

Three Realms 931

Chapter 931: Inexhaustible Trump Cards

Even though nobody worshipped the true dragons in the Divine Abyss Continent, to cultivators they were still an existence akin to the gods because of the ancient legends. The dragons were the royals of old and also one of the noblest races ever, true dragons especially. They were a noble bloodline that was famous throughout the heavens.

The true dragon image charged towards the beast head on and instantly shattered the savage-looking lion image into nothing. Just how powerful was the will behind that bloodline? A low-level image was only powerful in appearance. Without the presence of will, it would possess attack power but lack sovereignty. The image that Jiang Chen had formed encompassed the powerful will of a true dragon, and thus also contained the might of a true dragon. This was why it was able to shatter the enemy image in an instant.

For a brief moment, the entire arena was enveloped in silence. Many had yet to react, as they were too busy digesting the series of events taking place before their eyes. Their minds were filled with all sorts of questions. How could there be true dragons in the Divine Abyss Continent? Pill King Zhen had obviously refined the true dragon bloodline. Otherwise, the true dragon image that he'd conjured couldn't possibly possess such a strong willpower.

"Your Majesty, Pill King Zhen..." Cloudsoar Monarch's brain had also fizzled out for a brief moment. He couldn't even manage to eke out a proper sentence.

"The will of a true dragon! This young brat actually possesses the bloodline of a true dragon! He's a true genius!" Emperor Peafowl was overjoyed. Incidentally, the reason behind the emperor's current cultivation base and status was due to him having stumbled across the fortuitous encounter of a lifetime when he was young. He had accidentally obtained the bloodline of the ancient peafowl during his youth. The peafowl was also one of the noble beasts from the ancient era. In fact, their clan was only slightly inferior when compared to the dragon clan.

Due to the strength of that bloodline, the young Emperor Peafowl became famous for being able to master everything he learned, eventually becoming the overlord that he was at present. Because of that, he understood just how powerful bloodlines were more than anyone else. He could tell that Jiang Chen's true dragon bloodline was extremely pure. It was apparent that there were no impurities in it due to the authentic physique of the true dragon image. Countless people had descended from the dragon clan ever since ancient times, but their bloodline only became increasingly thinner with every new generation. However, there was also a few who were the direct descendants of the true dragon clan.

Emperor Peafowl was extremely shocked, but also a little glad that he had a keen eye for talent. Jiang Chen is destined to become a legend in the Divine Abyss Continent one day.

Over at an uneventful corner not far away from the arena, two elderly men disguised as wandering cultivators were in disbelief at what had just happened in the arena. They were in a bind. One was a twelfth rank inspector of the Ninesuns Sky Sect, while the other was the sect's venerated elder. They both held very high positions in the Ninesuns Sky Sect. They'd snuck into Veluriyam Capital for Pill King

Zhen, disguised as wandering cultivators. Like the Eternal Celestial Capital, they were suspicious of Pill King Zhen's true identity.

However, they had a better reason than the Eternal Celestial Capital for their suspicions. They'd accidentally come across information that Pill King Zhen had once brandished his pill king badge at the border of Veluriyam Capital and stated that he was a second-rank pill king. In the Ninesuns Sky Sect, there was a second-rank pill king named Shi Zhen that was associated with Cao Jin. However, the name on Pill King Zhen's pill king badge was Zhen Shi. Obviously he'd simply reversed the order of the name!

The Eternal Celestial Capital had no idea that the Ninesuns Sky Sect once had a young pill dao genius called Shi Zhen. After all, a mere second-rank pill king wasn't likely notable. But, the Ninesuns Sky Sect knew that Shi Zhen and Cao Jin had disappeared at the same time. Moreover, all evidence pointed towards the fact that the fall of Cao Jin had something to do with Jiang Chen. If that were the case then Jiang Chen likely had something to do with Shi Zhen's disappearance as well. Thus, it was only logical to suspect Pill King Zhen after he had brandished the badge.

They were almost certain that the badge belonged to Shi Zhen. They also suspected that Pill King Zhen was the same person as Jiang Chen. After analyzing the evidence they had, they were at least eighty percent sure that Pill King Zhen was Jiang Chen himself. They had even more grounds for their suspicions than the Eternal Celestial Capital. Thus, the Ninesuns Sky Sect was paying close attention to this match. The large brute in the arena was actually one of their great disciples. His ranking was even higher than Cao Jin. Cao Jin was ranked ninth, while this man was ranked seventh.

He was Xiao Paohui, stronger than Cao Jin in every single way. Moreover, this man was very fierce and agile in battle. All his thoughts of fear and death were thrown to the wind during battle, making him incredibly aggressive. Many who had battled with Xiao Paohui couldn't adapt to his aggressiveness and were utterly crushed.

Xiao Paohui was actually quite close to Cao Jin. Because of that, he didn't even hesitate before accepting this mission. However, he wasn't just trying to avenge Cao Jin. His superiors from the clan had told him that the Ninesuns Sky Sect ardently wanted something that Jiang Chen might have obtained from a fortuitous encounter. This only gave Xiao Paohui even more motivation.

Xiao Paohui had placed great hopes on Cao Jin from the start. Thus, it was evident that Cao Jin's death had influenced him greatly. He wasn't sure if Pill King Zhen was the same person as Jiang Chen, but if he was, then his cultivation base must not be half bad if he could manage to eliminate Cao Jin and his three-man group.

Maybe there was an unexpected reason for Cao Jin's defeat, but he had no doubt that this was an opponent that he couldn't take lightly, even if the opponent only appeared to be at the seventh level sage realm. Xiao Paohui walked onto the arena with this in mind and didn't take his opponent lightly at all. He'd wanted to crush his opponent with the Thunderous Lion Roar, but it had proved ineffective. After that, he'd switched to his specialty of close combat, hoping to overwhelm his enemy with his strength and aggressiveness, but that had also proved ineffective. These continuous failures had made him take his opponent very seriously, which was why he decided to use his ultimate trump card of all, the power of totems.

He strongly believed that after using this trump card, he would be able to kill his opponent as easily as flipping a hand. After all, the power of his totem would double his combat strength. Moreover, the totem image was capable of destroying all in its path. The power of an image was not to be compared with that of common martial methods. An image didn't just deal physical damage; it also dealt divine damage.

Moreover, common defense methods were unable to deflect the power of an image. Xiao Paohui could never have imagined that his opponent would use an even more powerful image to instantly destroy his ultimate killing technique. Even a man as confident as Xiao Paohui would feel a great sense of loss after that. The proudest achievement in his cultivation had been easily destroyed by another person with the same method. He stared at Jiang Chen with a look of defeat. "You... you understand image attacks too?"

Jiang Chen revealed a bland smile. "The power of totems. You mustn't have come from a simple background, am I right? Who sent you? Why do you show your tail but hide your head?"

Xiao Paohui's glare danced to and fro as he roared savagely, "I'm not convinced that your image is stronger than mine!"

The savage roar was as loud as the collapse of mountains and the cracking of earth. Xiao Paohui's body began to emit a silver brilliance. It seemed like he was going to accumulate all of the strength in his body into one strike.

"Brat! If you don't fall with this strike, then it shall be my demise!" Xiao Paohui was no longer treating his opponent as he would any other. He understood that he would have to go all out in order to defeat this enemy. Silver runes began to materialize, as if they were carp splashing around in the blue ocean waves. They became increasingly brilliant. Xiao Paohui put his hands together and formed a rune that was a foot wide and three feet long. It appeared within the void and seemed to bear the strong will of a mighty expert.

He opened his arms, causing the rune to turn into a ball of silver light and enter his body. Moments later, it almost seemed as if he'd been possessed by an emperor realm expert. The silver brilliance emitting from his body suddenly swelled by ten feet and shot into the clouds.

"The might of a great emperor!" Someone below the arena exclaimed.

"This is the will of a great emperor! Did an emperor possess his body?"

"Not good! Pill King Zhen is in danger!"

Jiang Chen immediately realized what was happening when he felt the frightening amount of power. It was indeed as powerful as the aura of a great emperor, but it wasn't emitted by a genuine emperor. It was the rune that had encapsulated the might of a great emperor and temporarily manifested itself in Xiao Paohui's body. He suddenly felt an inexplicable sense of danger.

Jiang Chen made a decision in a split second. He grabbed the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman and activated it. The defensive power of a great emperor instantly entered his body as well. The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman had come from Ji San, indirectly given to him by the Coiling Dragon clan lord.

Jiang Chen had also used it once in the desolate wildlands. An Imperial Advent Defense Talisman could be activated twice. Since he had already used it once, it could only be used once more. Jiang Chen

hadn't planned on using it easily. However, he understood that if he didn't use it now, there was a chance he would no longer get to use it again. Since the opponent had manifested the might of a great emperor, he now temporarily possessed the might and power of a great emperor. Jiang Chen now had the same. This way, the powers might cancel each other out, helping him endure the attack.

Ji San was relieved as he observed the battle play out. "It's fortunate that I gave him the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman. Otherwise, he would have eaten a big loss this time."

The Coiling Dragon Clan Lord nodded in agreement, "Ji San, you must maintain a good relationship with Pill King Zhen. He's an incredible genius that has an incredible future ahead of him. After thirty or fifty years, the entire continent will probably become Pill King Zhen's era and legacy!"

The clan lord didn't feel that it was inappropriate to describe Jiang Chen in such a way. The clan lord's words made Liuxiang, who was sitting right beside them, incredibly upset. The smug look on Ji San's face only served to make him even more jealous. Isn't it just due to luck that you were able to become friends with Pill King Zhen? Ji San! I, Liuxiang, will forever be better than you!

Unexpectedly, Ji Zhongtang seemed to be watching Pill King Zhen with a profound look in his eyes. His face was filled with nothing but admiration.

Chapter 932: An Earth-Shattering Strike

Even though the Eternal Celestial Capital been itching for a fight before this, the series of unforeseen events that had just unfolded in the arena had made them incredibly nervous. At this very moment, Saint Holy King Mu, Saint Holy King Ke, and Holy King Bei were right outside the arena, having blended in with the crowd to observe the battle. They were trying to observe Pill King Zhen to see whether or not he was indeed Jiang Chen.

The current Pill King Zhen had displayed a completely different fighting style from what they'd heard about Jiang Chen in the rumors. Jiang Chen hadn't revealed his trump cards often in the past. Every time he was forced to reveal them, he would eliminate the enemy without leaving behind any trace of evidence. The only thing everyone knew that he possessed was the Bewitching Lotus of Ice and Fire, because it was simply too heaven defying and unique. Many had seen it with their own eyes, which was why every major sect had deeply associated the Bewitching Lotus of Ice and Fire with Jiang Chen. Other than that, they were finding it incredibly difficult to associate Jiang Chen with any other unique ability.

"Brother Mu. It seems that Pill King Zhen is a lot harder to deal with than we'd originally thought. I've become a little unsure if he really is Jiang Chen," Saint Holy King Ke had become slightly skeptical.

Saint Holy King Mu's expression darkened, "This brat might've hid it well, but my instincts tell me that there's definitely something more to him. We cannot use our common sense to make judgments when dealing with this kid. Even though this brat might have stronger battle techniques and martial methods than Jiang Chen, you must not forget that it has been almost two years since the destruction of Regal Pill Palace. Judging by how quickly that kid improves..."

Saint Holy King Ke didn't say anything else. Saint Holy King Mu had made a good point.

However, Holy King Bei, who was staring at the large brute in the arena, suddenly frowned, "My two honorable saint holy kings, are neither of you somewhat suspicious of the large brute's background?"

“Suspicious? Why do you say so?”

“It’s obvious that the large brute’s martial methods and divine abilities are from a large sect. A disciple of his stature could never have come from a small clan or a small sect. Your subordinate is wondering if he might actually be a disciple from the Ninesuns Sky Sect?”

The two saint holy kings immediately scowled. The Ninesuns Sky Sect?

