treasures Antidote, but they did about the things that happened outside the valley." Jiang Chen was very pale. "That must mean the demon race had allies in the group outside. Their communications are certainly very advanced. Even their bone apparitions had such detailed knowledge. It was difficult to notice anything out of place."

They both became rather tense when they considered the underlying problems. The demon race, possible traitors, the wildlands... All of this contributed to a growing sense of unease.

"At least they didn't know anything about the happenings after we came in. This shows that Lin Yanyu isn't one of their guys, at least," Huang'er supplied. Jiang Chen agreed. If Lin Yanyu was an ally of the demon race, there would have been no need for him to reveal the Eight Treasures Antidote's distinctive trait. The tidbit of info about the pungent scent had come straight from the youth's mouth.

"Then who is the undercover agent here?" The other cultivators' faces flashed across Jiang Chen's mind one by one. He didn't have a clue. None of them looked like nice people, but working for the demon race? There was no evidence of that whatsoever.

Chapter 882: The Shadow Demon King

Luckily, the bone apparitions hadn't been that strong. They'd been on par with the Ghost Cave Five. Select recent events had put Jiang Chen on edge. It looked like demons had indeed permeated the desolate wildlands.

"With the demon race resurfacing, repeating the calamity of ancient times seems unavoidable. They are back with a vengeance." Any other cultivator would have a natural fear of demons. Jiang Chen was different. Demons were fearsome because they were alien for the continent. They came and went like shadows. But he knew of both the race's advantages and disadvantages from his previous life. Though the demons were one of the stronger races within the heavenly planes, they were not invincible.

"Of the five hundred entering this time, I wonder how many will return alive?" A trace of worry flew across Jiang Chen's heart. He had no emotional attachment to these people, the demon race was the true threat. Once their claws and fangs reached outside the wildlands, there would be great calamity for the human domain.

"Ideally, there are people wise enough to make early preparations against them." Jiang Chen could only hope to himself that it was the case. He didn't dally after destroying the five bone apparitions, but kept going forward with Huang'er. Both of them were more cautious on the way.

"Brother Chen, did the demon race intentionally spread news of the Requiem Wood?" Huang'er couldn't help but ask. Jiang Chen had considered the possibility as well. However, he'd seen a leaf from the wood

with his own eyes. It was definitely real. Moreover, its freshness meant that it had been plucked from the tree not long ago. Thus, perhaps the Requiem Wood was a trap, but it certainly did exist. He couldn't just back down from the situation, despite the risks.

"The Requiem Wood is definitely around here somewhere. You're right that it could be the demons' trap, but we still have to go. This is our only chance. So what if it is? We're no stranger to beasts' lairs. Remember Tai-ah City and the Eternal Celestial Capital's trap there, when they claimed they'd captured Regal Pill palace head?" Jiang Chen wasn't scared of traps. Not finding the Requiem Wood was a bigger concern. As long as it was found, he wouldn't bat an eyelash at any trials and tribulations required to obtain it, regardless of their severity.

.....

In the depths of the wildlands, ghostly wisps glittered within a secluded karst cave underground. Their eerie radiance shone like stars in the night sky, motes floating like fireflies in half-light. A shadow scurried into the cavern. "My liege, I've finished the mission." It knelt towards the darkness at the end of the passage.

A cold voice harrumphed softly in the gloom. "How many people have come in?"

"The first wave is five hundred. The opening is quite wide now, so at least ten thousand more are behind them. More should trickle in as time goes on... I estimate the final figure to be twenty to thirty thousand."

"...Are there cattle for the slaughter?"

"Fifteen or twenty emperor realm cultivators."

"Not bad, not bad." The demon king cackled chillingly. "You've done well, and deserve to be rewarded for your effort. When they are all dead, you shall be given a tenth of their wealth. The remainder will be placed in the treasury to fund our future war efforts."

"Thank you, my liege!" The person sounded overjoyed.

"I give only what you deserve. However, your mission is not yet complete. There are too many emperor realm cultivators even for an appetite as great as mine. Only through home field advantage can I take all of them out individually. I require your further assistance in this matter."

"Of course, my liege. I will do everything I can."

"Good. There is one more thing, pay attention to the Wood Demons. Their interest in this prey is as strong as ours. Even both clans are demons, there is still competition among different branches. Since we Shadow Demons have awakened earlier, there is no reason not to take advantage of this opportunity. The Shadow Demons were not one of the more prominent in the ancient times. I hope to change that, and gain a stronger influence through our achievements in the second holy war."

"My liege, there is no need to worry. Your servant will pay close attention. As you say, Wood Demon parasites are hard to defend against. I see many cultivators who are unknowingly infected with them. They have a clear advantage when the parasites widespread."

"Advantage?" The king of the Shadow Demons sneered. "You've only scratched the surface of their capabilities. Wood Demons are fairly strong, but not much more than us Shadow Demons. Their parasites do reproduce and spread quickly, but once someone figures out how to deal with them, their advantage is rendered null."

"One can deal with parasites?"

"Obviously. Wood Demons would have long taken over the heavenly planes otherwise. However, spreading parasites is only one of their methods. What's truly terrifying about them is their pervasive use of poison. Moreover, they're a very intuitive race with high degrees of comprehension. Wood Demon geniuses often rise beyond all ten of the demon races. In warfare, it is more likely for top-ranked experts to be Wood Demons than compared to every other race, so much so that they're comparable to Celestial Demons."

"...Celestial Demons?" The person blanked.

The Shadow Demon King audibly exhaled in disgust. "You don't need to know more about these things. Do your job. Remember, it doesn't matter who you were previously... now that you've joined with us, you better not have second thoughts. Otherwise, I'll make you regret you were born into this world."

"Quite, quite, my liege." The person rushed to express their loyalty. "Your servant is completely faithful to you. My only hope is to do work for you, that I might have for a good future when the demon race takes over the world. I couldn't possibly have other thoughts. The only thing on my mind is my lord's wish."

"If that's really what you think, then that's fine." The demon king snorted. "Go, carry out the next stage in our plans."

"Yes." The person made to leave.

"Hold on," the demon king suddenly called out. His consciousness was moved by something.

"What is it?" The person stopped in his footsteps.

"Someone destroyed five of my bone apparitions. More importantly, their identities were discovered!" The demon king's voice had a hint of anger.

"Discovered?" The person was surprised. "By whom?"

Bone apparitions were controlled directly by the Shadow Demon King, and moved at his command. He scanned his thoughts for the relevant memories. "A cultivator surnamed Huang and his partner. What background do they have?"

The person's body shook a little when he heard. "It's them? Then there should be another, no?"

"Only two."

"Maybe they split up?" The person muttered to himself.

The demon king was quite upset at having lost five apparitions. "So, what do you know about them?"

The person grimaced. "That fellow's pretty odd. I only know that his last name is Huang, and nothing else. I will say though that he's very arrogant. I don't believe that he's emperor realm even, but he is definitely strong. Even the Prince of Shangping is a little wary of him. My best guess is that he's a great disciple of a big sect or faction, but he's hiding his identity."

"I don't care what big sect or faction he's from. He has to pay for destroying my bone apparitions. His strength only makes him more valuable!" The demon king wore a bizarrely eerie smile.

"My liege can rest easy. That kid doesn't know two things about the world. He'll be right under your finger as soon as he enters your territory."

"Hmph! Lure some people here first. If I am to assume a physical form, I still need a bit more essence from cultivators. It's best if you can get a strong emperor realm cultivator to come. The stronger the body, the better. I shall... temporarily... borrow his body."

"Then let's pick that prince. He's pretty strong, and he practices some kind of body-tempering art as well."

"A fine choice." The demon king cackled once more.

.....

"Your Highness, we haven't done much since we entered the wildlands. There are so many earth rank and sky rank spirit herbs we've missed, all because we're chasing after that Huang brat... is it really worth it?" The one who asked this was a cultivator dressed like a retainer. He was halfway to emperor realm, and a force to be reckoned with.

He was speaking to the Prince of Shangping, who merely smiled. "Sky rank herbs, earth rank herbs... they are only illusions. As a master of the arts of the eye, I'm not fooled by such trifles. You shouldn't be, either."

"Illusion?!" The retainer gasped.

"Even if they aren't, there will certainly be many traps." The prince sounded like all was within his grasp.

"What's so worthwhile about pursuing the Huang brat, though?"

The prince faintly smiled. "Ole Shen, you've been with me for many years. Do you think a cultivator like you would act with such impudence in front of true emperor realm cultivators?" "This subordinate wouldn't dare."

"If even you wouldn't dare, but that brat would as a sage realm cultivator... do you think he's just puffed up? Or do you think he has good reason to be that way?"

"I, er, I can't really tell." The retainer laughed, a little lost.

"You can't tell because you haven't studied the arts of the eye. Though I can't completely tell either, I know that his arrogance is likely an intentional pretense. His confidence isn't, however. When Ole Feng Heng snuck up on him, the kid slowed down the speed of the old man's needles with a flourish of his sleeves. He must have some powerful treasure hidden in there that can slow attacks down. I estimate

that he's a great disciple of some strong sect, and carries many treasures on his person. If we can take them for our own, then we'll be able to do as we like here in the wildlands."

"A great disciple of a big sect?" The retainer was shocked.

"Yes! But now that he's in the wildlands, it doesn't matter who he is anymore. Ole Shen, remember, never underestimate him if you meet him in person."

"Thank you for your advice, Your Highness. I will exert my full strength to help you crush him."

The Prince of Shangping showed a winning smile. "Let's go. I already sense that he's not far from here. Make sure to kill him in one blow. Don't give him any opportunities to turn the tables."

Chapter 883: A Mint Ginseng

A vast and roaring river stretched horizontally before Jiang Chen and Huang'er. There had originally been a bridge crossing the river. But the bridge had fallen into severe disrepair with the passage of time. Vegetation grew rampantly around the broken bridge, protruding from the river like pillars of coral reef.

"We've reached the river," Jiang Chen was delighted. "Our destination lies just beyond the other bank."

Huang'er also examined the map. This river had been clearly marked out. Once they crossed the river and passed by a few more areas, they would reach the place that He Hongshu had indicated where the Requiem Wood lay. "According to He Hongshu, there are some aggressive spirits residing in the river, but they aren't very strong."

This place hadn't been unearthed at all from ancient times until now. Just the natural spiritual energy suffusing this place would be enough to birth various powerful spirits. Without the interference of the outside world, even a plant with some degree of natural aptitude could become a spirit being, developing into a sentient lifeform. The two of them had refined the Golden Cicada bloodline and simultaneously called on the power of the Golden Cicada wings, leaping towards the opposing riverbank.

Although He Hongshu had given them this information, Jiang Chen didn't rely entirely on the other's experience. He continued to be on his guard as he crossed the river. That was then and this was now. When He Hongshu had crossed the river, he might have been lucky enough to be disrupted by only a few small spirits. However, the rapid currents of this wide river were inky green. They obscured the riverbase like the currents of a vast ocean, giving people an unfathomable feeling. It wouldn't be surprising that some powerful spirit was lurking in the depths. Caution was the parent of safety. Even when he approached the opposite bank, Jiang Chen did not lower his guard lest he fail in the face of success. It had to be said that his instincts were quite strong.