The presence of the Ninesuns Sky Sect was the last thing they wanted to hear. Even if one were to ignore the heated battles between the two that recently took place in the Myriad Domain, they’d already been at each other throats over Emperor Featherlight’s inheritance for a thousand years by now. If the Ninesuns Sky Sect’s disciple were to defeat Pill King Zhen today, they’d gain the upper hand. No matter how perfect or elaborate, the Eternal Celestial Capital’s plans would become completely meaningless, even if Pill King Zhen truly was Jiang Chen. The Ninesuns Sky Sect was also been looking for Jiang Chen. They were planning to use Jiang Chen to unlock the secrets of Emperor Featherlight’s inheritance.

“Ninesuns Sky Sect...” A cold glint appeared on Saint Holy King Mu’s face as he wrapped himself in his own thoughts.

Saint Holy King Ke however, forced out a laugh instead, “Don’t tell me we’re supposed to pray for Jiang Chen? Pray that he’ll win?”

They felt incredibly conflicted right now. On one hand, they were worried that the large brute was actually a genius from the Ninesuns Sky Sects, and that their age-old enemy would gain the upper hand after the battle. Yet somehow, they were also hoping that Pill King Zhen wouldn’t be too strong. After all, the Eternal Celestial Capital had also planted a few of their own members to battle him later on. If Pill King Zhen were to defeat the large brute, it would mean that the arrangements they’d made earlier might not actually be sufficient. This was because none of the three geniuses that they’d sent out were capable of defeating the large brute in terms of absolute strength! Thus, anxiety began to envelop the two saint holy kings.

Back in the arena, the battle had reached its climax.

One side held the might and power of a great emperor, while the other held the defense of a great emperor. The two opposing sides were equally matched. It was hard to tell who would end up the victor.

One could tell that Xiao Paohui currently possessed a sharp increase in attack power. His plan was simple. He planned on crushing his opponent by simply using the might of a great emperor. He was used to defeating his opponents in close quarters. An emperor’s might was incredibly frightening, even though it was actually strength that originated from a mere rune. Xiao Paohui was throwing out a flurry of attacks at a speed that had reached an entirely new level. Every single punch that he threw seemed to release a gust of wind that was as loud as the roar of a tiger. It was so mighty that the entire arena seemed to be shaking and so powerful that nobody could even approach beyond a few hundred meters from them.

“Pill King Zhen, I admit that you are worthy to be my opponent, but this will be as far as you go!” Xiao Paohui looked towards the skies and roared. Power continuously rushed around his body as his might

soared. Behind him, faint ethereal silhouettes of gods began to form into being, making him look extremely celestial.

“This is the Judgement Fist of the Celestial Emperor! You should feel honored for making me take your life with this move!” Xiao Paohui spoke dominantly. In fact, he was exuding an aura of dominance from head to toe. It was as though he was a sovereign that had descended upon the world.

“Celestial Emperor? Judgement Fist?” Jiang Chen frowned as he spoke. All of a sudden, he began to laugh coldly, “The Celestial Emperor? Are you even worthy of using such a name?” He felt a strong sense of abhorrence and disgust when he heard those two words escape his opponent’s mouth. As the Celestial Emperor’s son, Jiang Chen had never once heard his father create a move called the Judgement Fist. This move was likely named by a pretentious and lowly cultivator from the lower regions. One could easily tell that this move would be grandiose only in name.

Xiao Paohui could never have guessed that the opponent standing in front of him was actually the reborn son of the celestial emperor! This was why he was able to act as though he was the personification of the celestial emperor himself, high and mighty as though he dictated all life. “Take this!” Xiao Paohui swung his arm to deliver a punch, tearing the void. The punch felt like one was being crushed by a mountain range from a distant, ancient era, or by a fallen star from the endless night sky. It seemed unstoppable. A giant fist, at least one hundred feet tall, struck down from the void towards Jiang Chen.

“Die!” Xiao Paohui kept swinging his arms, materializing countless numbers of fists that began to merge with the giant fist formation. It was as though thousands upon thousands of experts had fused their attacks together into one move.

Moments later, the void began to tremble, and the arena began to collapse into rubble. The four pillars that supported the arena had begun to collapse one by one. This arena had been originally designed for youths, which was why it couldn’t withstand the might of an emperor realm attack and was thus currently disintegrating.

It was evident that this was an attack at a level so destructive that it would destroy everything under the void. However, Jiang Chen, who was standing in the middle of the arena, didn’t seem to be overly concerned about the attack at all. It was as though the huge fist bearing down on him was not an attack worthy of any reaction. The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman was showing its full capability.

Even though his current battle capabilities wasn’t high enough to be able to retaliate, the protection he received from the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman wasn’t something the enemy could easily penetrate. After all, the enemy was only borrowing power from a rune to gain a temporary boost in might and attack. But he wasn’t up to the standards of an emperor realm expert in other aspects, such as the knowledge and understanding of martial dao. Thus, the powerful-looking fist formation was frightening to others, but only frivolous and weak to Jiang Chen.

Once the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman was fully activated, Jiang Chen was enveloped by an energy barrier that contained the defense power of an emperor realm expert. The giant fist formation was only able to bear down thirty feet above his head, unable to penetrate any further.

One side wielded a giant silver fist while the other side wielded a shiny golden energy barrier. The giant fist struck down violently, causing a huge dent in the golden energy barrier, but it couldn't penetrate beyond the thirty-feet mark. Xiao Paohui was dumbstruck when he saw this. This is a great emperor attack! How can he possibly withstand it?

"A great emperor realm barrier?" Xiao Paohui immediately lost all composure. This was his most powerful trump card! He had no other trump cards to unleash after this strike!

"Impossible!" Xiao Paohui roared again and again. He began to unleash a flurry of fists at a faster rate. "Shatter! Shatter! Shatter!!"

His fists kept on materializing and merging with the ethereal giant fist formation. As expected, the fist began to sink a few more feet into the barrier after his incessant frenzy of punches. However, a frenzied attack like this was also going to consume a great deal of life energy. At the end of the day, Xiao Paohui was only a half-step emperor. The more he did this, the more of a toll it took on his body. If he maintained this rate of attack, he would fall into a cultivation deviation within an hour. There was even a possibility that he would suffer a backlash from the great emperor aura as well!

Jiang Chen felt immediate relief when he saw how his opponent was reacting. He knew that the opponent had lost his calm. This was a good opportunity to retaliate. The enemy might've gotten a temporary great emperor level boost to his attack and might, but his defense was definitely still the same. If he could launch a surprise attack on the enemy, dealing a fatal strike was definitely possible.

Jiang Chen's mind was set once he arrived at such a conclusion. With the protection of the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman, there was no need for Jiang Chen to worry about defense. Right now, all he needed was to find an opportunity to deal a fatal strike to the enemy. Numerous finishing moves appeared in Jiang Chen's mind in a split second.

In the end, he ultimately decided to use the Pentecolor Divine Swords given to him by Emperor Peafowl. These were divine swords that had been branded by the emperor himself. It was time to show the world the Pentecolor Divine Swords' edge! Jiang Chen once again called upon the power in his bloodline. The golden brilliance exuding from his body suddenly became blurry and faint. He had formed the Golden Cicada Image. Cicada's Disappearance!

His true self circled behind Xiao Paohui. The Pentecolor Divine Swords boasted of five techniques. The five techniques could turn into one, just as easily as one could turn into five. It could change between techniques freely. Jiang Chen slapped the sheath, causing five colored beams of light to break through the void. Encompassing the strength of the heavens and earth, he hewed the blade towards Xiao Paohui.

The strike overturned the wind and clouds, and moved the sky and earth. Five colored beams of light shone through the void, bringing along five iridescent clouds. Like trained horses, the five distinct lights flashed by, merging into one and converged upon their target.

Strike!

Chapter 933: Strike! Kill!

There was no way anyone could describe the strike with words. It was peculiar, because nobody could understand it. How did Pill King Zhen break free from his opponent's attacks and strike Xiao Paohui from behind?

Such dominance! There was so much profoundness in the sword dao of this single strike that it dumbfounded many of the famous sword dao experts that were present. This was the "Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique" that Jiang Chen had trained to use with the Pentecolor Divine Swords. This particular sword art had a very extraordinary background. The expert that had practiced this sword art back then had been even more powerful than his father, the Celestial Emperor!

Years ago, the Vastsky Divine Emperor ascended from a secular world to become a divine celestial emperor. The Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique was one of this legendary being's ultimate techniques. Jiang Chen had idolized the Vastsky Divine Emperor ever since he was a boy. His father had often mentioned that within the vastness of the cosmos, there lived the legendary divine celestial emperors of the heavenly plains.

Jiang Chen had been very intrigued by the traces left behind by the Vastsky Divine Emperor. Because this was a man that had ascended from a secular world and had cultivated both pill and martial dao. He was also immensely talented in pill dao, having skyrocketed in strength in his later years. Eventually, he would become a divine celestial emperor that would shock the entire cosmos.

Jiang Chen had just displayed the Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique in the Divine Abyss Continent. It was not a sword technique from this plane. The sharpness of the sword edge and his talent had been displayed in just one strike. It was at this moment that things were destined to come to a close, and Xiao Paohui destined to die.

The invincible sword light struck Xiao Paohui's enormous body. His body suddenly turned stiff, as though struck by a paralyzing glyph. His eyes were filled with disbelief. He wanted to turn around to see who had dealt him the fatal strike. As strong as he was, he unfortunately couldn't even muster up the strength to turn around.

Moments later, the sword light pierced straight through his body. Five beams of light equated to five holes in his body.

Bam! Xiao Paohui fell to his knees before his huge body slumped onto the floor. His body was so enormous that it kicked up the dust around him. Resentment remained in his eyes even in death. His eyes were wide open like a bell.

The arena was so quiet that it almost seemed like the air had solidified. It remained like this for a few breaths before the sound of applause exploded from all sides. The praise swept through the area and came in like a tide from both near and far. Jiang Chen sheathed his sword. "Who's next?" He asked, seemingly unfazed.

After such a battle, Jiang Chen had gained a battle aura. This was an aura that was vastly different from his aura from previous battles. In the past, he had been able to defeat the strong by relying on his equipment. Even though he had used the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman in the battle, his techniques were noticeably more sophisticated than before—images, sword techniques, the Golden Body of Demons and Gods, and more.

Every candidate in the first arena was silent due to fear. It was evident that all cultivators in the first arena had given up any intentions of fighting Jiang Chen after such a battle. However, the rules stated that it was mandatory for every single one of them to challenge Pill King Zhen. This was a hard rule that was set so that every single candidate would have to fight one another. But against a person of Pill King Zhen's stature, these cultivators simply couldn't find the courage to challenge him.

"That's insane! Is this Pill King Zhen's true capabilities in martial dao?"

"Unbelievable! I've always thought that Pill King Zhen was just a genius in pill dao. Never in my life would I have imagined that Pill King Zhen was just as capable in martial dao!"

"No wonder he could become the arena lord of the first arena. Someone even mentioned that he'd cheated during the formation selection stage. That person must be hitting himself right now!"

"Forget it. I've decided to forfeit against Pill King Zhen."

"I will forfeit and admit my loss too."

"Which idiot wouldn't forfeit against him? I'm not about to let him torture me!" One by one, the cultivators in the first arena sighed in relief. They could finally put down the baggage in their hearts. If they were going to lose irrespectively, they might as well admit defeat. Admitting defeat against someone as powerful as Pill King Zhen wasn't shameful in the least.

At a corner far away from the arena, the two high-ranked members of the Ninesuns Sky Sect were petrified as well. They'd risked danger, disguised themselves as wandering cultivators, and blended in with the crowd, all so they could watch Xiao Paohui crush Jiang Chen in the arena. They had all but confirmed that Pill King Zhen was truly Jiang Chen. Moreover, they were extremely confident this time. Xiao Paohui was a top-notch genius, ranked seventh among the ten great disciples. Amongst the youths in the Ninesuns Sky Sect, those who could defeat him in battle could be counted on one hand.

Jiang Chen might be heaven defying, but he was too young. And with the passage of only a few short years, how heaven defying could an origin realm speck like him possibly be?

And yet...

The result from the battle had overturned their beliefs. The two looked at each other and saw the bitterness and resentment in each other's eyes. It was evident that they both couldn't accept the result. Xiao Paohui was dead! It wouldn't have been an issue if it were some common disciple. There were an infinite number of geniuses in the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Losing one or two wouldn't make much of a difference, but the ten great disciples weren't just any common disciples! These disciples were supposed to be the future pillars of the sect!

Cao Jin's death had already caused a great deal of unrest in the sect. Adding Xiao Paohui's death to the list was truly one disaster on top of another. Their deaths weren't debilitating for the sect, but they were still a huge blow. Worse, they couldn't even collect the body under such circumstances!

Even though nobody knew where Xiao Paohui was from, the one thing people knew for sure was that he'd come for Pill King Zhen. Collecting his body right now would expose their true identities. This was Veluriyam Capital after all. They calmed themselves down after the heartbreaking result, but they still didn't dare to collect the body. They had a feeling that Emperor Peafowl had already set his sights on

them. If they were to collect the body from the arena now, somebody else might have to come collect their bodies with it too.

“Let’s return to the sect.” The two figure heads of the Ninesuns Sky Sect looked at each other. They made this choice begrudgingly because they knew that their plans had failed yet again. However, this failure only made them even more confused. They were no longer positive that Pill King Zhen was the same person as Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was a genius, but he was only a young brat that had just broken through to the origin realm at Precious Tree Sect those few years ago. How many years had it been? It wasn’t possible for a person to improve so quickly that he could defeat a half-step emperor within such a short period of time! Not a single person in the entire history of the Divine Abyss Continent could achieve such a feat.

Were we truly mistaken? The two figure heads of the Ninesuns Sky Sect were feeling extremely conflicted. If they were mistaken, it would be like smashing their own feet with a stone they’d picked up themselves. Moreover, there was no way for them to seek revenge on a person from Veluriyam Capital. If they were to do so, all of Veluriyam Capital might retaliate. After all, this was Veluriyam Capital’s home turf and also their tournament. Sending a great disciple to deal with a genius from Veluriyam Capital was already a huge violation of the rules. The two Ninesuns Sky Sect figures quickly took their leave.

“That was astounding!” Over at the Coiling Dragon Clan, Ji San had been clenching his fists nervously. When he saw Jiang Chen’s heroic and mighty display, he was overrun by excitement.

The clan lord was staring at Jiang Chen’s back with an astonished look. “Genius... Genius! Veluriyam Capital has not seen a genius of such a level for the past three thousand years! It seems like His Majesty was truly farsighted!” The clanlord muttered to himself.

The three youths from the clan were surprised when they heard the words, “His Majesty”.

The clan lord laughed. He knew that he’d spilled the beans. All this while, rumors had been circulating that Emperor Peafowl was going to make Pill King Zhen the heir of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. This was a rumor that seemed to have some truth behind it, but there hadn’t been an official announcement yet.

Even though the disciples of the great clans were often spreading the rumor around, nobody could say for sure that it would happen. Since the clan lord was Emperor Peafowl’s trusted subordinate, it was only natural that he’d know a thing or two about it. However, he didn’t dare to wag his tongue before the emperor’s official announcement. Liuxiang couldn’t resist asking, “Clan Lord, is the emperor really going to make Pill King Zhen his heir? Isn’t this decision a little too rash?”

The clan lord broke into an odd cackle, “How can you believe such baseless rumors?”

“Many are saying that it’ll happen, but they all feel that it’s unfair. After young master Fan’s death, many disciples of the major clans in Emperor Peafowl’s faction were planning to make themselves stand out during the Martial Pagoda battles, so that His Majesty would notice us,” Liuxiang replied.

“It’s not a bad thing for youths to set a goal for themselves,” the clan lord responded with a chuckle.

“Liuxiang, don’t tell me that you intend to compete for the position as heir of Sacred Peafowl Mountain too?” Ji San asked mockingly.

“There’s no harm done in participating. If one were to have no dreams, they would be no different than a mere salted fish,” Liuxiang replied with a quiet snort.

“Fine. I admit that you have very bold dreams. But don’t tell me you still plan on realizing that dream?” Ji San asked with a supercilious smile.

“Don’t tell me that you believe Pill King Zhen can scare everyone off with just that performance?” Young master Liuxiang responded with a cold laugh. “I admit that he is strong, but nobody on the Genius and Young Lord Rankings are to be scoffed at.”

Liuxiang had his own pride. It was evident that he didn’t believe that he was inferior to Pill King Zhen.

“Why are you quarrelling over such matters? The stage has already been set up for you in the Martial Pagoda battles. Find out who’s stronger in the arena,” the clan lord said conclusively. Ji San laughed yet again, but didn’t say anything else. Liuxiang, however, was caught up in his thoughts. Nobody could tell what he was thinking about.

Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry when he saw what was happening. Every single candidate in arena one was now forfeiting their matches against him. His consecutive victories shot up within a short amount of time. He hadn’t expected this to happen. He never thought that this difficult matchup would bring him so much fortune in the end!

Chapter 934: The Intent of Ten Thousand Blades

The first arena became the oddity of the New Star Rankings. It took only ten challengers for its lord to receive a flawless record. Regardless of whether other champions matched this achievement, they would still be marked as latecomers. This was entirely due to Jiang Chen’s first arena advantage, decided during the formation test prior. Moreover, securing first place in the New Star Rankings with only ten matches was an unprecedented record in the history of the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering. Though these rankings weren’t as heated as the Genius Rankings and the Ranking of Young Lords that would take place afterwards, it was still no stranger to fierce conflict over its positions. A placement concluding in a mere ten challenges had never happened before.

In addition, nobody doubted the authenticity and ability of this particular first-place finish. Perhaps not everyone had seen the fights firsthand, but too many had nonetheless. Rumors, stories, and gossip of all kinds abounded, but there was no doubt about the actual result. This was because Pill King Zhen had met an expert who was at least in the ninth level sage realm in battle, possibly even in the half-step emperor realm. Using the power of glyphs, the opponent had wielded a great emperor’s might for a short time. That Pill King Zhen was able to perform a reversal in such circumstances was the most astonishing of all.

Faced with sudden danger, many people could only wait for their inevitable demise. Some geniuses, however, distinguished themselves from the rest. Put into the same kind of situation, they would instead turn the tables in an incredible manner. Pill King Zhen was a genius of such a caliber, an expert amongst experts. There was no debate, and could be none, about his first-place position on the New Star Rankings.

Even the few factions that weren’t as friendly with Pill King Zhen had nothing to say on the matter. Because Jiang Chen’s results had been decided in advance, he no longer needed to participate in any

upcoming battles. The next two months that would have been spent in the New Star Rankings' battles were thus freed up for him. He had no intentions of letting his newly-acquired two months of interim go to waste. He returned to Taiyuan Tower in order to further cultivate and refine his strength.

He hadn't trained the Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique very much yet. He needed more time to understand its intricacies. He had only managed to cut down Xiao Paohui because the latter hadn't been on his guard. As a result, he'd been able to exploit his opponent with the simple use of a decoy. But many people now knew about this technique because of the battle. Given another opponent on Xiao Paohui's same level, it was unlikely he'd be as lucky. Thus, he still had much to learn and practice with this technique.

The Thunderclap Sword Technique wasn't for delivering a sneak attack, but for killing the opponent with stateliness and majesty. The technique had been used by the Vastsky Divine Emperor of yesteryear. No matter if his opponent was at his same level or much stronger, he was able to crush his opponents in a dominant fashion once the technique was in full swing. The technique relied on both the exertion of one's aura and an overwhelming sword intent to annihilate everything in its path. The 'five' in the technique's name corresponded to the five elements, as did the 'pente' in the Pentecolor Divine Swords'. The two fit each other extremely well. Even Emperor Peafowl hadn't foreseen this fact.

Of course, the technique wasn't suitable for the average cultivator. Only a cultivator like Jiang Chen, who cultivated all five elements, could take up a sword technique like this. He had thought this problem through long ago when he was still entering the spirit realm. In martial cultivation, many geniuses focused on one or two elements according to their personal talents. It was impossible for the vast majority of cultivators to refine all five, and they had none of the requisite knowledge and resources anyway.

Jiang Chen was different. Because he had kept the issue in mind when he was still establishing his foundation, he'd used the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill to coalesce all five types of qi within his body and cleave open the spirit realm. As a result, energy of all the elements ran through his meridians. This special advantage allowed him the option of refining them all. Perhaps there was no visible edge in the short term, but its benefits would certainly be clear over a long period of time.

Because he was tempering all five elements at the same time, he could learn any technique he wanted. On the other hand, a cultivator with only one or two elements available to them had no way of learning a great number of superb techniques, even when presented with the option to do so. The stronger one's level was, the more pronounced this difference became. Many cultivators had no way of breaking through once they reached a certain point because of this. They hadn't established a solid enough foundation all those long years ago, at the very beginning.

Jiang Chen had delayed entering the spirit realm specifically for this purpose. It was better to be slow and steady and do everything correctly. Now, he was reaping the benefits.

"My Thunderclap Sword possesses only sound and fury. It lacks substance. I haven't understood even a little bit of the technique's intent." Jiang Chen knew himself better than anyone else. For him to reach that kind of understanding required calling upon his own energy to summon the five thunders.

Accompanied by the swords' aura movements, the five thunders carried a destructiveness potent enough to shatter worlds. If the Vastsky Divine Emperor knew about how Jiang Chen was using his trademark technique, he would likely find it both amusing and annoying.

The most basic of basics for the Thunderclap Sword technique was refining qi. All five types of qi had to be abundant and perfectly balanced. Only if one were to sufficiently gather enough qi would one be able to balance them well, thereby summoning the five thunders and form sufficient killing power in the technique.

Jiang Chen had always been attentive to refining all five qis. Assisted by his Bewitching Lotus, his water and fire qi were the most solid. His metal qi was honed by his magnetic golden mountain, and thus easily rivaled his water and fire qi. As for his wood qi, he had the wood spirit spring, fueled endlessly by the Taiyi Jade Vine.

Gong Wuji had taken the spring once upon a time, but Jiang Chen had recovered it later. Ultimately, he didn't lack much in this regard either. The only elemental treasure he was lacking was earth. To make up for it, he used a variety of spirit herbs and medicines. There was a gap between earth and his other four elements, but it wasn't enough to severely hamper him.

Was there some effect? Of course. If Jiang Chen's earth qi matched his other elements', then his practice of the Thunderclap Sword Technique would be made a fair bit easier. Because that wasn't the case, he felt some difficulty and restriction in his attempts. Still, he was in no hurry to make up for this imperfection. He knew that finding something appropriate was entirely up to luck and fate. His own desires had very little to do with it. Actually, earth element treasures were not uncommon; Jiang Chen simply hadn't encountered any. "If I can find an earth element treasure one day and exert all five of my elemental attributes with the same degree of effectiveness, then my Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique will be complete."

Though the technique wasn't entirely complete yet, the power behind the technique still allowed him a fifth or tenth of its actual strength. Opponents on the same level, or even two or three levels higher, were easily swept up by its might, even at a fraction of the technique's true potential. Grabbing two stalks of earth element earth rank spirit herbs, Jiang Chen sighed softly. "To think that I'm eating earth spirit herbs like snacks... if anyone else knew about it, I'd be the target of widespread contempt."

Earth rank spirit herbs were appropriate for emperor realm cultivators. The average emperor rank certainly didn't have a limitless supply of earth rank spirit herbs, but Jiang Chen had the luxury of simply snacking on them.

A month passed. Countless swarms of meteors suddenly soared across Jiang Chen's consciousness, which had become as vast as a borderless universe.

"Is this the intent of ten thousand swords in flight?" Jiang Chen suddenly opened his eyes; they were glittering like stars. His face was flush with excitement. The month or so of contemplation had finally paid off. He could finally feel the sword intent! Every cell in his body carried an explosiveness that could not be contained. He desperately needed an outlet for the energy. He wanted more than anything to pour his entire body's strength into this sword intent and vent all his excess intensity.