When the two had flown across the center of the river, something unexpected suddenly appeared from a piece of the shattered bridge. Without warning, what had originally been nothing but a swathe of innocent vegetation abruptly spewed jet after jet of green-colored fog. Amidst the fog, a tentacle covered with countless green warts writhed into the air towards them like an enormous green python. The green fog actually carried some kind of mysterious power. It had powerful swathes of restraining energy that instantly reduced the speed of Jiang Chen and Huang'er's wings. Like flowers scattered from the sky, that tumor-like tentacle instantly sealed off the space within a hundred meters around it.

Jiang Chen smiled in cold rage. These tentacles were comparable to his Lotus of Fire and Ice. In the second it took to think, the Lotus of Fire and Ice on him had already been unleashed. The vines of countless lotuses violently lashed out towards those tumor-like tentacles. Simple and direct! Ever since Jiang Chen had nurtured the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, its form had evolved continuously. Its speed of evolution was still full speed ahead. As of today, even a random prompt by Jiang Chen would cause hundreds of vines to completely immobilize the tumor-like tentacles.

Immense flower petals lunged towards those tentacles like the gaping maw of a beast. At the same time, Jiang Chen and Huang'er unleashed their techniques, sweeping away the green smoke that crept towards them. The two people moved with urgency, swiftly dashing higher into the clouds. In the face of adversity, the brave prevail. The Bewitching Lotus of Ice and Fire truly deserved its status as a sky rank spirit creature. These terrifying tentacles had initially been a cultivator's worst nightmare. But the petals of the lotus closed around them like an enormous mouth and slurped them up like a bowl of noodles. No matter how the tentacles struggled, they could not break free.

Awwoooo! Suddenly, the bridge split in two with a loud rumble. A green monster emerged, its entire body covered with green patterns that looked like eyes. The ends of those tumor-like tentacles just so happened to be attached to these patterns.

"What kind of monster is this?" Huang'er frowned. As expected, the desolate wildlands was truly a bizarre place. Such a hideous monster had actually managed to conceal itself in the vegetation so that even Jiang Chen had not detected its presence!

With a sweep of his God's Eye, Jiang Chen spotted its limitation. "Look at its main body. Doesn't it look like a mint ginseng?"

The mint ginseng was a kind of spirit herb. Huang'er had also heard of this. Upon closer inspection, its main body really resembled the fabled mint ginseng. However, the size of that spirit herb was only supposed to be that of an infant. This monster was well over eighty feet long and twenty feet wide. It was definitely a mint ginseng that had been magnified a few hundred times. Moreover, the mint ginseng might be a kind of spirit herb, but it couldn't possibly be sentient!

"That thing must have been nurtured here for ten thousand years, to the extent that its physical form changed and it developed a consciousness. It's become a sentient lifeform!" Jiang Chen exclaimed upon seeing this. Nonetheless, even if this mint ginseng had developed sentience, it still posed no big threat to Jiang Chen. Moreover, the guy seemed to have just gained its consciousness. Its attacks might be powerful, but they lacked cunning. Spewing poison fog, using toxic tentacles to sweep things away... These attacks might be sufficiently fatal for any ordinary cultivator. But Jiang Chen was not one of them.

As they spoke, that mint ginseng's tentacles were being continuously engulfed by the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, eliciting screeching howls. Clearly, this newly-born creature that had just developed consciousness was just like a small child. It wailed and cried whenever it suffered. The devouring ability of the Lotus was extremely strong. Soon enough, the bottom part of the monster would be swallowed. After that, the main body of this mint ginseng would then be cut apart by the lotus. It would be destroyed.

When Huang'er heard the mint ginseng's howls of pain and saw it writhe around in agony, she couldn't help but feel sorry for it. "Brother Chen, it should be a newborn lifeform, just like a baby. Perhaps, you should capture it instead?" She was innately soft-hearted.

When Jiang Chen heard the girl's words, he immediately prompted the lotus to stop. An ordinary person might truly be baffled by how he could communicate with this mint ginseng. But Jiang Chen had been fluent in numerous languages in his previous life. He understood the speech of ancient beasts and somewhat knew the languages of various spirit races.

"I see that developing a consciousness was not easy for you. Perhaps you'd be willing to accept me as your master?" Jiang Chen used the language of the spirit races to converse with the mint ginseng.

The mint ginseng had just been born. It was just like a small child being bullied by a stronger person. Since it had no parents to tattle to, raising its hands in surrender was its instinct.

"I am, I am, just don't kill me!" The foremost instinct of any sentient life form was putting its survival above everything else. The human race was like that, as was the demon race and any other race.

Although it had already surrendered, Jiang Chen did not let down his guard. A ray of consciousness surged into the mint ginseng's form. "Since you've surrendered, don't think about trying something else."

"N-no, I wouldn't dare." Initially, that mint ginseng seemed to have some thoughts in mind. But after seeing Jiang Chen's methods and being pierced by a ray of consciousness, how would it dare resist? It let Jiang Chen's consciousness settle within its soul. This ray of consciousness was to monitor the creature's actions. Once this guy showed any sense of disloyalty, Jiang Chen's consciousness would instantly know.

"Relax, you won't lose out by following me. It's not like you'll have any future to speak of if you keep hiding under this bridge. You'll be destroyed the moment you encounter any powerful opponents."

"Yes, of course." The mint ginseng was obviously terrified of Jiang Chen. It went along with whatever its new master said, not daring to rebut anything. The mint ginseng could increase or decrease its size at will. After it was captured, it turned back into the form of an ordinary mint ginseng. Although it was still a little bigger than normal, it wasn't as exaggeratedly enormous as just now. This small interlude might have been more bark than bite, but it still cost Jiang Chen a bit of time.

After they crossed the river, they encountered no further dangers along their way. Jiang Chen also asked the mint ginseng about the demon race, but the creature had just gained its consciousness not long ago. It was completely ignorant, not even comprehending the concept of the demon race. He didn't know whether to cry or to laugh. This whole situation felt like the blind leading the blind.

After around fifteen minutes, two shadows flitted past the vast river, landing on the bridge fragment where Jiang Chen had captured the mint ginseng. Unexpectedly, it was Prince of Shangping and his trusted aide.

"There was a battle here not long ago," Prince of Shangping had keen senses. "It should be him. The remnants of battle haven't been erased. From the looks of it, he's confident in his power."

His aide replied, "That brat is too arrogant. I feel that he swaggers everywhere is because he doesn't feel that anyone here poses a threat to him."

Prince of Shangping muttered, "We can't be sure about that. I still suspect that his bluster is all an act. Perhaps his goal is for us to underestimate him."

"How can a young cultivator be that shrewd?" His aide asked, half mired in doubt.

"And who cares whether he's faking it? Hurry and catch up to him before it's too late. Listen to my commands. When the time comes, I'll keep him busy with small talk while you launch an ambush." This master and servant pair did not hesitate as they continued their pursuit of Jiang Chen.

After Jiang Chen crossed the river, he began to slow down. According to the hints provided on He Hongshu's map, beyond the river, this was a comparatively more dangerous territory. This territory stretched across a valley. According to He Hongshu's records, this valley was heavily suffused with yin energy. From time to time, fiendish yin demons and monsters would appear. Back then, He Hongshu's party had lost plenty of people because of this place. However, fortunately, someone amongst his companions had possessed a treasure with the yang attribute that specialized in restraining those yin monsters. This had allowed their group to escape with their lives.

"Huang'er, we'll have to be careful here." They would be one step closer to their destination after passing through this valley. Moreover, although this valley was not too big, at first glance, it was as dark as the interior of a sack, giving off an extremely unpleasant impression.

Jiang Chen himself wasn't too scared of these things, but Huang'er was different. Although Huang'er's cultivation was very powerful, these yin monsters might affect her Generation Binding Curse.

Yin monsters and foul creatures could most easily trigger the Generation Binding Curse. This was what Jiang Chen was most afraid of. He instantly retrieved some wood spirit spring. "Huang'er, this is the essence of the wood spirit spring. When you feel like something is wrong, swallow some of it. It's effective against those yin monsters."

Wood spirit spring contained purifying qualities, more so for the essence that he had extracted.

Chapter 884: Myriad Corpse Valley

Huang'er received the wood spirit spring essence with an elegant nod. Her clear eyes had become a bit more serious. She was aware of the inflammatory effects that yin-attributed beings had on her Generation Binding Curse, so she took them very seriously. She had been tormented by the curse since she was little and had long since come to terms with it. However, today was different. If something happened to her, Jiang Chen would be affected as well. Huang'er didn't want to drag him down with her.

Jiang Chen activated his God's Eye and looked into the distance. The valley was obscured with fog. It appeared equally gloomy no matter the season, as if sunlight was forever incapable of piercing through it, giving the valley an incredibly sinister feeling. Regardless, time waited for no one. Jiang Chen and Huang'er exchanged a glance. "Let's go."

The moment the two of them entered the valley, they heard a voice call out from behind them, "Daoist Huang, please wait."

Even without turning around, Jiang Chen could identify the owner of the voice as the creator of their alliance, the Prince of Shangping. He didn't slow down as he continued to dash deeper into the valley.

He didn't want to deal with any side issues, so he called out instead, "Prince of Shangping, let us walk our separate paths on this wide road." His attitude clearly indicated that he didn't wish to interact with the Prince of Shangping.

The Prince of Shangping appeared startled before he forced out a laugh. "Daoist Huang seems to hold some enmity towards me, but from the bottom of my heart I hold nothing but praise for you. Today, I wish to share an opportunity with you."

Jiang Chen didn't turn his head at all. Mocking laughter rang in his trail. "Just enjoy it yourself. I have no interest in whatever opportunities you may have for me."

The Prince of Shangping had never imagined that this man wouldn't even give him a chance. A small seed of irritation took root in his heart. However, he was very careful not to expose his exasperation, or else his scheme would completely fall apart.

Jiang Chen held zero interest in the other's nonsense. Although he did not know why the Prince of Shangping had sought him out, his instincts told him that this Prince of Shangping definitely did not hold nearly as much goodwill towards him as he tried to make it seem.

.....

"My liege, the Prince of Shangping has entered the Myriad Corpse Valley along with a cultivator named Huang. According to this servant's earlier deductions, this Prince of Shangping might wish to take advantage of Huang." The person from earlier contacted the Shadow Demon King through a secret method.

"Tsk tsk, I'm interested in both of these two fellows. Who'd have thought that they would stroll in together?" The king clicked his tongue in wonder.

"Should we move now?" The person asked.

"No rush. Let them fight it out for a while first. Afterwards, we'll seize the opportunity to break them down one by one. How far are the others from here?"

"This servant has planted a number of mechanisms along the way. If anyone sees them, they'll be lured here step by step. This servant has also followed Your Majesty's instructions and planted these mechanisms in order to separate all of them. In doing so, it'll prevent a surge of people from entering this place and interfering with Your Majesty's plans."

"Mm, not a bad job. Continue to execute the plan. Be aware of the Wood Demon's movements at all times. They will definitely not let me enjoy this feast alone."

"Understood."

.....

"Huang'er, seal your senses and consciousness. I'll guide you," Jiang Chen whispered. The dark forest surrounded them like a dense fog. Shadowy figures flickered hauntingly within the fog. The further they traveled into the valley, the more they could sense the yin qi that pervaded the place. If an ordinary person entered this place, they might even be directly swallowed by the yin qi. Even an ordinary

cultivator wouldn't have much luck traversing this valley. This fiendish yin qi was definitely not something they could defend against.