“Vastsky Divine Emperor, I will definitely spread the name of your technique far and wide, into every corner of this Divine Abyss Continent! All masters of the sword everywhere will find embarrassment from it!” Jiang Chen had an endless confidence. The sudden revelation was like a ray of light cutting through immeasurable darkness. His dao heart cleared up quite a bit more. He’d learned a lot from the enriching experience.

Jiang Chen couldn’t wait to return to the arena and find another strong opponent. He wanted to test his newfound understanding. He left his secret room and was congratulated by everyone he saw.

“Senior brother, New Star Rankings number one, congratulations!” Shen Trifire was the first. Liu Wencai, Lu Yali, and various others trailed closely behind.

In contrast, Gouyu, Xue Tong, and his other personal guards showed themselves comparably less. All they needed to do was cultivate and cultivate. Though it had only been a short while, Gouyu and company’s cultivation levels increased at a drastically rapid pace. They were catching up to Shen Trifire and his peers very quickly. With enough time, it wasn’t inconceivable for them to surpass the people from Regal Pill Palace.

Still, Jiang Chen had the highest expectations for Liu Wencai in terms of martial dao. He’d always taken good care of Liu Wencai. Back at Eternal Spirit Mountain, he’d given the young man Redscaled Firelizard blood essence. As expected, Liu Wencai hadn’t let him down at all. He had almost caught up to Shen Trifire, a genius of a former fourth-rank sect.

The sight of Liu Wencai reminded Jiang Chen of Tang Hong from Precious Tree Sect. Jiang Chen thought favorably of both brothers, an opinion that had persisted since the beginning. The entire Precious Tree Sect had gone into seclusion, though. Who knew where they were now?

“Come with me, Wencai. I have a few questions I’d like to ask,” Jiang Chen specifically called his brother to the back court. Knowing that Liu Wencai was Jiang Chen’s sworn brother, the others didn’t think much of it.

Chapter 935: Heritage of Dragon Blood

Liu Wencai was by nature a cautious man. In this regard, he was different from the somewhat careless Tang Hong. He had a few reservations about Jiang Chen’s summons. Was he not good enough? Had he let senior brother Jiang Chen down? Jiang Chen’s care of him at Eternal Spirit Mountain resulted in Liu Wencai viewing the former as a dear brother, worthy of lifelong respect and admiration. Even Forefather Ninelion, the sect head of Myriad Spirit Sect, couldn’t compare at all.

The young man’s hesitance was plain enough. This was when Jiang Chen wondered if he was being too serious. It wasn’t intentional, of course. His stoic demeanor had been entirely in order to alleviate the doubts of others.

“Senior brother... have... have I done something poorly?” Liu Wencai rubbed his palms continuously against his clothes.

“Done... something... poorly?” Jiang Chen smiled wryly.

Liu Wencai was red in the face. “We’re eating and sleeping here for free, and we haven’t been able to contribute much... we’re... we’re like freeloaders, right?”

Jiang Chen laughed upon hearing that. He finally remembered that Liu Wencai wasn't the same as Tang Hong. His discreteness, while sometimes positive, also meant that small things would be arbitrarily magnified. Liu Wencai was a sensitive youth.

"Look at how large Taiyuan Tower is. Do you think that I can't afford a few living expenses?" Jiang Chen smiled with mild irreverence, "Really, don't sweat it. I didn't tell you to come here to get you to do anything. There's only one mission here."

"What mission?" Liu Wencai's eyes lit up. Senior brother Jiang Chen was finally giving him something to do! He felt a lot more important somehow. There was no more worry of not earning his keep.

"Your mission is to fully devote yourself to cultivation. You must tap into all of your latent strength. Wencai, do you remember what I said to you back at Eternal Spirit Mountain? Just like a buried treasure trove, your body carries endless potential. I didn't have the ability to dig it all up before, but we're at Veluriyam Capital now. I can provide a relatively stable environment with my ability and position, as a convenience for you. I don't know how long it will last, though, so you should work extra hard. Seize the day, and beware of time," Jiang Chen was entirely serious as he said these things. He obviously wasn't joking.

Liu Wencai was stunned. "Cultivate? Senior brother, is that really a mission? I'm taking up resources here, but I'm not doing anything... I'm worried that other people will talk about me."

"This place belongs to me. As long as I don't say anything, who's going to contradict me?" Jiang Chen was impassive. "Don't worry about what others say. Taiyuan Tower's motto is make the best of men and material. You don't have talent for pill dao, and you can't manage external or internal affairs. Your biggest asset is your cultivation potential, and the thing I need for you to do most is develop it."

Jiang Chen didn't actually want to borrow Liu Wencai's power. He simply felt that it was better for his own brother to be stronger. Who knew what the future held for the Divine Abyss Continent? In a chaotic world, more strength meant a better chance to survive. Liu Wencai had a lot of talent, and his gifts would be wasted elsewhere. Not even the heavens could tolerate that kind of waste.

Liu Wencai's eyes reddened, and his nose grew stuffy. He was a sensitive person, but rarely heard such heartfelt comments. Even Forefather Ninelion had promoted and trained him solely because the old man knew about his potential. Only senior brother Jiang Chen had honestly and sincerely cared for him from beginning to end.

"Senior brother, I... I'm worried that I'll let you down." Liu Wencai's throat was a little clogged. His tone carried a tinge of bawling.

Jiang Chen sighed softly, "Wencai, you're a big softie, but sometimes you shouldn't overthink things. You should know that I'm not the type of person to be so preoccupied about every little detail. We're brothers, and that's what you've called me, right? Who am I supposed to take care of, if not you?"

Liu Wencai's eyes were entirely puffy now. He could do nothing but nod, his lips trembling.

Jiang Chen gave him a light pat on the shoulder. "Letting me down or not, that's not important. You should worry more about not letting the heavens down, or your parents down, instead... they were the ones who gave you your talent and body, after all."

His words brightened up Liu Wencai's expression instantly. Having been an orphan since he was very young, Liu Wencai clearly felt strongly about his parents. He strongly nodded at Jiang Chen's comforting advice. "Senior brother, I understand. I will train and train with all my might and help you in the future, when I am stronger." A statement like that was positively unique for Liu Wencai—definitely one of the bravest he could muster.

Jiang Chen made no attempt to hide his joyful acknowledgement. This kind of Liu Wencai was the kind he wanted, brimming with confidence. He fished out a small bottle. "Wencai, this bottle contains something very important for you. I hope you can make the most of it."

"What is it, senior brother?" Liu Wencai was somewhat confused.

"This is the blood of a true dragon," Jiang Chen said softly. "I once gave some to the Precious Tree Sect's Ye Chonglou. Tang Hong had some as well. But you're the one that can make the best use of it. I can feel the potential in you. Perhaps there will be an unexpected breakthrough once you are stimulated by the dragon blood."

"The blood of a true dragon?" Liu Wencai's entire body shook. He suddenly remembered the image of a true dragon Jiang Chen had conjured up in the arena. "You have this much, senior brother?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, but didn't say anything. If I told you I had a true dragon, would you be scared to death instead? He muttered internally.

He casually handed over two dragon crystals alongside the bottle of blood. "These are dragon crystals. They have a similar effect to dragon blood. I hope that with time, you can become a great emperor who hails from the Myriad Domain."

Great emperor? Liu Wencai's gaze wavered. There was great yearning in his eyes.

"There is no doubt that you have the potential. The Myriad Domain is a lower region not because it lacks geniuses, but because it has been robbed of all its resources. Maybe one day, you too can contribute to the recovery effort."

"Senior brother, to do so would be an honor and a duty."

Jiang Chen nodded, "You should either refine these or carefully store them away. Remember, never reveal them to anyone."

Not everyone had the qualifications to use dragon blood. Jiang Chen had a modest amount of the material, and he wasn't going to just hand it out like candy. That would only do more harm than help. Only those who were compatible with the blood and could make the most of it were deserving of being given dragon blood. Liu Wencai was definitely the best candidate for it.

Holding the bottle and crystals in hand, his fingers trembled a little. He was trembling with anticipation. Either of these two things could be sold in an auction house for an absurd price. They would have been impossible to find in the Myriad Domain, end of statement. Liu Wencai hadn't heard of any treasures as valuable as dragon blood during the length of his stay in Veluriyam Capital either. He was really quite curious—had senior brother Jiang slain a dragon once? A question like that was a bit too sensational. The thought passed by like a flash in Liu Wencai's heart, but he didn't dare actually ask.

Watching Liu Wencai's figure gradually disappear, Jiang Chen exhaled with every emotion. "If Wencai really makes full use of the dragon blood, then becoming a great emperor is no empty promise. I just hope he still has enough time to grow."

Given his current position in Veluriyam Capital, Jiang Chen could absolutely feed and clothe Liu Wencai and company for an indefinite amount of time. The problem was that he was unsure when the demons of the wildlands would finally invade. Once the demonic invasion was fully underway, the entire human domain would descend into chaos. Though Veluriyam Capital was very strong, it would nevertheless be impossible for it to remain unscathed.

No cultivator could remain removed in midst of such an invasion, even the ones that hid themselves in the wilderness. Everyone would be caught up in it, regardless of whether they wanted to or not—much like an avalanche sweeping everything it passed along for the ride. Jiang Chen could only hope that the invasion would begin later rather than sooner. The people close to him needed some room for growth.

Ten, twenty years? Jiang Chen was more hopeful for thirty or fifty. After that many years, even the weakest amongst his friends; such as Xue Tong, Guo Jin, and the Qiao brothers; would be able to hold their own. They had low starting points, but the resources they possessed now matched those available to a first-rank sect's disciples. They didn't lack the potential, but potential without the proper catalyst was useless. With both the resources and the tutelage in place, everyone grew at a rapid pace. Those who came later were seemingly poised to surpass the average geniuses from Regal Pill Palace. Even Shen Trifire, previously amongst the top ten at Regal Pill Palace, no longer had a commanding lead over the newcomers.

After a month or so of battles, the competition for New Star Rankings was finally over. The ten-thousand-man New Star Rankings were finally ordered. Pill King Zhen was at the top of the chart, a placement that nobody had any doubts about. Sunyu Xiaosheng followed closely after, taking second place. There was a series of names that came afterwards, all of whom had been highly ranked during the formation test. Conversely, there was another batch of high-ranking names that had only shown an average performance during the formation test. Evidently, these people in particular had clearly hidden their strength during the test. Jiang Chen didn't care much about this, however

Most of the people on the New Star Rankings would have to stop here. The next round of competition meant that these ten thousand cultivators, plus the early-qualifying noble scions, were competing for only two hundred slots.

The Genius Rankings. Thirty-six of those slots were reserved for those directly tied to the great emperors. Thus, the two-hundred-man Genius Rankings was in actuality only a hundred sixty or so. Ten thousand plus people, vying for a hundred sixty placements... it was quite the cruel squeeze.

Chapter 936: The Genius Rankings Battles

"You sure are free, brother. You disappeared immediately after you finished the New Star Rankings battles. Have you forgotten your brother here?" said Ji San in a half joking, half begrudging way while throwing a fist at Jiang Chen's shoulder.

Jiang Chen knew that Ji San wasn't actually angry because he was smiling, despite his tone. He immediately returned the smile, "What if I tell you that I'm studying the Pinecrane Pill right now?"

Ji San froze before laughing foolishly, "Good, that's very good. You truly are the model of youngsters and the aspiration of all in the world of pill dao! I am truly impressed by how hardworking you are, even though you're so talented already. You chose the perfect time to cultivate behind closed doors! Absolutely perfect."

Jiang Chen laughed, "I lied, I wasn't researching the Pinecrane Pill. I spent the last month preparing for the Genius Rankings battles."

Ji San's smile immediately froze. A wry look appeared on his face. "Come on brother, don't play with me like this. I know you must have figured out the ins and outs of the Pinecrane Pill already, right?"

Jiang Chen knew that the Pinecrane Pill was a sensitive topic for Ji San, so he immediately straightened up his act and answered seriously, "Don't worry, you will have the Pinecrane Pill."

Ji San immediately smiled with delight, "Really?"

"Would I lie to you?"

Ji San immediately hugged Jiang Chen and laughed loudly, "Good, good. You truly are a good brother!"

His particularly effeminate action caused Jiang Chen to break out in cold sweat, "Let go of me, let go of me! If you don't then the Pinecrane Pill never existed, you hear?" When he felt the strange gazes glancing at him from all directions, all he wanted was to destroy this brother of his with his glare ten times over.

Ji San didn't look ashamed in the least as he chuckled, "What are you people looking at? We're best brothers for as long as we live! You jealous?"

Jiang Chen had nothing to say about this guy. It was at this moment that someone pushed his way through the crowd. It was Wei Jie of House Wei. When Ji San saw Wei Jie, he assessed the other with a bit of astonishment, "Did you achieve a breakthrough, Wei Jie?"

Wei Jie had always acted a bit reserved in front of Ji San. He was after all, House Wei's superior. "Yes, young master Ji San. With luck, I managed to ascend to the ninth level sage realm," Wei Jie was very modest and cautious before Ji San.

Ji San chuckled, "That's great. Congratulations! I doubt there's anyone else in House Wei who will question your abilities to succeed the family in the future."

Wei Jie felt very pleased to hear this praise and nodded, "The elders of House Wei are indeed quite pleased to hear of my breakthrough." Having said this, Wei Jie bowed respectfully towards Jiang Chen, "It's all thanks to you, Pill King Zhen."

Jiang Chen waved his hand, "Thank Ji Ole Third instead. That pill was gifted to me by the Coiling Dragon clan lord."

Ji San was surprised, "You mean that Sage Smile Pill?"

Wei Jie finally understood what they meant, and he hastily saluted Ji San, "Please receive my thanks, young master. And please give my thanks to the clan lord."

Ji San was very generous, “Don’t thank me, the clan lord’s the one who gave Pill King Zhen that pill as a greeting gift, so he can do whatever he wants with it. Pill King Zhen has already settled the debt between you and me, so this is between you and Pill King Zhen. I can’t accept your thanks for free.”

Wei Jie still said respectfully, “I’m still going to thank you, young master.”

Ji San waved his hand, “You and your rules, Wei Jie. Fine, you can thank me if you want. Now that you’re a ninth level sage realm expert, your chances of entering the Genius Rankings just became a lot higher.”

“I’ll do my utmost for this battle. I hope I’ll be able to come away with something.”

“It’s not a hope, but a must. House Wei has been neglected for several years, and even with Pill King Zhen’s backing, your family will be lucky to maintain their position. At your current state, advancement is almost impossible. However, if you can enter the Genius Rankings, House Wei will win back the status they’ve lost. Only then will your family have a bit of hope in advancing with Pill King Zhen’s help.”

House Wei was a ninth rank aristocratic family; advancing further would make them a great clan. Although a great clan was split into different ranks as well, a great clan was on another level compared to a ninth rank aristocratic family. After all, even the worst great clan was still a great clan.

A trace of anticipation appeared in Wei Jie’s eyes when he heard Ji San’s encouragement. He nodded resolutely, “I won’t disappoint your expectations, young master, Pill King Zhen.”

The competition of the Genius Rankings battle was no doubt going to be fierce. Every aristocratic family and great clan disciple was finally joining the array. Although the great emperor geniuses hadn’t joined the battle yet, the injection of the aristocratic family members, great clan disciples, and wandering cultivators who had fought their way through from previous battles was undoubtedly going to make the competition that much fiercer. There were ten thousand already from the New Star Rankings, adding the noble youths to that number made for a total of 12,800 people.

This number was the result of careful calculation.

Two hundred finalists were going to be decided through six rounds of combat and enter the Genius Rankings. So although the Genius Rankings battles were not as complicated as the previous battles, they were more desperate. The format would be the most brutal elimination process. Moreover, there were no such thing as seeding in this elimination tournament. Anyone could be eliminated in a single round no matter what level they were at. Therefore, luck was a huge element in this type of tournament.

Two of the greatest geniuses of the tournament might have the misfortune to run into each other early on. In that case, the top two hundred geniuses who were to enter the Genius Rankings might not necessarily be the strongest possible geniuses. Therefore, there were some mechanisms installed to avoid too many chance tragedies happening during the elimination contest.

After the six elimination rounds were over, the top thirty contestants who were defeated in combat would be given a shot at coming back. This shot at a comeback was the right to challenge any one of the top two hundred contestants. If they succeeded, they would replace their opponents and join the Genius Rankings instead.

This comeback rule was a chance to rectify things for those geniuses who had the misfortune of running into the most powerful enemies early on. Despite failing to become part of the top two hundred

contestants the first time, they could still challenge another opponent and potentially win. This rule was very humane. After all, the top thirty who were unfortunately eliminated might be powerful experts. They might not necessarily be unqualified to enter the Genius Rankings. This comeback rule also flushed out the weak cultivators who were lucky enough to make it to the top two hundred, per survival of the fittest. Even Jiang Chen was very impressed by this rule.

“Everyone, I am sure that you are clear about the rules already. There will be six rounds, and the opponents you meet will be completely random. Once the battles are complete, you will be fighting again to decide your ranking. Only those who have are amongst the top thirty are completely safe and cannot be challenged by the comeback contestants. Everyone else is free game. Therefore, I hope that you will pay your full attention during these rounds and especially during the subsequent rankings battles. Otherwise, your position may be in danger even if you make it to the top 200 the first go around. Also, unlike the comeback contestants, you won’t get a chance at coming back in.”

The rules were harsh, but it was also fair to everyone. No one knew who would enter the Genius Rankings first and who would be eliminated first.

Ji San chuckled and swept a fearless glance at the crowd. He was the successor of the Coiling Dragon Clan, and out of every genius in Veluriyam Capital, the great emperors’ geniuses were the only ones he was afraid of. It was true that there were some great clan disciples amongst these people, and they shared almost the same talent as him, but Ji San didn’t think that those people were capable of disqualifying him at all. In the end, it all came down to how one performed in actual combat. The great clan disciples were good, but Ji San knew very well that they weren’t so good that they could kick him out of the top thirty. Therefore, he wasn’t worried about getting into the Genius Rankings at all. His target was the Ranking of Young Lords. Although he knew that that ranking would be very difficult, he was willing to give it a try. Even if he were to fail in the end, he would at least figure out how far he was away from those great emperor geniuses!

“Brother, I’m warning you first. If you run into me during the Genius Rankings, I’m not going to go easy on you,” Ji San chuckled.

Jiang Chen laughed involuntarily, “You think you can disqualify me?”

Ji San puffed up his chest, “It doesn’t matter. I’m not going to go easy on you. If you can beat me, then I will admit that you’re better.”

“You mean that you don’t think I’m better yet?” Jiang Chen chuckled.

“Oh, I’m like 70 or 80% there. At first I did think of you as my better, but then my clan lord secretly told me that I should surrender immediately if I see you. So I’m not giving up just yet. Hahaha!” Ji San couldn’t help but laugh when he said this, but a look of dejection quickly overwhelmed him, “The clan lord used to think highly of me, but this time he’s discarded his own and taken your side! This is so unfair.”

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but laugh at Ji San’s whimsical appearance. When he cast a glance at Wei Jie beside them, he noticed that Wei Jie was looking a little nervous. He immediately consoled Wei Jie, “Be more confident. You’re a ninth level sage realm expert, aren’t you? There is absolutely hope for you to make it into the top 200.”

Wei Jie nodded. He knew that the Genius Rankings battles were no pressure to neither Jiang Chen nor Ji San. However, he would have to put in 200% effort to have even a sliver of hope at winning a spot.

“Alright, we will start drawing lots now. First round contestants, once your names have been drawn, an arena will be generated for you. Please remember both your arena numbers and your opponents.”

12,800 people would have to go through six rounds of battles before the top 200 ranking could be decided. Therefore, the battle to enter the top 200 wasn't exactly easy. It was highly unlikely for someone to be so lucky that they would meet no powerful opponents six times in a row. This also meant that the contestants who survived to the end were more or less the real deal. Sometimes, there were some insanely lucky people who made it to the end without much difficulty. However, the comeback contestants would definitely challenge them and take them out of the running.

Chapter 937: Sword Dao Genius

It was likely that before Jiang Chen had fought Xiao Paohui, many arrogant disciples among the great clans were more than willing to be matched up against Pill King Zhen in the Genius Ranking battles. Since Pill King Zhen was exceptionally talented in pill dao, they'd assumed that his talents in martial dao would only be mediocre at best. His sage realm cultivation level also seemed unspectacular on the surface. However, they no longer thought the same after watching his battle with Xiao Paohui. On the contrary, those disciples were now praying that they wouldn't have to cross paths with Pill King Zhen, as they all felt inferior to the large brute. Jiang Chen hadn't been thinking all that much about such matters. The identities of his opponents didn't matter to him.

“Wandering cultivator Ye Tianzuo against Pill King Zhen!” A wandering cultivator was selected as Jiang Chen's opponent in the first round. This made the disciples of the great clans sigh with relief. At least they didn't have to fight someone as insane as Pill King Zhen in the first round.

Ye Tianzuo had a thin physique and spirited eyes that made him look quite intelligent. However, helplessness was written all over his face at the moment. “Pill King Zhen, you may be strong, but this is a martial dao competition. I understand that I am no match for you, but I will still have to give my all. Please forgive me for the offense.” He gave Jiang Chen a respectful bow. Even though he was only a wandering cultivator, it was evident that he was still extremely respectful of the foremost expert of pill dao in Veluriyam Capital.

Jiang Chen's heart didn't waver and he returned the bow. They were rivals in the arena. His opponent's words and respect towards him didn't matter. Those were things that only mattered outside of the arena. As long as they were in same arena, both of them would only have one goal—defeat the enemy. Even though his opponent was only at the seventh level sage realm, Jiang Chen still didn't underestimate him. Being able to fight his way into the New Star Rankings was already a testament of his opponent's abilities.

“After you.” Jiang Chen cupped his hands. He was now considered a celebrity in Veluriyam Capital. When fighting a wandering cultivator, it was only natural that he would show some graciousness by letting his opponent make the first move.

Ye Tianzuo smiled calmly, “Pill King Zhen, for years I've been wandering the world in my attempt to comprehend sword dao. I have a sword technique called the Four Seasons Sword. I hope that Pill King

Zhen can point out my shortcomings. This sword only has four moves. If I am unable to win after four moves, I will admit defeat and continue to perfect my sword techniques.”

Jiang Chen looked at his opponent for a brief moment. This man had unwavering eyes. It seemed like he was being sincere. His eyes reminded Jiang Chen of Feng Pao. During the Myriad Grand Ceremony, Jiang Chen had given Feng Pao some pointers in his sword techniques. Later on, he'd saved Feng Pao's life in the Great Scarlet Capital as well. At that time, Feng Pao and Liu Wencai were being auctioned off as slaves. It was Jiang Chen who'd saved them from their predicament. He wondered where Feng Pao was now.

Feng Pao was also a sword dao maniac. He had dedicated his entire life to the dao of sword and was willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of this pursuit. People like him, even though they weren't powerful figures now, had limitless potential as long as they didn't lose sight of their goals. Jiang Chen had always been quite respectful of swordsmen dedicated to the sword dao.

“Four Seasons Sword,” Jiang Chen nodded. “Make your move.”

A hint of eagerness appeared in Ye Tianzuo's eyes and he cupped his fist, “Then I'll begin.” He unsheathed his green, three-foot long sword. His technique didn't contain any flashy or superfluous moves. With his sword in hand, he suddenly began to exude an aura of extreme sharpness. The ordinary-looking sword almost seemed like it had roared to life. Its aura was astounding and full of vigor. It emitted an unconcealed, keen aura.

“First move of the Four Seasons Sword, Suppleness of Spring!”

The sword became increasingly brilliant, flickering endlessly like the fine rain during a shower in the spring. Like vines from a willow tree, it instantly enveloped the arena within a realm of the intent of spring.

Overnight rain in the spring. This was his sword intent. A formidable sword intent didn't always have to encompass extreme sharpness or monstrous killing intent. The realm intent decided the strength of the sword. It was evident that the Suppleness of Spring was a formidable example because it enveloped the surrounding area. Only a truly formidable sword technique was capable of creating such realms.