Not only did Jiang Chen have to be mindful of the situation around him, but he also had to pay attention to the Prince of Shangping. This caused him to greatly slow down his pace. He didn't dare travel any faster lest he miss any warning signs of sudden situations. If they continued at this speed, they would need at least two hours to make it through the valley, and that was assuming that everything went smoothly. Clearly, such smooth sailing was nothing but wishful thinking.

As Jiang Chen moved, he suddenly realized that the scenery alongside him was continuously shifting. Countless tombstones were springing up one after one from the loosening soil. If they were just ordinary tombstones, he had nothing much to fear. However, these tombstones were very abnormal. Strange characters had been inscribed on the surface of every tombstone, as if they had been summoned straight from the depths of hell. In the moment it took Jiang Chen to bring up his guard, those tombstones actually started to move, as if they had grown legs. Piece by piece, they arranged themselves in an orderly fashion, and in the blink of an eye they had formed a formation, blocking the duo's path.

Jiang Chen's eyes darkened as he gazed at these tombstones. He abruptly activated his God's Eye, his gaze penetrating deep into the ground past these tombstones. Beneath the ground, each tombstone was actually supported by several bone apparitions that were rapidly moving these tombstones around.

"Pfft, such pretense!" Just as Jiang Chen was about to dispose of them, he heard the howl of wind whistle past his ear. The Prince of Shangping and his subordinate had caught up to them. Jiang Chen restrained himself from impulsively making a move. Instead, he stood to the side, gazing at the Prince of Shangping with a supercilious smile. "Prince of Shangping, these tombstones are a little strange. I'll leave them to your Highness' remarkable prowess."

The Prince of Shangping sternly replied, "This place is somewhat bizarre. Why not attack together?"

Jiang Chen shook his head. "It's hard for me to fight right now. I'll have to trouble you instead."

The Prince of Shangping shot a passing glance at Huang'er, who lay in Jiang Chen's arms. He furrowed his brows and asked, "What happened to this daoist?"

Jiang Chen calmly replied, "She's not very used to all this yin qi. If the Prince of Shangping views me as a friend, then help me out by getting rid of these. How about it?"

The Prince of Shangping thought for a second before he nodded. "I've known that this place was suspicious all along. It's natural for us human cultivators to travel in groups and work together after entering the desolate wildlands. Since Daoist Huang is inconvenienced, I will try my best. If I am unable to handle everything alone, I ask that Daoist Huang refrain from simply watching from the sidelines."

"If Your Highness is having trouble, how can I simply watch from the sidelines? How would I have the confidence to proceed further if even Your Highness has fallen?" Jiang Chen watched a patch of tombstones with a shadowy gaze as he spoke calmly.

The Prince of Shangping nodded. His profound gaze was fixated on those stone plates. Suddenly, he pointed to the sky with a talisman in hand. "Shatter!"

Once he activated the talisman, it immediately split apart. Countless streaks of violet-colored energy snaked over the tombstones. The light carried an enormous explosive power, rumbling loudly as it traveled.

Boom! This Exorcism Rune seemed extraordinarily destructive against demonic yin creatures. The violet, snake-like lightning crashed against the tombstones with a roar, and the tombstones were instantly ground into a fine powder as they shattered one after another.

The Prince of Shangping smiled leisurely. "That wasn't much. Please proceed, Daoist Huang!"

Jiang Chen's appearance remained normal, but he was sneering inwardly. As expected, this Prince of Shangping bore him no goodwill. His attack had seemed vicious, but he had only destroyed the tombstones. The bone apparitions beneath the ground had been left untouched. There was no way he could believe that someone as discerning as the Prince of Shangping would overlook the bone apparitions below the tombstones. Jiang Chen had run into these bone apparitions before. They possessed the ability to transform. When needed, they could even take the shape of a human.

The tombstones had been destroyed but at least a hundred bone apparitions were still buried below ground. The constructs were not intelligent enough to realize that the two humans standing above them had long since discovered their existence. When Jiang Chen saw that the Prince of Shangping prompted him to go first, he knew it was definitely not out of kindness. He chuckled, "Your Highness should complete his act of goodwill. Why not lead the way?"

The Prince of Shangping kept a straight face as he nodded, "This place is rather suspicious. It's truly inappropriate to ask Daoist Huang to create a path for us while he cares for his friend. However, I am worried about placing you behind me. How about this? Ole Shen, you lead the way. I will bring up the rear. We'll work together to cross this valley."

Jiang Chen smiled calmly but didn't move from his spot. He suddenly asked, "Your Highness, this valley is so dangerous. Why are you so adamant about crossing it?"

The Prince of Shangping sighed. "I received news that an opportunity lies at the end of this valley." "What opportunity?" Jiang Chen could not help but ask.

"Hehe, since Daoist Huang does not seem interested in working with me, you'll have to forgive me for keeping this to myself," The Prince of Shangping's smile was veiled with mystery.

Jiang Chen silently cursed this sly old fox, but his expression remained etched in stone, as he did not inquire further. He waved a hand, "Since Your Highness has such a great opportunity, why don't we return to our old rules? The road is wide—we can each walk our own paths."

The Prince of Shangping blinked in surprise. "There's only one road here. Are you thinking of leaving the valley?"

Jiang Chen laughed. "I'll wait for Your Highness to leave first. I don't want our relationship to be hurt by you thinking that I wish to fight you for this opportunity."

In the end, Jiang Chen was still unable to trust this Prince of Shangping.

The other smiled wryly, "Fellow daoist, you don't seem to trust me very much."

“Better to be a little prudent when I’m not in my home territory.” Actually, Jiang Chen’s heart was seething with anxiety. The reason he had requested for the Prince of Shangping to walk ahead was so that he did not have to expose his back to the man. If the prince walked ahead, Jiang Chen would still have sufficient time to react even if this old timer deployed any malicious schemes. Moreover, although the tombstones in front of them had been destroyed, Jiang Chen was unwilling to dispose of those bone apparitions by himself.

The Prince of Shangping sighed lightly. At this point, he could only pretend to be ignorant of the numerous bone apparitions hiding underground. He gestured to his follower, “Since Daoist Huang cannot trust us, let us walk on ahead.”

When the prince saw that Jiang Chen continued to be on his guard and keep him at arm’s length, he instantly wanted to erupt with hostility. However, he still managed to control himself. Without absolute guarantee of victory, he would never make his move. This was his principle, particularly since he was in this strange of a valley. If he wanted something, he had to attain it in one fell swoop.

Whether it was out of fear of the powerful talismans that the Prince of Shangping had deployed or for some other reason, the bone apparitions did not attack the Prince of Shangping as he walked past them. When Jiang Chen witnessed this, he thought it was somewhat unfathomable, and he became somewhat hesitant. The bone apparitions had not attacked this Prince of Shangping when he’d walked past. If he himself did the same, would they remain docile as well? If that was the case, this was actually a great opportunity.

However, if the bone apparitions suddenly attacked him, what Jiang Chen was truly afraid of was not those pesky little monsters, but rather the cultivator who had walked in front of him. He had a way to deal with bone apparitions. But bone apparitions on top of the Prince of Shangping? That was difficult to say.

Chapter 885: The Eight Statues

Jiang Chen hesitated for a split second. In the end, he still decided to wait until the prince and his aide had walked ahead for a while before proceeding. He didn’t want to take the risk of being simultaneously assaulted by the bone apparitions as well as the Prince of Shangping. Thirty minutes after the latter had left, Jiang Chen saw that those bone apparitions still didn’t seem to want to attack. He glanced down at Huang’er. Although she had completely sealed off her five senses, she would still be affected by the insidious yin qi within the valley.

“Can’t wait any longer.” Jiang Chen grit his teeth and bounded forwards. He hadn’t expected the bone apparitions to remain completely docile, as if they were asleep. They were like terracotta soldiers that had been buried underground, completely still without any signs of aggression. How could Jiang Chen dally when this was the case? He swiftly passed through the area.

However, even after crossing the tombstone district, Jiang Chen remained alert. In such a strange valley, these tombstones were probably just the opening act. Moreover, why had those bone apparitions not attacked him and the Prince of Shangping? This was incredibly suspicious.

“Someone must be controlling these bone apparitions. Otherwise, these transforming monsters couldn’t possibly possess such a high level of intelligence, even if they’d retained some form of knowledge from

their previous life. They should have some offensive capabilities. Why did they suddenly decide to let us pass?" The more Jiang Chen mulled over this, the more the hairs on his skin began to prickle. He constantly felt as though there were a pair of eyes on him, closely watching everything he did.

"Huang'er's situation doesn't look too encouraging. I have to find the Requiem Wood as soon as possible. No matter how powerful the demon race here might be, I must obtain that Requiem Wood." Jiang Chen was fully aware that there was already no path of retreat. Currently, apart from the threat of the demon race, there was also the unreadable Prince of Shangping who really troubled Jiang Chen. Hence, even though a sense of urgency burned in his heart, he couldn't travel any faster.

On his way, Jiang Chen suddenly stopped in his tracks again. He stared at the ground and then at his surroundings before his expression twisted into a grimace. Alarm bells rang out in his head as his acute intuition warned him that a source of extreme danger was surging madly towards him. In response, Jiang Chen clawed the air in front of him, his fingers clamping around a talisman.

It was the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman that he had received from the young master of the Coiling Dragon Clan. Simultaneously, his other hand closed around the Featherflight Mirror. His gaze swept the area around him as he listened for any noise. Suddenly, an arrow shot out from the undergrowth on his right. Its momentum far surpassed Jiang Chen's expectations. He didn't even need to think as he brandished his Featherflight Mirror. With a swish of the mirror, the arrow instantly lost speed.

Without any delay, he raised a finger towards the heavens. The powerful force of his Supernova Point slashed outwards in a criss-cross arc, towards the direction where the sneak attack had been launched.

It was at this moment that Jiang Chen suddenly felt the scenery before his eyes shift. The next moment, the duo's bodies were sent into a formation. When he regained his bearings, one by one a series of majestic statues began to stretch into existence before his eyes. Each of these golden divine statues possessed the terrifying eyes of a guardian deity. Immense pressure bore down on Jiang Chen under their heavy gazes.

The eight statues suddenly floated up into the air and subsequently charged ferociously at Jiang Chen as if they were living beings. An attack from eight different directions instantly placed Jiang Chen into an exceedingly vulnerable position. He instinctively activated the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman. Golden radiance erupted three feet into the air. As the brilliant rays engulfed Jiang Chen, they gently turned into streaks of flowing light, circling his entire body. The next moment, the defensive measure of the talisman reinforced Jiang Chen's body as the eight statues simultaneously struck.

To his immense shock, Jiang Chen realized that each one of these eight statues possessed the offensive power of the initial emperor realm. Moreover, the attacks made by these eight statues even corresponded to formation-type attacks. As formation after formation rained down upon him, Jiang Chen was no longer even sure which side he should defend from.

Although he was protected by the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman, Jiang Chen didn't dare to relax. Without warning, he activated his body tempering arts. Ten feet of golden light covered his torso. He hugged Huang'er tightly, pressing her body against his chest. Even if he was injured, he didn't want Huang'er to be hurt by these statues. Attacks were coming from his right, his left, and from behind... Jiang Chen could no longer pay attention to them. He knew that what he had to defend was his front.

Because Huang'er lay in his embrace.

The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman could protect him but not Huang'er. The blows from the two statues charging head on at him must be deflected by his own strength. Thankfully, Jiang Chen possessed so many strategies that he instantly stopped the assaults with a swish of his Featherflight Mirror. At the same time, the attacks of the other statues landed heavily on his body.

Crash!

Streaks of golden light poured out from Jiang Chen's body. It was as if he was being gently pummeled by a baby's fists. Although he could feel the attacks, they didn't bring the slightest sensation of pain. He was inwardly delighted. This Imperial Advent Defense Talisman definitely lives up to its name!

Once activated, the talisman could last at least eight hours. Jiang Chen didn't need to worry about the talisman losing its potency any time soon. At this point, he could no longer conceal his true power. He unleashed his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, entrapping the two statues in front of him. With a hand seal, the numerous vines of the lotus lashed violently towards the two statues.

The lotus was incredibly powerful at both binding and shattering, but these two statues had clearly also been constructed extraordinarily well. While Jiang Chen couldn't tell what exactly had been used to create them, even the combined strength of hundreds of vines couldn't grind them down. Finally letting his frustration get to him, Jiang Chen repeatedly sliced into the air with a fingertip.

The fourth move of the Supernova Point: Galaxy Slash!

This Supernova Point had been coined by an authority from the ancient era. Its formidable might could slice even the Milky Way apart. Jiang Chen had been training this technique for a very long time. Just because his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice couldn't break these things didn't mean that the Galaxy Slash would fail to. The powerful blow sliced into the statues. As expected, cut after cut carved into them. Just as Jiang Chen repeatedly deployed the Galaxy Slash, another arrow hurtled out from the distance. It pierced through space, careening towards him with a deadly trajectory.

Anger flared up within him as he pushed his hand downwards, slamming the mint ginseng into the ground. "Go and drag out that bastard shooting these arrows." The fellow launching sneak attacks on me must definitely be rather weak. Otherwise, he wouldn't keep relying on these unseen arrows.

The mint ginseng was still quite terrified of Jiang Chen. When it saw that this was its chance to prove its usefulness, it was naturally extremely happy. On the other hand, Jiang Chen only had one goal in mind as he continued to slice those two statues apart. When the other statues realized that they had no way to attack him, they consecutively surged towards his frontal side. How could Jiang Chen allow them to do as they wished? He shifted his position continuously as he called out, "Prince of Shangping, is this your so-called cooperation?" If he still couldn't figure out that this was the prince's dirty ploy, then there must be something wrong with his brain.

In the darkness, the Prince of Shangping seemed slightly dumbfounded as he manipulated his formation disk. He had received this formation disk thanks to a stroke of good luck in an extremely fortuitous situation. The disk could compel eight divine golden statues to attack simultaneously. With the Prince of Shangping's potential, he could only tap into a third of this power. The eight statues were only able to materialize strength of the initial emperor realm. After all, his own level of cultivation was only in the

emperor realm. These eight statues were akin to an alliance between eight initial emperor realm cultivators. One could easily imagine their resulting power.

Moreover, these eight divine statues were different from ordinary emperor realm cultivators. An ordinary cultivator might possess slightly higher offensive power, but their defensive capabilities might not be up to par. The defense of these eight statues was truly insurmountable. A normal attack couldn't even hope to scratch them. After all, they didn't fear pain. This kind of perverse durability would definitely cause an ordinary opponent to suffer a severe headache.

Hence, when the Prince of Shangping had set up the formation as a ploy against Jiang Chen, he had felt fairly confident. Who would have expected that these eight golden divine statues would be unable to ruffle the feathers of this mysterious young cultivator? This brat actually possessed such an impenetrable defense that the attacks of his statues had no effect on him! If he hadn't had to protect his companion, he might very well have taken out all the statues already.

In that moment, the Prince of Shangping was both shocked and furious—shocked because his opponent possessed a defense more formidable than his eight golden divine statues, and furious because all his efforts seemed to have gone to waste. If the first attack failed, any further aggression would be much more difficult. Moreover, his location had been discovered by his opponent. At this moment, the Prince of Shangping had almost given up. However, he was a very determined person. Some glowing thing covered this brat's body just now. He must have used some kind of strange defensive talisman. Defensive talismans last for an hour at most. After one hour, the effects will naturally disappear...

When he thought of this, the Prince of Shangping regained his fighting spirit. This brat is decked from head to toe with so many treasures. If he didn't snatch them for himself, then he would truly have wasted all this effort. When he realized this, the Prince of Shangping chuckled before springing out from the darkness. One of his hands grasped the handle of a silver longsword.

"Since Daoist Huang possesses such strong enmity towards me, then don't blame me for being too harsh on you!" This Prince of Shangping was completely shameless. It was obviously him who had initiated the attack, yet he continued to speak of himself in such a pompous manner.

Jiang Chen only sneered at him. His gaze was fixed on the Prince of Shangping as he said, "I knew an old codger like you would be up to no good. You can't hide your sly fox tail anymore, can you?"

The Prince of Shangping was completely shameless. When he heard Jiang Chen's mocking words, he acted as though he couldn't hear anything. "Brat, things have already reached this stage. What's the point of spouting such nonsense? Tell me your background so I can see if I can afford this offense."

Jiang Cheng was too lazy to even converse. "Fight if you want to. What's the point of chit chatting?"

A nasty grin appeared on the Prince of Shangping's face. "Quite arrogant huh, brat? But even if you're the disciple of a famous sect, do you really think you have any right to mess around after you've entered my formation? Today, I will send you straight to hell. All your valuables... I'll take them for safekeeping. I'll send your companion to accompany you after I've toyed with her. Ahahaha..."

Chapter 886: Fleeing With His Tail Between His Legs

The Prince of Shangping had repressed himself for so long. When he saw Jiang Chen fall into his hands, he no longer needed to hide anything. He shed his mask of geniality and instantly displayed his true character. When Jiang Chen heard this, he abruptly raised an eyebrow. His gaze was filled with killing intent. "Prince of Shangping, do you think that you can suppress me just because you've put everything you have into this scheme?"

The Prince of Shangping appeared as if he was about to say something, but a sharp shriek resounded from the area beside them, cutting him off. When he heard this shriek, his expression instantly changed. Naturally, he could identify that this voice belonged to his aide. "Ole Shen, what happened?"

Jiang Chen only smiled chillingly. He knew that the mint ginseng had found its target. As expected, countless tentacles lashed out from beside them. Stream after stream of green fog billowed rapidly towards the Prince of Shangping.

The other's pupils contracted violently as he dodged in a flurry. He could vaguely sense that a strong binding power lay within that green fog. Within the space obscured by the fog, more than a few hundred wart-covered tentacles shot successively towards him at lightning speed. He was completely dumbfounded. His longsword soared into action, slicing apart a few dozen tentacles. However, the moment a tentacle was split apart, it regenerated almost instantly. This regenerative ability was ludicrous, to the extent that the Prince of Shangping wanted to break down in tears.

Jiang Chen chuckled darkly. Suddenly, he raised his hand. A small golden mountain appeared at the center of his palm. With a single hand seal, countless tadpole-like characters began to orbit around him. Without warning, the miniature mountain expanded into a hill before ruthlessly crushing the Prince of Shangping.

The prince had many tricks to his name and was well versed in formations. He was also bolstered by the eight statues and his own arts were quite strong. As a cultivator well-versed in formations and in possession of the eight statues, his innate power was also remarkable. And yet, today's events had truly opened his eyes. The techniques and abilities of this mysterious youth actually outmatched him in terms of both number and prowess. As the golden mountain engulfed the space overhead, the Prince of Shangping felt as if the sky was falling down. His wits had deserted him out of sheer terror from the immense shock he felt. He still possessed several techniques that had not yet been used, but under the pressure of this titanic mountain, he was suddenly rendered incapable of activating any of his vast repertoire of tricks.

Similar to the green fog, the golden mountain actually also carried a binding power with it. These two different kinds of binding power caused the Prince of Shangping to feel as though his body no longer obeyed his commands. How would he dare continue the fight?

He didn't even have time to retrieve his eight statues. He activated a talisman and used it to quickly shatter the golden binding power before rapidly hurtling away from the mountain. The magnetic golden mountain's shining rays might travel quickly, but they were still a hair behind the speed of the escape mechanism granted by his talisman. Even after it had smashed into the ground a few times, it was still unable to block his path of escape.

As soon as the Prince of Shangping fled, the formation around them greatly weakened. When Jiang Chen broke the formation with his Moonshatter Awl, the eight statues also lost their connection to it. One by

one, they ceased their flailing and toppled to the ground like deflated balloons. Jiang Chen had no qualms about sweeping these eight statues into his storage ring. The statues were extraordinary. Even numerous blows of his Galaxy Slash had only scratched them instead of shattering them entirely. In order to destroy these statues with his current level of power, Jiang Chen would have to slash at them repeatedly for at least two hours. And even then, he might barely be able to eliminate one of them. This kind of spectacular durability truly amazed Jiang Chen. However, he was currently in no mood to admire these statues. After retrieving the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, he called the mint ginseng back as well and praised it, "Not a bad show. Some credit goes to you in this."

One glance at Ole Shen's shriveled corpse told Jiang Chen that the mint ginseng had completely drained the body of its essence. Jiang Chen didn't feel a twinge of sympathy for him as he helped Huang'er up and left the area. He had been trapped in battle within this formation for a good two hours and hence, didn't want to waste any more time. The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman could maintain its defensive power for another two hours. He had to take advantage of this time to cross this sinister valley as soon as possible.

If Jiang Chen had been alone, he would have been fine with surviving in this place for ten to fifteen days. But Huang'er's Generation Binding Curse couldn't withstand the aggravation of even a little bit of yin qi. At this point, Jiang Chen hated that he wasn't able to instantly find the Requiem Wood and cure her illness.

.....

On the other hand, the Prince of Shangping had run a long distance but fear still lingered in his heart. His face was deathly pale. From time to time, he glanced behind him, worried that Jiang Chen was still pursuing him. "Bastard, that brat acted like a weakling to lure the tigers out!" The Prince of Shangping's eyes were filled with fury. All along, he had thought that he was the one trying to lure and kill those tigers. He had never expected that his opponent would be even more vicious than him and conceal himself even more deeply than he had!

"Just where did that brat come from?" The more the Prince of Shangping considered the entire situation, the more he felt that something didn't quite add up. "Even if he was a great disciple of a first-rank sect, he couldn't possibly possess such power, right?"

The Prince of Shangping had seen plenty of such disciples. To tell the truth, he had even killed many of those kinds of disciples. Although great disciples of a first-rank sect did indeed know numerous techniques, they were still lacking in power compared to an emperor realm cultivator like him. Moreover, the equipment that the Prince of Shangping owned was also considered to be at a top-level existence amongst cultivators.

Naturally, although the Prince of Shangping might call himself a wandering cultivator, in reality he couldn't strictly be considered as such. It was just that he enjoyed going on adventures and doing the same kinds of things that wandering cultivators generally liked. He had always been confident in his equipment and treasures. He felt that even if he wasn't considered to be amongst the top cultivators in the human domain, he would at least be one of the best. However, the opponent he had encountered today had caused him to taste bitter defeat. As of now, he had escaped with his life. Although he was devastated by the result, he continued to silently ponder over the losses and gains from his battle.