Common sword techniques were simple and violent, as their only purpose was to kill. They weren't capable of creating a realm of sword intent. Such techniques were only suitable for killing third-rate opponents. Only through sword intent could one gain realm intent, and thereafter attain absolute control of the battlefield. That was a sword intent that all formidable foes would then fear.

Ye Tianzuo had truly achieved great heights in sword intent! A glimmer of admiration appeared in Jiang Chen's eyes. He could tell that his foe had reached this level all on his own. A cultivator that could attain his own sword intent and create a personal sword technique was definitely no ordinary swordsman.

Jiang Chen had always cultivated techniques that had been created by others. He'd never created a martial technique on his own. However, his foe was actually using a sword technique that he'd created himself. Jiang Chen was suddenly overrun with feelings of admiration. This was definitely a foe worthy of his respect. Ye Tianzuo was a much more accomplished swordsman than Feng Pao. Feng Pao was dedicated to sword dao too, but he was only immersed with the sword. Ye Zuo Tian however, was already immersed with sword intent. He'd already begun to detach himself from the apprehension of

common swordsmen and started to create his own martial dao by immersing himself in sword techniques and sword intent. He'd begun to form his own comprehension and his own thoughts.

Once people like him attained a grand mastery of their own martial dao, they would establish their own sect or their own clan and thereafter become martial dao grandmasters. Reaching the peak in martial dao was easy; establishing a clan or a sect was difficult. Those who created their own martial techniques were definitely capable of becoming grandmasters in their later years.

Even though Ye Tianzuo was still a young fledgling, Jiang Chen could sense his immense talent in sword dao. Jiang Chen had suddenly become highly interested in him. His sword intent fluttered like a gentle spring rain, leaving no openings in its wake. It was also like the vines on a willow tree, impossibly complex and entangled. The most formidable part of this sword intent was its persistent and chaotic nature. It seemed gentle and non-threatening on the surface, but that was only a ruse. People would lose their way, never knowing when the lethal strike was going to fall upon them. Jiang Chen shut his eyes and immersed himself in the sword intent. It was as though he'd forgotten about the threat imposed by the foe's technique.

The audience was taken aback when they saw what Jiang Chen had done.

"What is going on? Why did Pill King Zhen close his eyes? Was there some kind of demonic power in the sword technique that could influence a person's mind?"

"Are you kidding me? What's he doing?"

"The young lord is..." Gouyu was frowning as well.

"Everyone, stop worrying in the stead of others. I'm sure senior brother is trying to come up with a counterplan. Didn't senior brother win the previous round despite facing an incredibly strong foe?" Shen Trifire suddenly said.

Indeed, Xiao Paohui was definitely stronger than this swordsman. Everyone stopped fretting upon realizing this. However, none of them could let their guards down. After all, accidents could happen during a clash of martial dao. It was possible for a certain technique to be susceptible to another. One's strength wasn't just dependent on one's mastery over martial dao.

Even though Ye Tianzuo was in a state of hyperfocus as his sword intent raged, he was still taken aback when he saw Jiang Chen shut his eyes. However, a formidable swordsman would never prematurely end their sword intent because of the actions of others. In fact, his sword intent only became even more complex after that.

Jiang Chen suddenly smiled. He shot a golden ray from his eye into the fluttering rain. That was the Evil Golden Eye. The golden ray instantly sawed through the lethal strike within the fluttering rain. It then struck the sword at the blade.

Ping!

Ye Tianzuo felt his wrist turn numb. The sword in his hand suddenly felt like it had become a thousand pounds heavier. A powerful force was weighing it down. His sword intent quickly crumbled.

Jiang Chen withdrew his Evil Golden Eye once the sword intent had dissipated. He smiled and gave Ye Tianzuo a nod, "Good sword technique. Continue!"

Ye Tianzuo felt chills down his spine. His opponent had defeated his fluttering sword intent without moving, taking only the time to open and close his eyes. He knew that Pill King Zhen was formidable, but after experiencing the latter's prowess for himself, he realized that there was actually no limit to the pill king's strength. And yet, he didn't feel depressed. In fact, his failure only seemed to motivate him even further. "Pill King Zhen, you should be wary of summer's savagery!"

The Four Seasons Sword contained the laws of the four seasons. Spring was gentle whereas summer possessed a ferocity. His sword intent changed forms abruptly. Now, it felt like the arena was being scorched by the heat of ten blazing suns. The temperature began to rise significantly. Ye Tianzuo's sword had also become even more glaring. All of a sudden, the surrounding void felt like it had gone up in flames. The floor became searing hot while the four surrounding pillars in the arena seemed like they were going to spontaneously combust at any moment and collapse.

Jiang Chen was actually quite surprised. He began to think even more highly of Ye Zuotian. It would take incredible talent to be able to drastically switch sword intent within such a short span of time. Common swordsmen typically didn't have multiple drastically different sword intents because they had inherited their sword techniques. However, Ye Zuotian was able to switch between drastically different ones at a whim! Even though the switching method was a little rigid, it wasn't his fault.

The fault actually fell on the Evil Golden Eye that Jiang Chen had used to defeat Suppleness Of Spring. He'd destroyed the sword intent, yet his foe was still able to link the two in an adept manner and switch to a drastically different one. Ye Zuotian's attainments towards sword dao was actually quite startling. Even the seven great emperors were piqued by what was going on in this particular arena. They were paying attention to Pill King Zhen, but soon realized that Pill King Zhen's opponent was actually incredibly talented as well! The seven emperors all agreed that it was a waste to let such a fine talent wander about in the outside world. The sword intent of summer was tyrannical, sharp, and scorching. It looked as if it was going to scorch the entire world with extreme savagery.

Endless scorching fires began to gush out from all sides, as though countless pill furnaces of the heavens had been toppled. Immediately following, a violent burst of flames that contained an inexplicably powerful sword aura shot towards Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen couldn't help but admit that his opponent's control was quite astonishing.

Chapter 938: Enemies, Like Lovers, Are Designed to Meet

Ultimately, Jiang Chen considered an attack at this level to be slightly lacking. The strike had sufficient theory and intent behind it, but it also displayed insufficient maturity and discipline on the part of the swordsman. After all, his enemy was only a sky sage realm cultivator, in the seventh level sage realm to be precise. From this imperfection, Jiang Chen could perceive that his opponent was indeed a genius in the art of the sword, but had rather common prospects in other areas. The potency of the sword intent failed to hide the weakness in his level of cultivation.

Jiang Chen being in the seventh level sage realm was comparable to someone who was in the half-step emperor realm, and he was able to hold his own against such people in battle. Ye Tianzuo's seventh level sage realm, on the other hand, was unabashedly ordinary. With the assistance of his sword intent,

he could perhaps defeat eighth or ninth level opponents. But when faced with a half-step emperor realm opponent, he would be at a disadvantage.

Surrounded by frenzied sword intent, Jiang Chen produced a large cauldron. It was the one he'd obtained from Lu Shinan, superb in its defensiveness. With great force, all of the attacks were sucked directly in.

Clang!

In the next moment, Jiang Chen's finger tapped the blade of Ye Tianzuo's sword. It hummed with sorrow, and the sword intent upon it faded away once more. Ye Tianzuo's eyes shone with surprise. Pill King Zhen's mercy was evident. In fact, the pill king had pretty much only played along with him until now. There had been only an admiration of his sword techniques without an actual follow-up counterattack. Given Pill King Zhen's powerful offense, it was unlikely that Ye Tianzuo would even be able to bring a fraction of his sword techniques to bear when put on the defense. The swordsman hesitated a little. He had never hesitated on matters relating to sword dao, but the present situation gave him sufficient reason for pause. At this point, carrying on his attack would be akin to not knowing chalk from cheese.

Jiang Chen smiled serenely. "Daoist Ye, feel free to continue. Your sword intent is remarkable, masterful even. I would like to see as much as you can show."

Ye Tianzuo blinked before flashing a wry grin. "Pill King Zhen, my sword intent seems to have no effect on you at all. It seems that my cultivation is still insufficient. I am a long, long way from being a real genius."

Jiang Chen shook his head. "Not at all," he answered seriously. "It may look easy for me, but it truly wasn't when I faced the first two waves of your sword intent. What I showed and what I felt were very different."

"Truly?" Ye Tianzuo was very pleased.

Jiang Chen didn't want to crush a sword dao genius like him. "Exactly so. I think the intent in your next two techniques will be even more powerful."

Ye Tianzuo was greatly cheered up. "I'm not so sure that the next two techniques will be more powerful, but they will definitely carry different intents. If that's what you think, Pill King Zhen, then I will give this showing my all. No matter if I win or lose, it's a big help for me to trade blows with a top-rank genius such as yourself."

He gathered up sword intent once more as he spoke. In the next instant, the atmosphere around the arena changed once more. The killing intent was real and tangible this time.

"Autumnal Slaying Sword!"

When the garden blooms, I am not there; when I come, all flowers perish.

Autumn was the season of cessation. When time rolled from summer into fall, both leaf and petal alike met their endings. A chilly season gave character to a chilling sword intent. At the urging of the

swordsman, another aura descended upon the surroundings. Every flower was wilting, every leaf shedding and falling, every life descending into eternal slumber...

Life was being cut out of each and every living thing. The Autumnal Slaying Sword would kill all. If the two previous sword intents had their own twists on the act of causing death (one had carried a softness, and the other a fierceness), then this sword-strike embodied only one essence instead.

Slaughter, as simple and brutal as death itself. Every streak of sword energy, every little detail and movement served to accomplish the conveyance of that concept. The sheer intensity of the killing intent caused palpitations in Jiang Chen's heart. He had seen many sword techniques before, including those which had names that included 'killing', 'slaying', or 'slaughtering'. But they had been far too complicated, contrived, and luxurious. They overly pursued beauty and elegance.

Ye Tianzuo's sword technique was none of these things. It had only one thing it sought—for it be simple enough for one to forget that this was a technique at all. A sword technique like this was truly terrifying. A killing sword that had no bells or whistles attached, no devotion to useless things in its aura. A true killing sword technique needed only one word: kill!

From the destruction of the flesh and heart to the total annihilation of body and soul, along with one's opponent's martial will—all of these things were utterly destroyed. Ye Tianzuo had represented the embodiment of a killing strike's essence. Even Jiang Chen didn't dare take the attack too lightly. He pushed his golden body to its limits. Hands outstretched, he deployed a powerful magnetic force field over the entire arena, pushing out every other influence with it.

Clang, clang, clang... The incessant crashes were discordant to the ear. Everyone present felt discomfort upon hearing the noise. Under the disarrayed force field, Ye Tianzuo's sword intent missed entirely, scattering everywhere like a headless fly.

"A powerful technique!" Jiang Chen praised. In order to evade the attack, he had been forced to exert his magnetic aura to alter the arena's force field outright. Essentially, it was a sign that even he hadn't been able to find an appropriate solution in that split second.

Out of the Four Seasons Swords, this Autumnal Slaying Sword was the most powerful. Alas, even it had failed to penetrate the opponent's defenses. Ye Tianzuo sheathed his sword, coming to a still before saluting Jiang Chen respectfully, "Pill King Zhen, you're truly extraordinary. You have my utmost respect. I do not yet fully understand the profound truth in my last strike. For me to use it would be fooling around in front of a true expert. I concede the fight."

Jiang Chen was startled. "Do I not have the fortune of experiencing your final technique?"

"I do not have the courage to show it without first perfecting it." Ye Tianzuo sighed. "If one day I manage to accomplish that feat, and complete all four techniques, I hope to challenge you at that time once more."

Jiang Chen nodded, a little despondent. "You are sure to become a master one day with your talent. How come you're still a wandering cultivator?"

Ye Tianzuo smiled placidly. "There've been a number of sects willing to take me, but I am a man chasing after my own freedom. How can I wield an unfettered blade if I myself am fettered by a sect's

regulations? I know that they'd be able to give me many resources as well as serve as a powerful backer, but I don't want either of those things. My sword dao must stem from a pure and sincere heart if I am to reach its pinnacle."

The words conjured up a strong feeling of admiration in Jiang Chen. "You're a true swordsman in every sense of the word." He nodded. "I hope that in thirty or fifty years, your name will spread across this entire continent."

"You can count on it." Ye Tianzuo's laughter rang out with sovereign leisure. "Then, until we meet again."

"You're going just like this? Are you giving up on the opportunity to get back into the competition later?" Jiang Chen smiled. "If I make it into the top thirty, you'll have another chance." One of the rules had the clause was that anyone defeated by a genius in the top thirty could enter the competition for another round. Given Jiang Chen's ability, getting into the top thirty wasn't much of a problem.

Ye Tianzuo laughed again. "I came here only to prove my sword, not for a place in the rankings. I've received all I'd hoped for and more from you already. The Genius Rankings? That doesn't mean anything to me. There's no point competing further."

A real swordsman was independent and unrestrained, either by fame or anything else. Jiang Chen remained silent after that, only nodding thoughtfully in acknowledgement. To say anything further would be an insult. He understood both what the other man sought and his mindset. This Ye Tianzuo was undoubtedly a genius, one that was certainly much more powerful than Feng Pao. The latter was obsessed with the sword, but didn't possess a great deal of individuality. He had easily accepted Jiang Chen's teachings back then.

But Jiang Chen surmised that even if he were to teach Ye Tianzuo, the latter would likely be unreceptive of his guidance. This man was only loyal to his own understanding of sword dao. More importantly, he didn't know what he could teach the other, even after some consideration. Ye Tianzuo's sword had its own dao already. Any advice from him would be equivalent to holding a candle to the sun. Aside from some pointless mucking about, it would accomplish little.

Jiang Chen had to admit, though, that he was a particularly interesting opponent. If he had reached Cao Jin's level of cultivation and was a first-rank sect's important disciple, then Jiang Chen would have had much more difficulty defeating him. Unquestionably, the fight would have been harder than Xiao Paohui's.

Ye Tianzuo's departure prompted a following of countless figures. Clearly, they were various adherents of the seven emperors who wanted to recruit him. Jiang Chen didn't put much stock in the likeliness of their success though. Ye Tianzuo had no intention of relying on any faction. He pursued only his own dao. Even the seven great emperors had no way of influencing a sword dao genius like Ye Tianzuo. He would be one of the primary choices for prospective true disciple candidates for any faction otherwise, worthy of being counted amongst the top-ranked geniuses. Now that Jiang Chen thought about it, even Cao Jin was likely inferior to Ye Tianzuo. Although he'd only won the first round, his opponent had given Jiang Chen far more enjoyment than winning ten rounds in a row would.

Unlike Jiang Chen's battle, the first rounds of the Genius Rankings taking place elsewhere were unexciting. No strange outcomes or dark horses had arisen. For the most part, the stronger contestants rose through the ranks, while the wandering cultivators were eliminated. The wandering cultivators had weaknesses in both tutelage and equipment. A competition like this brought both flaws into prominence.

After the first round's trial by fire, few wandering cultivators remained. However, the wandering cultivator geniuses that had obtained highly ranked spots in the New Star Rankings were largely still in the competition. The entire first round took three days to fully come to a close.

The single elimination procedure meant that only 6,400 were left, exactly fifty percent of the 12,800 initial contestants. There was no pause in the proceedings. The conclusion of the first round heralded the beginning of the second round.

This time, Jiang Chen's opponent was a noble scion, one that he knew quite well, in fact. It was Murong Qiu. Jiang Chen was amused by this turn of events. Enemies, like lovers, were destined to meet. Jiang Chen had first encountered the young nobleman when he was assisting Long Xiaoxuan in his breakthrough. Entranced with Huang'er at the time, Murong Qiu had received a harsh lesson from Jiang Chen. Neither party had pursued the matter to an extreme at the time. However, this reunion on the sands was a fresh opportunity to settle an old score!

Chapter 939: A Clean, Pre-Emptive Strike

Murong Qiu clearly hadn't expected to encounter Jiang Chen in such a situation. With so many candidates available, it was surely misfortune that drew them together upon the same stage once more. Jiang Chen was none too pleased either, but there was evidently deeper hatred emanating from Murong Qiu. Murong Qiu had eyed Jiang Chen with hostility the moment he got on the stage. His gaze was filled with a murderous intent.

"Oh, who's this? Young lord Murong, hmm?" Jiang Chen said mockingly. "You didn't get cleared out alongside the rebellious Majestic Clan, eh? What a surprise, considering how inseparable you people were."

Murong Qiu's anger boiled over. "Don't get so full of yourself, Zhen!" he retorted coolly. "You're proficient with pills, I'll give you that. But the world of martial dao is ultimately reserved for martial geniuses only. It's definitely not your lucky day today! You're in my hands now, and I'll make sure you get your reckoning!"

He made no show of hiding the malice in his tone. He hated Jiang Chen's guts. Now, on this stage, he finally had the chance to take his nemesis' life, fair and square. Taking out Pill King Zhen would be a great achievement to present to Emperor Shura.

Jiang Chen couldn't help but laugh at Murong Qiu's unfounded confidence. "Martial genius? Are you possibly talking about... yourself?"

A few more careful looks at the youth revealed that Murong Qiu's cultivation had gained a rank. Compared to his previous seventh rank sage realm standing, he was a rank higher now. But in the Genius Rankings competition, was a cultivation level like that much of an advantage at all?

A sneer played at the corner of Murong Qiu's mouth. Jiang Chen found the expression to be a little queer. With a series of crushing victories over his prior opponents, he'd shown at least a teaser of his strength, if not the full extent of it. So he couldn't figure out where Murong Qiu's confidence stemmed from. What was there to back up his smirk? His eighth level sage realm cultivation? The abnormality of the entire situation sounded an alarm in his mind.

As the scion of a great clan, it's quite possible for Murong Qiu to be the heir to a special heritage. Moreover, I am one of the biggest threats to Emperor Shura right now, so Murong Qiu might have received a treasure from him as well. Jiang Chen had no fear of a mere eighth level sage realm cultivator. He was much more wary of any hidden methods or tricks that his opponent had up his sleeve.

Still, given what kind of character Murong Qiu was, Jiang Chen wasn't particularly concerned about things after all. No matter how powerful a treasure was, it would be wasted. The young man before him was a buffoon. It would hardly achieve a fraction of its potential. Mulling these thoughts over in his head, he now had the inklings of a plan in his heart. No matter what kind of trump card Murong Qiu possessed, Jiang Chen was going to strike first. There was no reason to give his enemy an opportunity to use a possible trump card at all. "I remember telling you this already when we were outside, Murong Qiu, but whatever happened on that day wasn't the end of it at all."

Murong Qiu cackled. "Just what I wanted to say."

Jiang Chen nodded slowly. His formation disk suddenly sprang into action, eight statues materializing from the void to encircle his opponent. He had no plans of holding anything back against Murong Qiu. The power the eight statues carried shut down all of the other force fields within the arena.

Murong Qiu's face colored even as Jiang Chen leapt into the arena. His Featherflight Mirror swept upon his enemy. Murong Qiu's entire body locked up, and his evasive maneuver was forcefully slowed by half a beat.

Jiang Chen took this gap in time to land a solid stomp onto Murong Qiu's chest. The abruptness of all of these developments caused an uproar in the audience.

A flurry of kicks landed upon Murong Qiu's body, as if Jiang Chen were kicking a sandbag. The continuous storm of thuds prompted no response from their target. Murong Qiu was punted off the stage like a dead dog, landing at its foot in a crumpled heap.

Bam!

What was formerly Murong Clan's young master was now white in the face, his frame splayed. There was no breath going into his nostrils.

The entire crowd was stuck in a state of open-mouthed shock.

Is he dead, just like that? Yes, Jiang Chen had decisively cut down Xiao Paohui earlier, but that opponent, though formidable, had also been relatively unknown. As such, what little surprise there was hadn't devolved into full-on hysteria.

But Murong Qiu was different. He was a recognized aristocratic dandy of Veluriyam Capital! The Murong Clan wasn't as top-tier of a faction as something like the Coiling Dragon Clan, but it still possessed quite

the breadth of connections within the city. Pill King Zhen had murdered its young master in only a few blows in public. How great must the grudge be between the two of them?

Everyone from the Murong Clan who was present watched these series of events pan out, eyes wide, not entirely able to accept the reality before them.

“Qiu’er!” The Murong clan lord’s voice was hoarse. The clan’s experts swarmed out at the call to examine Murong Qiu’s vitals. The young lord was entirely disfigured and inanimate at this point. No matter what they did, there was no response.

The Murong Clan Lord’s face convulsed in fury, his eyes fixated on Jiang Chen with rancorous obsession. “Pill King Zhen, why have you landed a killing blow in a competitive match like this?”

Jiang Chen was stoic. “Bouts in this arena offer no security for the lives of their participants. If anyone is scared, then they shouldn’t participate in the Martial Pagoda battles in the first place.”

The Murong clan lord knew of the grudge between Murong Qiu and Pill King Zhen. He was exasperated to the point of being speechless at the explanation. “Zhen, let’s be open about this. Do you have the guts to say that this wasn’t out of personal spite?” Staring daggers at the pill king, the clan lord looked ravenous enough to swallow him whole.

But Jiang Chen had never been one to fear such meaningless threats. “I only know that no matter who you are, you should be prepared to die in the arena,” he smiled faintly. “If you want someone to blame, clan lord, then blame your son’s lack of skill... and his collection of bad habits to boot. Rather than have a shouting match with me, you should set your house in order. The Murong Clan is a great clan, yes? But its young clan lord is—sorry, was—merely a lascivious lech. Even I’m ashamed for you, honestly.”

He walked offstage as he said this, not sparing the corpse another look. “Honored judge, don’t you agree with my words regarding the sanctity of this space? The arena is a cruel place.” He was now directly in front of the person he was addressing. The judge could only return a wry smile and a nod. Those were the rules.

“Good. So I’m perfectly within my rights to kill my opponent, no matter how harshly I do so?” Jiang Chen slowly went on.

The judge didn’t know how to answer. Everyone knew that the pill king was taking public vengeance for a private slight. He was using the opportunity to kill the heir of the Murong Clan without repercussion! But just as Jiang Chen had said, no rules had been broken. Deaths were common in such a competitive environment, and in fact, the arena was the best place for past animosities to be settled.

Murong Qiu’s death truly did have to be blamed on himself. Given the circumstances just now, if he had taken the upper hand, it was unrealistic to expect mercy in reverse. From the looks of it, the Murong heir had had an ace up his sleeve, but he’d been prevented from using it. It wasn’t something the dead youth would have expected, to be sure. That was a tragedy in and of itself.

In his battles with the others before, Pill King Zhen hadn’t been particularly aggressive. He had fought with poise and style. Therefore, nobody had expected that the pill king would land such a rapidly preemptive strike, delivering such a sudden and ferocious onslaught. Murong Qiu’s lack of readiness had been his downfall.

Seeing everyone from the Murong Clan gazing at him hungrily, the judge's expression froze. "Murong Clan Lord, please leave the front of the stage immediately. You will be charged with threatening a participant otherwise."

The Martial Pagoda battles were strictly regulated. For the Murong Clan to make trouble because of a loss would be trampling upon public order. The Murong Clan Lord's eyes bulged with ire, but his subordinates' persuasion helped him retain his reason. With a huff, he took Murong Qiu's corpse away and retreated. His hateful expression just before departure was a clear tip-off, though. Jiang Chen knew that there was likely going to be a desperate struggle in the future between him and the Murong Clan.

Of course, there was no time to consider the ramifications of that right now. Even if Murong Qiu hadn't tried to molest Huang'er, he had still wanted to kill Jiang Chen. There was no reason for Jiang Chen to let someone who wanted to be at his throat at any given opportunity leave the arena alive.