“That brat’s defensive power may even be in the great emperor realm. He didn’t shy away from the blows of the eight statues at all. Not a single hair on him was ruffled. Could that be the power of the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman?” The Prince of Shangping had not thought of this earlier due to his panic. But now, upon careful consideration, he could make a few conjectures about what had happened.

“As expected, this brat should have the blessings of some great emperor realm cultivator.” As this occurred to him, the Prince of Shangping felt the beginning of a headache. “No, I can’t let this brat live any longer. If he leaves, will there be any place left for me in this world?” The Prince of Shangping might have a powerful backing, but the person he had offended today was under the protection of a great emperor. If word of this spread, there would be hell to pay.

“Wait a minute...” When the Prince of Shangping thought of Jiang Chen’s abilities, he was struck by a sudden flash of inspiration. “The brat’s techniques, I seem to have seen them before somewhere? But it’s definitely my first time seeing them... If I’d encountered him somewhere before, I’d definitely remember him. But why do I keep thinking that he seems a little familiar?” The Prince of Shangping’s brain vaguely seemed to have latched onto a particular train of thought, but he was unable to piece together the puzzle. He racked his brains further.

“So many vines, suffused with ice and fire attributes... Eh?” The Prince of Shangping’s expression abruptly changed before he leapt up in revelation. “It’s him?!”

At that moment, he finally found the final piece of the puzzle he had been looking for. When he had been traveling around the world, he had visited numerous places. When he had passed by the Great Scarlet Mid Region, he had come across an incredibly exaggerated bounty poster. And the person worth such a bounty had been called Jiang Chen...

“Jiang Chen... Right, Jiang Chen!” The Prince of Shangping’s eyes suddenly shone with rays of epiphany. “When the Eternal Celestial Capital invaded the Myriad Domain, the Capital’s Holy Kings dispatched countless armies in vicious pursuit. The Great Scarlet Mid Region’s reputation was also severely damaged. And the target of their pursuit, wasn’t it this Jiang Chen? His techniques and equipment seem to match this guy very well. Could it be him?” As the Prince of Shangping mulled over this line of thinking, he felt that it made more and more sense.

“It’s him. It’s definitely him!” The Prince of Shangping’s mind continued to spin. “This damn brat... you’re being targeted from all sides and yet you strut into the desolate wildlands in such a carefree manner! Ah, the bounty posters did mention that he had a companion. It must be that friend he was carrying in his arms.” As he considered the situation, the bitter taste of defeat completely disappeared.

“Even the Eternal Celestial Capital suffered at the hands of this brat. I didn’t know about him, so it’s only natural that I lost a little to his nonsensical techniques.” Although the Prince of Shangping was willing to admit his loss, there was no way that he would just let bygones be bygones. Rather, his number of grievances had only increased.

“If this brat has so many techniques, it’s no surprise that the Eternal Celestial Capital fell to him. No, even my eight statues fell into his palms. What’s more, what right does this brat have to own so many heaven-defying treasures? Why should he be the one to control these things?!” The Prince of Shangping couldn’t accept this. “I must kill that brat! I’ll quench the hatred in my heart, take his treasures, and turn him over to the Great Scarlet Mid Region for bounty.”

The Prince of Shangping might have been driven into a corner but that was only because of the unexpected pressure of the magnetic golden mountain. He still had some techniques up his sleeves. Although he might not be able to triumph over his opponent, he still had some combative power.

"I underestimated him previously. I didn't expect that that brat would hide his strength so that he could prey on the strong." The Prince of Shangping comforted himself. "I'll slowly set another trap. This time, the trap must be foolproof enough so that the brat won't have an escape route." He had experienced many battles in his life. He might have suffered a slight setback, but his fighting spirit still remained intact.

"Those tentacles might be terrifying but they can be dealt with. Only... if I'm covered by that golden mountain, things won't be so easy." He carefully considered the tactics he would use to oppose Jiang Chen. After a brief second, a plan had formed in his mind. And at that same moment, his ear twitched before he suddenly turned around and shot into the nearby undergrowth.

The sound of light footsteps sounded out from across him. A figure floated out from the forest as it called out, "Prince of Shangping?"

When the Prince of Shangping heard this voice, he could immediately tell that this was not his death-sworn enemy. His pounding heart immediately relaxed. He walked out calmly and gazed towards the newcomer, apathetically asking, "Ole Brother Lu, why are you here?"

This person, who was dressed like a scholar, had also been one of the members of the alliance formed outside the valley. His name was Lu Shinan. Back then, he had actually sought Jiang Chen out to form a secret alliance, but had been firmly shot down.

Lu Shinan looked at the Prince of Shangping in shock, "Your Highness, why do you look so beaten up? Have you encountered any danger?"

The Prince of Shangping huffed coldly, "This has nothing to do with you, Brother Lu. Anyway, why have you suddenly appeared here?"

Lu Shinan smiled bitterly, "I was pursuing a trail but it seems that the trail mysteriously ends here."

"What trail?" The Prince of Shangping asked without inflection.

The smile remained on Lu Shinan's face. "It's not convenient for me to reveal what it is. Since the Prince of Shangping is occupied, this junior will not disturb you. I'll leave first."

A light went off in the Prince of Shangping's head as he suddenly spoke up, "Wait a moment!"

Chapter 887: Colluding Villains

Lu Shinan grew serious and a little wary as he stared at the Prince of Shangping. "What else do you have to say, Your Highness?"

The Prince of Shangping smiled wryly, "Don't worry, I'm not interested in you."

Lu Shinan spat on the ground, "Are you trying to imply that I'm interested in you?"

The prince waved his hands to show that he wasn't here to quarrel with Lu Shinan. He answered calmly and without stress, "Daoist Lu, you and I are both emperor realm experts. Therefore, it is understandable that we are wary of each other."

Lu Shinan snorted softly but didn't answer. It was obvious that he had his guard up against the other. Lu Shinan frowned, "Just say whatever it is you have to say, Your Highness."

The Prince of Shangping nodded, but without any anger towards his rudeness. He pondered for a moment, "I have recently stumbled upon a great fortune. I wonder if you are interested in it, Daoist Lu?"

"There are opportunities everywhere across the desolate wildlands, so I'm actually not interested in this fortune of yours, Your Highness. Who knows if it's a trap you've laid down for me to jump into?"

The Prince of Shangping had a somewhat awkward expression on his face. He would've killed this offender with a single punch if this had been any other time. However, Lu Shinan's appearance had given the Prince of Shangping a few ideas. Therefore, he didn't retort angrily. He said seriously instead, "I can swear a heavenly oath that I have no intentions of targeting you in any way, Daoist Lu."

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before speaking reluctantly, "Why don't you tell me about the opportunity you found and let me decide if it's real first."

The Prince of Shangping didn't try to beat around the bush. "Do you still remember that cultivator named Huang in the valley?"

"Are you talking about Daoist Huang? The one with a female companion?" Lu Shinan asked curiously.

"Yes," the Prince of Shangping nodded. "What do you think of his strength, Brother Lu?"

"His strength? He should be at the sage realm, but he probably possesses the combat strength of an emperor realm cultivator. At the very least, his confidence is likely backed by some measure of ability," Lu Shinan voiced his own judgment.

"Some measure of ability, you say?" The Prince of Shangping laughed wryly, "He is a monster who fakes weakness to fool others. At the very least, his strength is on par with yours and mine."

"What do you mean?" Lu Shinan's eyes moved rapidly.

"I had a bit of a conflict with him earlier and suffered a minor loss because I underestimated him." The prince purposefully obscured things instead of explaining clearly.

A bit of ridicule dripped into Lu Shinan's smile. "Are you trying to get me to join you on a revenge excursion? If that's the case, then I am sorry to say that I'm not available."

Lu Shinan had figured out the Prince of Shangping's underlying intentions from his expression. The prince smiled wryly, "Am I that obvious?"

"Cut the nonsense. I'm not idle enough to waste time on your petty revenge."

The Prince of Shangping suddenly let out a cold laugh. "Why do you think wandering cultivators travel everywhere and seek adventure, Daoist Lu? We search for riches, power, or resources, all of which ultimately contribute to helping us become stronger. Do you agree with this, Daoist Lu?"

“You don’t say.” Lu Shinan seemed to have lost the heart to listen to the prince any longer.

The Prince of Shangping suddenly said, “In that case, let me be frank with you. This person is of extraordinary origin, and if you aid me in defeating him, I will grant you a great fortune.”

“Tut! If there really is such a great fortune, why don’t you claim it for yourself?” Lu Shinan still refused to believe his words.

“Naturally, there are things that I desire from that person as well. But he is valuable—far, far more valuable than you can possibly imagine. Do you still remember that joint bounty offered by the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region, Daoist Lu?” The prince asked with the ghost of a smile on his lips.

Lu Shinan finally turned serious as he cried out involuntarily, “Are you speaking of that junior of Regal Pill Palace, Jiang Chen?”

“That’s right. Right now, the bounty on his head has grown several times larger than what it was initially at. Do you think that you can ever earn that much wealth with your own talents, Daoist Lu?”

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before shaking his head honestly, “I don’t think so.”

“What if you have a chance to earn that bounty? To rise to the top in one fell swoop? Are you interested in giving it a go now, Daoist Lu?” The Prince of Shangping asked with a chuckle.

“Are you saying...?” Lu Shinan’s pupils abruptly shrank. “Is that kid the Jiang Chen that the Eternal Celestial Capital is hunting?”

“That’s right. I am at least ninety percent sure that he’s Jiang Chen.” The Prince of Shangping nodded.

“Hmph. That bounty is great, but that doesn’t mean that it’s easy to split between two people. I don’t understand. Your Highness, why are you willing to share this all with me?” Lu Shinan was a very cautious person.

“It’s very simple. I may not be able to take him down alone.”

“Where’s your aide?” Lu Shinan suddenly asked.

“He’s not strong enough, so he can’t help me with this.” Of course, the Prince of Shangping wouldn’t tell Lu Shinan that his subordinate was already dead.

Lu Shinan pondered for a moment. “The bounty is great, but there are still two of us. If we do go to the end, I may not necessarily be able to gain my fair share of the agreement should you change your mind.”

“The bounty is yours,” the Prince of Shangping said indifferently. “I am a person of some stature, and I don’t particularly need the riches offered by that bounty. Just the same, the amount of land offered and the chance to start a sect are not where my interests lie.”

“Then what do you want?” Lu Shinan looked startled.

“You can have the bounty while I reclaim the eight statues he robbed from me and take some of his equipment for my own. Are you satisfied with this distribution, Daoist Lu?” The Prince of Shangping said suddenly, “Don’t try to bargain with me. I’ve already made some concessions. If it weren’t for revenge, I

would never have come to you to make a deal. You know that there are plenty of people who are willing to work with me.”

He had been negotiating from a weaker position all this time, but his tone grew a little forceful now that they were at the final stage of the negotiation.

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before raising his eyebrows. “This split is fair, I suppose. But how do I know that you won’t break your promise?”

“We can swear a heavenly oath. If I am to renege on this split of rewards, may the heavens punish me with death.”

Feeling that the deal was fairly secure now that the heavenly oath was involved, Lu Shinan nodded immediately, “Alright, then I will partake in your revenge.”