This dramatic battle allowed Jiang Chen to pass through the second round. It was human nature to bully the good and fear evil. Jiang Chen's vehement killing of Murong Qiu served as an extremely compelling deterrent to any hidden adversaries. The remaining scions loyal to Emperor Shura were secretly alarmed and wary as well. Given the bad blood between the pill king and their own faction, each man felt a distinct insecurity. The pill king had killed Murong Qiu today. Who was to say that he wouldn't take a shot at a different target tomorrow?

At Emperor Shura's side, Moon Monarch was furious. "What a venomous brat! It's just a bout in an arena. Why such heavy-handedness?"

The emperor didn't chime in. He frowned instead. "This Pill King Zhen is quite perceptive. We didn't have many expectations for an insignificant character like Murong Qiu in the first place. However, to notice the hidden threat and attack only as a precaution... his boldness and decisiveness in the heat of battle are tenfold that of Murong Qiu. Murong Qiu was so pleased, too... how droll. I'm sure he certainly didn't expect to walk into an immediately fatal situation."

Murong Qiu carried little importance in the grand scheme of things. Emperor Shura had given him a small treat out of his desire to test Pill King Zhen's martial dao. Unfortunately, Murong Qiu had failed even the lowest of his expectations. He had died before having a chance to act, his death brisk and clean. The only qualities that Jiang Chen had displayed were the aforementioned perception and decisiveness, which even Emperor Shura had to respect.

Though some of the noble scions encountered miserable failure during this second round in unexpected ways, for the most part more and more wandering cultivators were eliminated. Those who remained were largely the elite. The following rounds of elimination would be increasingly difficult.

Chapter 940: The Number One Sword Dao Genius of Veluriyam Capital

After the end of the New Star Rankings battles and two consecutive rounds of the Genius Rankings, everyone in Veluriyam Capital found their recognition of Jiang Chen's martial dao talents completely refreshed. When it was time to draw lots for the third round, Jiang Chen once again drew a noble youth as his opponent. The latter looked gloomy when he discovered who his opponent was. His cultivation was even weaker than Murong Qiu's, so he knew that he was definitely going to lose to the powerful Pill King Zhen.

This noble youth didn't dare act too wantonly before Jiang Chen. In fact, he acted very gentlemanly and courteous. Jiang Chen knew from his attitude that the noble youth was only hoping to lose the fight with dignity. That was why Jiang Chen didn't put him in a difficult spot for too long. He kept the battle going for almost thirty minutes before defeating his opponent without hurting his dignity.

The three rounds were finally concluded. Other than the first round, Jiang Chen felt that the latter two rounds were rather fruitless. Although the contest had been dry and dull thus far, he didn't let down his guard. The greatest charm of an elimination-style contest was the possibility of sudden elimination. If a contestant was unfortunate enough to draw a powerful opponent, then they might be eliminated in advance. Although Jiang Chen didn't think that there was any participant in the Genius Rankings who could defeat him, he wouldn't allow himself to underestimate his enemy or become arrogant. The contest entered a short period of rest after everyone had fought three rounds.

Originally, the Eternal Celestial Capital had prepared three geniuses to snipe Jiang Chen during the Genius Rankings battles. But after witnessing Jiang Chen's forceful killing of Xiao Paohui, they grew a little hesitant about these cultivators' chances of success. Two of the three geniuses they had sent were obviously inferior to Xiao Paohui in terms of both strength and talent. The last one was at best Xiao Paohui's equal. It wasn't that they had no chance of defeating Pill King Zhen, but the risk was quite high.

Their only advantage was that they were still in the shadows. Now that Pill King Zhen had revealed some of his methods and skills, he was easier to prepare against. Still, there were plenty of disadvantageous elements that might negatively affect the outcome. The brat had an unbelievable amount of tricks up his sleeves, so who was to say that he didn't possess more abilities and trump cards than what he had already shown? Of course, it was still the elimination stages. Everyone's opponents were random. It was only possible to fight Pill King Zhen during the ranking battles that followed the elimination rounds.

The Eternal Celestial Capital refused to accept this outcome, so they ordered their three geniuses to sound out Pill King Zhen's trump cards to the best of their ability without exposing themselves, even if they couldn't beat or kill him. Of course, their own safety was the higher priority.

When the short interlude was over, the fourth round officially began. This time, Jiang Chen drew a wandering cultivator as his opponent. This wandering cultivator was made of stronger mettle, and he refused to concede defeat without fighting. A difficult fight later, the wandering cultivator was ultimately mercilessly swept off the stage.

Jiang Chen knew restraint, however. He didn't use any fatal moves knowing that his opponent hadn't intended to kill him. In fact, he didn't even hurt the wandering cultivator. When the fourth round was finished, only eight hundred were left fighting in the Genius Rankings contest. Once two more rounds had passed, the top two hundred would be decided out of this group of eight hundred. They would then enter the ranking battles.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly when the results of the fifth round's drawing came out. His opponent was a familiar face. He was Ji Zhongtang of the Coiling Dragon Clan. Jiang Chen and Ji Zhongtang weren't close to each other at all. They were, at the bare minimum, acquaintances who'd met each other several times in the past. Moreover, Jiang Chen found himself able to appreciate a character like Ji Zhongtang. At the very least, he was more pleasing to the eye than that Liuxiang.

His opponent's eyes actually glowed with eagerness when he saw that he'd drawn Jiang Chen as his opponent. Although Ji Zhongtang was younger than both Ji San and Liuxiang, he had long since reached the ninth level sage realm. It was true that he was incomparable to the two young masters who were both at the half-step emperor realm, but for someone his age, he was still without a doubt a genius amongst geniuses. Unfortunately, Ji Zhongtang's major focus was in martial dao, and everything else was of little concern to him. He wasn't particularly interested in the clan's welfare or becoming the clan's successor either. He was a man who was extremely faithful and loyal to martial dao.

On the stage, Ji Zhongtang spoke with eyes filled with wild passion. "To be honest, Pill King Zhen, I'd thought that your martial dao talent was ordinary at first. But now, I've realized that your martial dao talent isn't inferior to your pill dao talent in the slightest. It's my fortune to be able to meet an opponent like you, so I will do my utmost to defeat you. I request that you do your best too, and please know that I won't mind it at all if you beat me."

Jiang Chen laughed. "Good man! In that case, let us both do your best and show a good battle for everyone else, shall we?"

Ji Zhongtang chuckled. "That's exactly what I hope to do."

He rushed towards Jiang Chen like a horse free of its reins. When he moved, he did so in an imposing fashion. He lifted a broadsword into the air and swung it at Jiang Chen, as if he was planning on cleaving the world. The slash was simple but mighty. It was the Coiling Dragon Clan's famous sword technique.

The Coiling Dragon Clan's sword technique was direct and fierce. Every hit was as powerful as a coiling dragon. Ji Zhongtang's stance portrayed him as a cultivator who preferred a strong, unyielding martial style. An opponent like this wasn't particularly difficult to fight, but if one only possessed ordinary skill, then they could become one's worst nightmare. It was because opponents like Ji Zhongtang feared nothing and nobody. The moment they entered the zone, they would transform into a war machine who feared neither life nor death. When the broadsword slashed down on Jiang Chen's head, the phantom of a coiling dragon also swiped through the air.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Well met!"

Dragon-wise, Ji Zhongtang's coiling dragon was far inferior to Jiang Chen's own. His true dragon image didn't just possess the presence of a dragon, but also its blood and aura. The draconic phantom accompanying Ji Zhongtang's sword slash was just a supplement to the sword technique. Since he didn't possess the bloodline of true dragons, there was also no trace of the will of a true dragon in his attack. Naturally, a phantom that lacked the will of a true dragon couldn't pose a threat to Jiang Chen. However, despite being at the ninth level sage realm, Ji Zhongtang's special constitution and fierce martial style gave his sword technique power equivalent to Xiao Paohui's attack.

But that Xiao Paohui was already at the half-step emperor realm.

He truly is the noble youth of a great clan. The strength of this sword technique alone is as threatening as Xiao Paohui's attack. As a ninth level sage realm noble youth of a great clan, he certainly hasn't brought shame to his own clan. Jiang Chen praised Ji Zhongtang silently.

That being said, praise was no reason for Jiang Chen to let down his guard. Ji Zhongtang possessed extraordinary martial dao talent, and if he were to underestimate his opponent, he might actually suffer

a regrettable loss. Seeing the ferocity and swiftness behind Ji Zhongtang's sword, Jiang Chen felt his interest piqued. He raised his Pentecolor Divine Swords and actually began dueling Ji Zhongtang.

Earlier when he'd killed Xiao Paohui with a single sword strike, he had only scratched the surface knowledge of the Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique. Therefore, his strikes were powerful but lacking in depth. His understanding of the Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique had since improved by leaps and bounds. It was why he was hoping to fight Ji Zhongtang in a duel of sword technique.

The Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique was without a doubt more sophisticated than the Coiling Dragon Clan Sword Technique. However, Ji Zhongtang had begun training in the Coiling Dragon Clan Sword Technique since he was child, so his understanding of the technique must have reached a legendary level. Meanwhile, Jiang Chen's understanding of the Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique was average at best.

Beams of light and sword auras cut through the air. Both combatants were executing grand and fierce sword techniques, so it almost felt like two warrior gods were fighting on stage. Tremendous sword auras charged to and fro, and the brilliant light and power behind them made the battle look absolutely splendid. This battle was just as entertaining as Jiang Chen's fight against Xiao Paohui. In fact, the entertainment value of this battle was almost unparalleled to some sword dao geniuses. Even Ye Tianzuo's battle against Jiang Chen paled in comparison to this battle.

Ye Tianzuo had only executed three sword moves that day. All three sword moves had unique strengths, incredible depth, and intoxicating points. But many had failed to understand how wonderful those three moves were. They thought that those moves must be weak since Pill King Zhen had defeated all of them. No such thing existed in this battle, however.

Ji Zhongtang was a well known sword dao genius of the Coiling Dragon Clan. He cultivated the Coiling Dragon Sword Technique, and it was rumored that the clan lord privately praised Ji Zhongtang as the best sword dao genius in the clan for almost a millennium. No one knew that Pill King Zhen was also a sword dao genius until today. Although Ji Zhongtang had executed the Coiling Dragon Sword Technique to an unbelievable level, he was still unable to take down Pill King Zhen.

Pill King Zhen was also deploying a sword technique, but the depth of this sword technique seemed to exceed even that of the Coiling Dragon clan technique. However, it would appear that Pill King Zhen wasn't able to execute the sword technique perfectly just yet. What they saw was but the tip of the iceberg. Still, the tip of this technique was so powerful that it drew everyone's attention.

"I didn't think that Pill King Zhen would be a sword dao genius too. Amongst the youths of Veluriam Capital, there has been almost no one who could compare to Ji Zhongtang in terms of sword dao for many years, right? Excluding the geniuses of the seven emperors, Ji Zhongtang is undeniably amongst the top three cultivators out of all the great clans and aristocratic families, no?"

"Top three? According to the Coiling Dragon clan lord, Ji Zhongtang is the absolute number one sword dao genius amongst the youths of all worldly powers in Veluriam Capital."

"That isn't necessarily true. It's true that his sword dao talent is extraordinary, but he is young and lacking in foundation. It's not unlikely for various sword dao geniuses to crush him with brute force."

"That is true. Ji Zhongtang hasn't reached the half-step emperor realm yet after all."

“Hehe, speaking of geniuses, shouldn’t we praise Pill King Zhen? He’s only at the seventh level sage realm, you know, but he’s actually managing to fight the ninth level sage realm Ji Zhongtang head on without falling behind. Now this is a true genius!”

“That’s true. This should have been a battle where Pill King Zhen attempts to surpass the gap of cultivation and challenge his better, but why do I feel like Ji Zhongtang is the one who is challenging his better?”

It was as the last person had just said, Jiang Chen’s consecutive victories and in particular, his forceful killing of Xiao Paohui, left everyone under the impression that he was an unchallengeable expert. This was why they subconsciously categorized him amongst half-step emperor realm experts. They subconsciously thought that the ninth level sage realm Ji Zhongtang was the one who was challenging his superior. It was only now that they realized in a daze that Pill King Zhen was only at the seventh level sage realm.