The Prince of Shangping was very happy to hear this. “Very good. You and I are at about the same level of strength. If you and I were to fight him two on one, plus utilize some formations and the terrain to our advantage, I’m sure that our victory will be quite certain. Oh right, allow me to inform you of some of his combat characteristics, Daoist Lu. This is so that you won’t be caught off guard by him while in a tight spot.”

The prince looked incredibly sincere and his actions made Lu Shinan feel that he meant well. Thus, he nodded, “That is for the best. If you and I are both aware of what he can do, we can tackle problems properly and come up with the right plan of action.”

“That is correct. You and I must cooperate in good faith and not let a single thing slip by us.” The duo found a hidden corner and muttered to each other for a moment, creating a rough plan.

“First, we must have a formation that can trap him. Moreover, this formation must be concealed by the terrain so that he can’t discover it beforehand.” The Prince of Shangping said.

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before his eyes lit up. “I know of a place that is rather suitable to lay down a formation. However, it’s a little dangerous. At the very least, it’s dangerous enough that even I have to pick my way through it carefully.”

A fierce gleam fled past the Prince of Shangping’s eyes, “Dangerous, you say? As long as it doesn’t threaten both you and I, then the greater the better. That’s the best way to keep his attention fixed solely on the terrain around him. But before that, it must be a place that he has to pass through, of course.”

“That’s no problem. We can always try and lure him over,” Lu Shinan smiled. “I’ve communicated with that kid once before. Just leave it to me.”

The Prince of Shangping suddenly frowned, “You won’t suddenly betray me and work together with him later, will you, Daoist Lu?”

Lu Shinan smiled wryly, “I swear by the heavens that I will be smited by thunder and lightning if I were to work together with him.”

There was nothing more convincing than a heavenly oath. Therefore, the Prince of Shangping relaxed upon hearing this. "Please don't blame me for my cautiousness, Daoist Lu. The human heart is difficult to fathom, and I have no choice but to be on my guard."

Lu Shinan smiled. "I can understand that."

Both these people were old foxes who refused to take any losses. But now that they were working together, they had no problems feigning a magnanimous heart. "Where is this place you speak of, Daoist Lu? Take me there to have a look. I'll put my formation there if the terrain is suitable." The prince obviously didn't want to waste anymore time.

Lu Shinan nodded, but the hesitation on his face hadn't yet faded completely. "I'm still a little worried. That place is somewhat dangerous."

The Prince of Shangping frowned. "We have the two of us, so what is there to be worried about? If anything is to happen, you and I can always work together to overcome most of the obstacles."

Lu Shinan finally nodded after thinking for a moment, "Alright. You mustn't leave me behind if anything were to happen, Your Highness."

"Two people fighting together is always going to be better than one person fighting alone. So what do I have to gain by discarding you?"

Lu Shinan was already leading the way as they continued talking to each other. The pair ran into a massive grave about fifteen minutes later. White banners were everywhere, hanging on mounds. The Prince of Shangping frowned when he saw the white banners, "Why are these white banners here?"

Lu Shinan smiled wryly. "That's why I said that this place is eerie. These white banners were likely demonic objects from the ancient times, considering that they've remained intact even though a hundred thousand years have passed."

The prince investigated for a bit with a serious look on his face, but didn't see anything out of the ordinary.

"Will this place work? If it's not, we can always find someplace else." Lu Shinan suggested, likely because he was quite wary of this place.

The Prince of Shangping looked around for another moment. "No, this place is perfect. We'll set our trap here. These white banners contain some subtle demonic aura, so there's likely something strange beneath these mounds. However, this isn't a problem to us because I have a particular discerning eye art that allows me to see what's hidden inside. Although there are definitely some demonic signs around this place, you and I are strong enough to overcome them together. Plus, this is a place that that brat must absolutely pass through."

Anyone could see that the prince's mind was completely focused on Jiang Chen right now. "Daoist Lu, you must contribute some effort if you wish to claim the bounty. So why don't you keep watch while I lay down some formations according to this terrain?"

"Alright." Lu Shinan might not like this place too much, but he still nodded in agreement. "It'll be best if the formation blends so evenly into the terrain that he won't notice anything. Only then will the formations truly be effective."

"Relax, these are formations we're talking about. I'm fairly confident in this aspect of my skill set." The prince smiled coldly. He thought that Lu Shinan's warning was a little unnecessary.

As he said this, the Prince of Shangping suddenly stopped his hand movements. The white banners erected in front of the mounds had abruptly started to shake violently.

Lu Shinan shivered all over and jumped instantly to the prince's side, "What's going on, Your Highness?"

The prince was both worried and furious at Lu Shinan's cowardice. "What are you worried about? It's just a bit of movement from some evil air. There's nothing to be worried about."

He said this as he stared at the white banners, but he had no idea that the hint of a strange smile had crept into Lu Shinan's lips. He also didn't see that Lu Shinan's arms were raised slightly in a conspiratorial manner.

Chapter 888: Demon King Nineshadows

"Your Highness, that brat is here!" Lu Shinan suddenly called out.

"Where?" The Prince of Shangping was startled. However, he realized something was wrong the next moment. A black burst of light erupted behind him as he turned, and a strange black talisman exploded in the middle of his back. It turned into an inky jet of air and shot itself into the prince's body. On the other side, Lu Shinan shifted a few dozen meters away like a slippery eel.

The prince was furious. "Lu Shinan, you backstabbing..."

Lu Shinan laughed malevolently. "You're wily, Prince of Shangping, but your wits are no match for mine!"

"Then die!" The prince's face darkened. He was about to deploy an art but found that his body was weak and devoid of any energy. He had no strength left to muster. His entire body had been wrapped in the black air. He couldn't move at all.

"Lu Shinan, what did you do to me?" The Prince of Shangping was scared witless. His normal calmness was lost, and his entire body shook in fear. His intuition told him that the end was nigh.

"Heh heh, what do you think?" Lu Shinan stayed at a distance from the prince, not approaching beyond a certain point. His expression was inscrutable.

The prince's pupils contracted. "Don't forget that you made a heavenly oath!"

Lu Shinan snickered, "I made an oath that I wasn't in cahoots with the kid. That much is true. I'm really not."

The Prince of Shangping finally realized—there had been a loophole in Lu Shinan's oath from the very beginning. Because he had been wholly focused on Jiang Chen, it had slipped past him. And as a result, Lu Shinan's plot found unexpected success. The prince had been overconfident. In his alliance

with Lu Shinan, he had thought that he was the more favorable party, that he was the stronger cultivator. Even if the other man was plotting something behind his back, he had assumed that he wouldn't be really threatened by it. As such, the prince didn't believe that Lu Shinan would attack him before they had taken out Jiang Chen. Even if they were to reach a point of contention when they divvied up their spoils and ended up coming to blows, it would only be after Jiang Chen was out of the picture.

The possibility that Lu Shinan was never interested in working with him in the first place hadn't even crossed his mind. The Prince of Shangping was full of regret. He had plotted against countless people in his life. His failure to scheme against Jiang Chen was already unlucky enough; Lu Shinan's backstabbing was simply karmic justice.

"Do you think you'll be able to defeat that kid by yourself, Lu Shinan? Is that why you've trapped me like this?" The prince still wanted to salvage the situation.

Lu Shinan chortled, "Are you still dreaming, Prince of Shangping? Who said that I was going to face him alone?"

"You have a partner in crime?" The prince's expression changed drastically. "Who is it? Even if you do, they couldn't possibly be as strong as me. You think you'll have a better chance with them?"

"Don't think so highly of yourself. My partner is already 'in' you." Lu Shinan retorted mockingly.

"What?" The Prince of Shangping was completely lost.

Lu Shinan's mocking expression grew more pronounced. "You're at death's door, and you still don't even know how you got there. Truly, if wise men play the fool, they do it with a vengeance."

The prince's body shuddered as a new thought entered his mind. His look turned to despair. "Have you defected to the demons, Lu Shinan? Are you now their faithful servant?"

"It is good to know which way the wind blows," Lu Shinan laughed. "Demons are a high-class race hailing from the heavenly planes, and I'm only following their natural ebb and flow. Too bad you don't have the chance to do the same, prince. My liege has a use for your body. Though it's not perfect, there's little choice in haste."

"Your liege?" The prince's smile was grim. An incredibly powerful force within the stream of black air was already eating away at his consciousness. Completely restrained by it, he couldn't move a finger, much less launch any form of active resistance. It was as if a cleaver was headed straight towards his head, but he was powerless to avoid it. He wanted to destroy himself, but his body wouldn't respond to his commands.

"Lu Shinan, you traitor of the human race... I won't let you get away with this, even from beyond the grave!" The Prince of Shangping was hoarse from exertion.

"Oh, come off it," Lu Shinan was unimpressed. "You think you'll have a chance to do that? Don't waste your breath. I've set up soundproof barriers all around us. No one will hear you. You wanted to take out that brat, right? Don't worry, I'll avenge you in that regard at least. Why don't the two of you compete when you're both in hell, eh? Hahahaha." By the end of his speech, Lu Shinan wore a ghastly smile. The

light in the prince's eyes faded as his consciousness was eaten away, until it finally dimmed to a corpse-like gray hue.

Everything was quiet. The Prince of Shangping looked as if he had been dead for many hours. Suddenly, the prince's body moved. His gray-white eyes dilated, and his eyelids fluttered. He was alive once more. However, his eyes were now home to a new malevolence.

Lu Shinan's body shook. "Congratulations, my liege. You have finally attained a new body. This is a big step forward for the demon race." He knelt to the newly-risen prince.

The 'Prince of Shangping' looked a little disoriented, and his eyes moved about constantly. He scanned his surroundings, his expression vibrant. After a long while, he smiled bewitchingly, "Good, good, good. I, King Nineshadows, can finally see the light of day once more!"

"Now that you've awakened, my liege, I'm sure that a new renaissance for the demon race is not far off." Lu Shinan laid on heavy flattery.

The demon king smiled faintly, his gaze resting for a moment on the man. "You've done well, Lu Shinan. You deserve a rich reward for your work. When the time comes, I'll request a high-rank portion of demon blood from His Majesty the emperor himself. You'll truly become a member of our superior race then."

"Thank you for your praise, my liege." Lu Shinan was overjoyed.

"Stand now. This is only the first step. Though I've taken the Prince of Shangping's body, this unrefined body is not very suitable for my demonic arts. I do not expect that I'll have much combative ability, and I'll surely be cut down by any strong adversary." The demon king was not blinded by arrogance. He understood the situation very clearly.

"According to the information supplied by this Prince of Shangping, my liege, the person who destroyed the five bone apparitions is Jiang Chen. He is a tough character in the outside world."

"Oh? How tough, exactly?" King Nineshadows asked, frowning. Lu Shinan relayed a few of the rumors he had heard about Jiang Chen, as well as some details regarding the prince's loss to the young man.

"A sage realm youngster can stir up so much trouble? He seems like he'd fit in well with the demon race. We need geniuses like him the most. Shall I take his body? Or adapt his bloodline? Or perhaps make a corpse puppet out of him?"

Taking his body entailed occupying a new body with his consciousness, much like he was doing now with the Prince of Shangping's body. Adapting his bloodline meant injecting demon blood into his body, then letting it awaken in the youth naturally. In this particular way, Jiang Chen would end up becoming a member of the demon race as well. As for making him into a corpse puppet, it was a method unique to Shadow Demons that allowed them to change a living person into a lifeless puppet. Corpse puppets were stronger than bone apparitions.

Bone apparitions merely involved controlling bones through demonic arts. They appeared fearsome, but were actually rather simple and weak. On the other hand, corpse puppets could retain the abilities they had in their previous lives and moreover, gain new abilities that were unique to the demon race. They would become enhanced versions of their previous selves, in a sense.

Shadow Demons were not one of the stronger bloodlines of the demon race. However, they excelled at borrowing external strength. They didn't only use corpse puppets and bone apparitions; they boasted control over malevolent ghosts and monstrous zombies as well, using all kinds of minions to complete their goals with ease. Therefore, Shadow Demons were more difficult to deal with than many of their brethren. It was difficult to guard against their mysterious and insidious methods. Of course, that much could be said about the entire demon race. It was just that the Shadow Demons exemplified more of these characteristics.

"Don't you have a body already, sir?" Lu Shinan asked.

"This body is only for temporary measure. I won't be able to recover my former strength with a body like this."

The Prince of Shangping was decently strong amongst wandering cultivators. However, he didn't amount to much in front of actual competitors. This was especially true given that he had reached his body's natural limits in many respects. There wasn't much more to dig up and areas that he could make additional improvements in. To King Nineshadows, this was a deal-breaking flaw. Obviously, it was better for him to have a surrogate body of the highest possible quality.

Unfortunately, the demon king's soul wasn't in an ideal state. He wasn't able to take over cultivators that were exceedingly strong. A great emperor's body would of course be ideal, but the pressure they exerted could instantly crush his demonic soul. The demon king had no choice but to pick on the likes of people like the Prince of Shangping instead. He had the desire for greater, but not the necessary ability. Anyone stronger than the prince, and he would suffer significant backlash as a result.

"My liege, that brat should be close by now. What if you take him down as he approaches?" Lu Shinan's eyes flashed with malice.

The demon king thought for a moment, then shook his head. "There is no rush. If, like you said, the kid is capable enough to foil even the Prince of Shangping, then he's certainly quite a character. Though I can fight him immediately, my body's instability will be at a significant disadvantage. Let's play it safe since we're just starting out. There's going to be a lot more chances to toy with them once they enter Myriad Corpse Valley. I shall return to my Ten-Thousand-Year Coffin to gather more demonic energy so that I can further refine this body. You'll be responsible for keeping them in check. You can activate some restrictions when the time arises, but you must keep them in place. Three days is all you have. Remember, they cannot be allowed to leave. The territory outside the valley isn't mine."

Lu Shinan was a little disappointed by the demon king's instructions. He had hoped that the demon king would seize Jiang Chen, because then he would have the opportunity to rob the youth of his possessions. Although he didn't know what Jiang Chen possessed exactly, it had to be of superior quality and utility. After all, the Prince of Shangping had been willing to hand over Jiang Chen's entire bounty to him in exchange for these possessions.

Chapter 889: Leaving Myriad Corpse Valley

Jiang Chen moved forward at a steady pace. He wasn't overly pleased with beating the Prince of Shangping. With his knowledge of the prince's characteristics, he knew that the fellow wasn't the type to give up so easily. He would come again, or perhaps was already lying in wait for him with another

trap. If Jiang Chen hadn't been with Huang'er, or if she were able to function normally, Jiang Chen wouldn't mind going a few rounds with the prince until the latter was dead. However, he couldn't afford to horse around right now. The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman would last only two more hours, and one had already passed. Yet strangely, the Prince of Shangping had seemingly disappeared into thin air.

"Perhaps that old codger Shangping guessed what kind of talisman I was using. He won't bother me until the time is up!" Jiang Chen was a little bothered by the prospect. He wanted to get the fight over with quickly, no matter how many trump cards he had to use. He was tired of this game of cat and mouse. They were in demon territory, and all signs pointed to the gradual remobilization of the race. However, the time left was at least enough for him to leave the valley.

The good thing was that although Huang'er wasn't in a particularly great state, her condition also wasn't significantly worsening. Sealing away her senses had been the right choice. If he hadn't done so, it would have been much more likely for her consciousness to have been attacked under the current circumstances. Though Jiang Chen was somewhat worried that he had not seen any traces of the Prince of Shangping along his route, he didn't let this concern disrupt his thoughts. With Huang'er in tow, he continued moving forward. Now that they were more than halfway across the valley, he could simply press on if the prince refused to show himself. Once past the valley, Jiang Chen had a much better chance of survival.

.....

Lu Shinan, on the other hand, had mixed feelings. Though it was good that his liege lord once again possessed a physical body, he felt no sense of contentment. The demon king had given him firm orders to hold Jiang Chen off for three days. Three days? Lu Shinan's heart was aflame. That kid's strength is unfathomable. I don't even have the confidence to hold him off for six hours! The king has too much faith in me. What should I do?

While he deliberated, Lu Shinan received information from the bone apparitions that Jiang Chen was heading his way. His arrival wouldn't be immediate, but it would be within fifteen minutes. I have no chance of facing him with brute force alone. Why not use the same trick I used on the Prince of Shangping? Having come to a decision, he immediately carried out his course of action.

Jiang Chen arrived right on time. His consciousness was on the alert as soon as he entered the area. He spotted a man beneath a large tree, appearing to be resting against its trunk. Jiang Chen used his God's Eye to take a closer look. It really was a human cultivator, and someone he was familiar with at that.

"Lu Shinan?" Jiang Chen remembered him quite well. When everyone had been grouping up, the man had approached him in private, but Jiang Chen had refused his offer to team up.

Jiang Chen's approach seemed to surprise the man. Lu Shinan wiped away the blood on his mouth. "Daoist Huang?"

Their reunion in this particular place was very odd. Though the man seemed to be hurt, Jiang Chen had no plans of dropping his guard.

"Daoist Lu, what are you playing at?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly, looking Lu Shinan up and down.

Lu Shinan's face was pale. He grinned helplessly, "What do you think, friend?"

Jiang Chen had no interest in riddles. His smile remained, but he decided to continue moving forward. He had Huang'er with him, after all.

"Daoist Huang, how is your friend?" Lu Shinan couldn't help but ask.

"Just a little out of sorts," Jiang Chen said. "Thank you for your concern, Daoist Lu, but there's no need to worry."

Lu Shinan wiped at his mouth again. His smile was a bit wry, but it was suffused with an undoubtable sense of sincerity. "Daoist Huang, you really don't want to know how I got hurt?"

Jiang Chen was indifferent. "No, I don't."

Lu Shinan sighed softly. "I treat you like a friend, and this is how you repay me? I wanted to team up earlier, but you refused. Now, I've almost lost my life to the Prince of Shangping because of you. Alas, you're as distant as ever."

"The Prince of Shangping?" Jiang Chen raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

"I randomly encountered the prince just a little while earlier. He was a little flustered and told me that he'd had a big fight with you. He wanted me to help him. I disagreed, of course, but as a result he wanted to use me as a punching bag. Daoist Huang, that Prince of Shangping has surely laid a trap further in. You should be careful."

Jiang Chen was quiet as he looked at Lu Shinan with his God's Eye. He stared at the man for a few seconds before suddenly tossing a pill in his direction. "This is a healing pill. A gift from me."

Lu Shinan laughed ruefully. "Do you really intend on walking into danger alone, Daoist?"

"You don't need to worry about that." Jiang Chen smiled faintly. There was no way he would partner up with Lu Shinan, regardless of what the man said. He wasn't in the habit of traveling with strangers, nor would he show his back to anyone.

Lu Shinan was frustrated. The Prince of Shangping had been hard to deal with, but the prince had weaknesses. Though the guy in front of him also seemed to have many flaws, Lu Shinan didn't know how to find them. Nothing worked on him. People who didn't have any noticeable desires were detached and aloof. Lu Shinan had no breaching point against someone who wanted nothing from him.

His eyes glittered as he watched the youth disappear from his sight. He couldn't do anything about it. Fight him head on? He didn't think that he was stronger than the Prince of Shangping, and the prince had lost to the kid.

Jiang Chen slowly passed by. When he'd first entered the area, he pretended not to have noticed the surrounding mounds and white flags. His heart, however, was not so still. Someone with a consciousness as strong as Jiang Chen's could easily sense the demonic auras surrounding those fixtures. He could even perceive a bit of the Prince of Shangping's aura in the midst of those strong demonic auras.

Jiang Chen would have long since struck first if he didn't have Huang'er in tow. His intuition told him that Lu Shinan was hiding something. Was being hurt a pretense as well? Jiang Chen couldn't immediately tell. But Lu Shinan himself was definitely problematic, he was sure of that much, at least. Could Lu Shinan be the one who's defected to the demons? Jiang Chen had already confirmed that there was

such a traitor amongst the human cultivators. There was no other way that the bone apparitions could have acquired their intel.

He didn't have a clue who it was prior to this. But now, he had a vague inkling of the perfect candidate—Lu Shinan! I assume that the unlucky Prince of Shangping is already dead. Doesn't look like I'll be able to obtain the formation disk for the eight statues. Too bad...

Jiang Chen wasn't the slightest bit happy at the news. After all, the clandestine threat of the demon race's revival far overshadowed the prince's insignificant plotting. He had the option of spurring on some Goldbiter Rats to seek out traces of demon activity, but there were many underground creatures in the valley. The rats had no advantage. With this all in mind, Jiang Chen decided not to further complicate things. He headed for the valley's exit posthaste.

Though it wasn't exactly safer beyond Myriad Corpse Valley, at least Huang'er wouldn't be negatively affected by the malevolent air. Taking care of her was his first priority. Jiang Chen didn't have the luxury of engaging in any sort of heated battle.

Having been unable to detain Jiang Chen, Lu Shinan was like a cat on a hot tin roof. He had to return to the cave and inform his liege of his failure.

"What, you just let him go like that?!" The demon king was still in the process of absorbing demonic energy. He was greatly upset by the news of Jiang Chen's departure.

"My liege, that kid possesses extraordinary strength. Not even the Prince of Shangping could beat him. I was just worried that... well, it would throw a wrench into our other plans."

King Nineshadows's eyes gleamed, as if deep in thought. "Is that kid really as strong as you say?"

"I'm not really sure. But from what I understood of the prince's words, Shangping suffered at the kid's hand."

The demon king was silent for a moment. "Never mind. It's not worth the risk just for a sage realm kid. If he wants to return the same way he came, he still needs to pass by my Myriad Corpse Valley. I'll have completely infused this body with demonic energy by then. There will be no escape for him."

Lu Shinan's thirst for Jiang Chen was stronger than others'. "My liege," he couldn't resist interjecting. "If he leaves the valley, he'll be in the Wood Demons' territory. Do you think that they'll give him the chance to return at all?"

The demon king cackled. "That doesn't matter to us. We have to let them have some morsels, right? He's a mere appetizer compared to the emperor realm cultivators' rich feast. You said that there's probably going to be twenty or thirty thousand cultivators this time, no?"

Lu Shinan had nothing to say. He wanted to disagree. He actually thought Jiang Chen was the ideal prize. He didn't want to just say something like that, though. He greatly desired Jiang Chen's belongings. "My liege, isn't it hard to keep twenty or thirty thousand people in place just by ourselves?"

The demon king harrumphed. "Don't worry, I have my ways. This kid is lucky he's here early. My formation is not yet complete. When it is, the valley will be transformed into a living hell. Anyone who goes inside won't be able to make it out again."

.....

Jiang Chen had been careful along the entire way. He had expected a great struggle, but his expectations were let down. He was already out of Myriad Corpse Valley, but there were no assailants in sight. It was quite fortuitous. Now that they were out of immediate danger, he didn't bother thinking much more about it. He followed the map another few dozen miles, then unsealed Huang'er's senses.

Huang'er gradually woke up. "Brother Chen, where are we now?"

"Huang'er, even though I sealed your senses away, the malevolent air still found its way into your consciousness." Jiang Chen's expression was worried. "I think we'd better find that Requiem Wood, and fast."

Huang'er smiled apologetically. "Sorry... my condition is causing so much trouble."

"Why? We're closer than that." Jiang Chen comforted her softly. The land in front of them was perfectly clear. A vast grassy plain stretched off into the distance, and green coalesced into blue on the horizon.

Chapter 890: Chaotic Astral Wind

"There's a dense primordial forest past this grassland. According to what He Hongshu wrote, the Requiem Wood should be in that forest." Jiang Chen analyzed the map as he spoke to Huang'er, "Let's go."

He vaguely sensed that something was strange. With He Hongshu's level of cultivation, how had he managed to cross the Thousand Corpse Valley? Could it be that the demon race within the valley had not fully awakened at that time? Despite his skepticism, he currently wasn't in the mood to question how the information had been obtained. As their gazes roamed over the vast grassland before him, Jiang Chen and Huang'er didn't step onto the grass. Instead, they activated their Golden Cicada Wings and flew at a low altitude. To a normal cultivator who had never refined their wings of flight, this much flying would consume large amounts of energy.

Through the Golden Cicada Wings, the energy that Jiang Chen and Huang'er were expending didn't even reach a tenth of what they would have used had they relied on their own energy. As long as they occasionally took some pills to replenish themselves, they wouldn't suffer any side effects at all. However, the air currents within the area were extremely strange. Even as they flew close to the ground, they found it difficult to gain speed. It was as though there was some form of resistance in the air that barred their attempt at passing through the area quickly.

Initially, He Hongshu and his group had alternated between travelling on foot and flying to cross this grassland. They had spent a grand total of two days trekking through this passage and more than a third of their comrades had died. The grassland might appear tranquil, but within the endless, rampant growth of wild grass that had surpassed human height, who knew what was concealed within and below the terrain? What kind of terrifying existences were lying in wait for them?

First and foremost the marshlands that dotted this grassland were filled with countless traps. From time to time, quagmire whirlpools would mysteriously appear, dragging people down into their depths. As the two of them hovered above the ground, they could see plenty of what was happening below them. Occasionally, they could spy a couple of wind-worn bones lying amidst the grass. There were also the

corpses of numerous animals with various astonishing appearances. This place truly brimmed with desolation and isolation.

It wasn't that the two didn't want to soar higher into the sky, but the higher they went, the stronger the air resistance became. It was as though this patch of grassland had been naturally created to contain a special kind of magic power. The two were more or less stuck to gliding three to four meters above the ground. Of course, even this speed was much faster than travelling on foot.

If they could fly unobstructed for the entire trip, Jiang Chen felt that it would take them less than a day to pass through this large grassland. They glided without obstacles for two hours. Their trip so far had been very quiet—so quiet that he found it rather unfathomable. He was even quite uneasy about the entire situation. Throughout the trip, he had felt that there was something oddly suspicious about this unsettling quietness. By now, the defensive power granted by the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman had already disappeared entirely. Hence, Jiang Chen had no choice but proceed with the utmost caution.

“When Brother Ji gave me the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman, he said that I could use it twice. I've already activated it once so there should be one more use. I can't use it so freely now. If I use it, I'll be left with almost no defensive resources.” When Jiang Chen thought of this, he felt a flash of intense hatred towards the Prince of Shangping. If it hadn't been for that man's attack, he wouldn't have wasted the Imperial Advent Talisman's first use like this! Nevertheless, this was all in the past. By now, that fellow had probably already passed on. No matter how much Jiang Chen might hate him, it wouldn't amount to anything. The two people continued their flight with rapt attention, their five senses carefully attuned to their surroundings.

Eh? Suddenly, a rustling noise floated past Jiang Chen's ears. At first, he even thought he had misheard. But this noise grew louder and louder. However, when he glanced around, he didn't see anything unusual. Ever since Jiang Chen had refined his Ear of the Zephyr, his sense of hearing had never failed him under any circumstance. This sound reminded him of a silkworm gnawing on a leaf, distinct and easily distinguishable. He listened carefully and sensed that the sound was emitted from all directions. Although it didn't sound like anything too serious, it still filled Jiang Chen with a kind of uneasiness.

Screech! Suddenly, an ear-piercing noise split the air. From high above the clouds, an enormous black shadow careened downwards. It was an enormous eagle! It flapped its wings in alarm as it circled the sky above the grassland, its eyes filled with panic.

Indeed, panic! Jiang Chen could see extreme anxiety in this enormous eagle's eyes. One, two, then numerous ones...

Amidst the clouds, numerous birds appeared out of nowhere in the sky above them, screeching sharply in alarm and fear, as if the end of the world was imminent. The first huge eagle seemed to have made up its mind. With a violent dive, it abruptly plummeted towards the grassland below.

Suddenly, a lightning fast green shadow flashed within the grass before a gaping, fanged maw opened wide and swallowed the eagle whole. Upon closer inspection, Jiang Chen realized that it was actually an enormous green python. What the... it had concealed itself so masterfully! He had come so close to it, but he hadn't detected the hidden presence of the python at all.

“What in the world is this?” Jiang Chen was dumbfounded at the scene before his eyes. The spirit birds in the air seemed to have thrown all caution to the wind as they shot towards the grass like dumplings.

Every kind of creature born in the wild had its own natural territory. Birds like these usually only hunted for food in the grasslands. They didn't actually make the grasslands their homes. But at this moment, they had completely ignored this fact. They hadn't even consider that they might be barging into the territory of some other creature. They dived towards the ground in a flurry. When the predators on the ground saw this phenomenon, they hunted the birds continuously, devouring them one after another. But even so, tens of thousands of birds continued to shoot towards the grass. It was as if they didn't want to spend a second longer in the air.

Jiang Chen and Huang'er watched all this happen with wide eyes and gaping mouths. And at this moment, the noise by Jiang Chen's ear grew even louder, crescendoing almost instantly into a tidal-like roar. As he gazed into the horizon with his God's Eye, he discovered that a charcoal-colored air current was flowing all around them, heading towards them at a lightning-like pace. The momentum behind that air current was actually ten times fiercer than the surging ocean tides! In the distance, there were some birds who had not dodged in time. Their feathers scattered wildly into the air, their flesh exploding into bloody fragments as they were ground into fine powder by the vicious currents.

“This is bad!” Something seemed to have occurred to Jiang Chen as he grabbed Huang'er and buried into the ground without a second thought. At the same time, he used his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice to open a path before them, escorting Huang'er deeper into the ground. In his current situation, even if some emperor realm beast were lying below ground, Jiang Chen still wouldn't retreat.

Uwuwuwuwu! The terrifying air currents swallowed the surrounding clouds as they moved in all directions, gathering together. With a ghastly howl, the currents sucked away at the space around them like an unrestrained wave. Jiang Chen had already pierced more than three hundred meters into the ground by that time. Even so, he could still feel the fearsome tremors that wracked the ground around them, as if the earth itself would split apart at any moment and the sky would collapse from above.

Huang'er had seen and experienced many things in her life but she had also gone deathly pale. She whispered in a low voice to Jiang Chen, “Brother Chen, what is going on?”

Jiang Chen's expression was grave. “This is chaotic astral wind. It tears apart even the tallest of mountains in its way into tiny pieces. If our flesh and blood were to touch it, we'd be instantly ground into fine dust.”

“Chaotic astral wind?” It was the first time Huang'er had heard this name. She was temporarily shocked. As someone from Myriad Abyss Island, everything she had seen and experienced throughout her lifetime was of the highest tier within the Divine Abyss Continent. But she had never ever seen this chaotic astral wind. Conversely, it was Jiang Chen, a boy born in the backwater Eastern Kingdom, who knew what this terrifying thing was. A wisp of gratification floated within Huang'er's heart. “It seems that Brother Chen has indeed awakened many memories that don't belong to you. Could it be that you're really the reincarnation of a celestial from your previous life?”

The wind ravaged the area around for a few hours before it showed any signs of dissipating. However, Jiang Chen was in no hurry to leave. Even if the gale was weakening, it still wasn't something that a

human body could defend against. Nonetheless, he felt something was strange about this. They were in the desolate wildlands. Where in the world could this chaotic astral wind have come from?

Normally speaking, chaotic astral wind was created by a spatial crack. When a plane shattered or if a crack appeared in the space between two planes, a powerful chaotic astral wind would be generated. But in the desolate wildlands, how could there be such a powerful shattering of a realm?

The world above them might be in the process of being demolished by the astral wind, but that didn't mean that the area below ground was safe either. When Jiang Chen activated his God's Eye and surveyed his surroundings, he sensed the approach of at least four to five enemies from all around them. "Such powerful spirit creatures live even in such a deep underground crevice. No wonder so many people lost their lives in this grassland. This is hell on earth."

Fortunately, these powerful creatures which eyed them hungrily didn't seem overwhelmingly strong individually. Hence, Jiang Chen didn't fear them. Most importantly, these sources of power that eyed them so covetously were also naturally cautious. He didn't provoke them. He only wanted to wait for the astral wind to disappear before leaving this underground place. If it was anywhere else, he might have considered travelling underground. But this underground area was different from all others. Here, the quagmire around them was extraordinarily sticky, making it difficult to travel quickly. Moreover, there were countless spirit creatures in the ravine below ground. If Jiang Chen wished to travel underground, just dealing with these creatures alone would be enough to give him a headache.

At this time, one of the underground creatures could no longer restrain itself. With a menacing bellow, it shot towards Jiang Chen like a drill. It was incredibly fast, as though the stickiness of the quagmire in this abyss had no effect on it at all. However, just because Jiang Chen's movements were impeded didn't mean that he had no means to deal with the situation. With a flash of the Featherflight Mirror, a beam of light shot towards the creature. It instantly slowed down, but it had already been engulfed by the countless vines of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

Fortunately for it, Jiang Chen had no wish to offend these underground dwellers. With a careless swish of his lotus, he tossed the spirit creature aside. Simultaneously, he grabbed Huang'er, straightened his body and flew up towards the surface. The astral wind had dissipated and their surroundings regained their usual tranquility. Only, when they emerged from the ground, the scene that greeted their eyes was vastly different. Those tufts of tall grass had been completely shredded. Numerous spirit beasts had been wrangled into tiny bits of bloody flesh that littered the entire area. Truly, this was the widespread aftermath of a catastrophe.

Jiang Chen sighed lightly. A trace of fear lingered in his heart. If he had been even one step slower just now, he could have been wiped out as well. "As expected, you run into trouble every ten steps you take here in the desolate wildlands. We can't let our guard down at all." Jiang Chen calmed himself. He exchanged a glance with Huang'er before they proceeded forward.