

## Three Realms 951

### Chapter 951: Jiang Chen's Martial Dao Knowledge

Jiang Chen had occasionally seen Ji San battle because he had known him for a long time, but this was actually the first time he'd ever seen his brother go all out. One could tell that Gu Zhenshan was no longer belittling his opponent. He'd chosen to draw out the fight against Ji San instead of throwing out a flurry of powerful attacks at the beginning like what he'd done in his battle against Alchemist Xi. He was showing his respect and veneration for the Coiling Dragon Clan successor.

Gu Zhenshan was a true disciple of a great emperor. By reputation alone, one would expect that he'd have a better upbringing and legacy than a young master of the Coiling Dragon Clan. However, he was only a mere third-ranked disciple under Emperor Mountaincrush while Ji San was a genius that was first in line to succeed the entire Coiling Dragon Clan. Gu Zhenshan was in no position to act all high and mighty towards him.

Jiang Chen grew more impressed as the battle went on. He'd always thought that Ji San was less of a tactician in battle than Liuxiang due to his easy-going nature. In fact, he'd always thought that Ji San was inferior to Ji Zhongtang in terms of raw martial dao talent as well. However, he soon realized that he'd underestimated his brother too much. Ji San was in no way worse off. Moreover, since he was a few years older than Ji Zhongtang, he was more proficient with the clan's martial method too.

The easy-going Ji San had become quite serious because he was facing a truly powerful foe. His defense was incredibly tight, his attacks equally as powerful. His impeccable timing for attacking and defending made him every bit worthy of his heritage. He wasn't showing any signs of inferiority against a true disciple of a great emperor! Jiang Chen never imagined that Ji San would possess such a heaven-defying martial dao. He was actually a cultivator that adapted to his opponent's strength!

Odd geniuses like these would occasionally appear in the martial dao world. One could never truly see the full potential of these geniuses. However, they would often unleash an unimaginable burst of potential once placed in a difficult battle. The audience would often be shocked by their sudden increase in power. Ji San was definitely a cultivator of this sort. One could say that he was hiding his true abilities by playing a pig to eat the tiger, but this match alone was enough to prove that Ji San was no less talented in martial dao than Liuxiang. Jiang Chen had battled Liuxiang once. First hand experience had told him that Liuxiang was no slouch, but he wasn't an incredible talent either.

They were both successors of the Coiling Dragon Clan, but Liuxiang's martial dao path leaned towards the feminine side. Moreover, he was too reliant on his equipment and inheritance. His biggest flaw of all was the fact that his inheritance and equipment weren't completely compatible with each other. This meant that he wasn't able to fully utilize either of them. Ji San's martial dao path, on the other hand, encompassed a balance of both sides. A path like this would mean that he could attack and defend at will. He might not stand out in any way, but his potential in battle was limitless.

Ji San had given up the match against Jiang Chen. However, his battle today had made Jiang Chen believe that he would've had a difficult time defeating Ji San if his brother had gone all out against him and used all of his clan inheritance. Jiang Chen's opinion of this only solidified as the battle went on. It seems like the clan lord is already leaning towards Brother Ji. I probably won't be able to defeat Brother Ji if the clan's ultimate inheritance was passed down to him.

Jiang Chen might be strong, but he wasn't so strong that he could directly confront the Coiling Dragon Clan's ultimate inheritance. A clan with the potential of becoming another great emperor faction definitely possessed an inheritance that acted as the clan's ultimate trump card. It could be a treasure, a martial technique, or even a mysteriously powerful totem. Jiang Chen didn't think he'd be able to suppress such a powerful inheritance unless he used the restrictions in his palace. Their battle would end with a tie at best.

It seems like the internal struggle to become the clan's successor has finally ended. Liuxiang must've lost. Ji Zhongtang wasn't suited to lead a clan, as his personality is only suitable for martial dao exchanges. He's a good candidate to be Brother Ji's right-hand man though. This was Jiang Chen's initial judgement about the current state of the clan. Meanwhile, the battle in the arena had reached its climax.

Gu Zhenshan was also shocked by Ji San's battle prowess. Ji San had been able to take all of his attacks head on regardless of any ability he used. He hadn't faced this situation in his previous bouts. The flow of battle had begun to make him feel anxious. He'd heard rumors that the Coiling Dragon clan lord was going to become the eighth great emperor in Veluriyam Capital. Because of that, he wasn't that much more superior than Ji San despite his identity as a true disciple of a great emperor. He was only ranked third amongst Emperor Mountaincrush's true disciples after all. He could tell that Ji San was challenging him as the first successor in line to the Coiling Dragon Clan.

He unleashed all sorts of abilities at the beginning, believing that Ji San would eventually cave to one of them. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. He couldn't even manage to gain the upper hand. This was a blow to his pride. It seemed like Ji San was no less capable than Sunyu Xiaosheng in terms of his ability to read the battle. He was also quite adept at controlling the flow of the battle too.

Gu Zhenshan tried to crush his opponent with a flurry of vicious attacks, but Ji San nullified them all the same. This was his most difficult battle yet. Back then, Sunyu Xiaosheng had been prevented from dealing many fatal blows due to his inferior equipment. Ji San, however, was a successor to the Coiling Dragon Clan. Like a dragon, he was capable of dealing a fatal counterattack any time by soaring through the skies at any moment's notice. The battle between the two great talents was incredibly eye-opening.

Liuxiang, now next to the clan lord, was feeling incredibly unamused. He'd always thought that he was superior to Ji San. However, he could now tell that this had been his personal delusion all along. He'd thought that the frivolous Ji San was only a lucky good-for-nothing, but it was evident that Ji San's talent in martial dao was above his own. He was unwilling to accept such facts, but there was no way he could deny it after watching the battle taking place before his very eyes.

"I didn't know that third brother possessed such talent in martial dao. I've been underestimating him all this time," Ji Zhongtang quietly commented.

The clan lord laughed. "Ji San has a unique personality. He is able to adapt himself to the strength of his opponents. Zhongtang, you should strive to be as creative and malleable as him." The clan lord was overjoyed. He was very proud of Ji San's performance in this battle. The result of the match no longer mattered. What mattered was that he'd brought out the Coiling Dragon Clan's heart, pride, and soul. Moreover, he'd calculated that Ji San had a fifty percent or more chance of winning this match .

“Liuxiang, this battle might serve as a good inspiration for you,” he said plainly after taking a brief look at Liuxiang.

Liuxiang had no choice but to nod bitterly. Flames of jealousy were raging inside of him, but there was nothing he could do. It was just the reality of things. During his battle against Gu Zhenshan, all he could do was put up a brief period of resistance before he’d been defeated. Still, he’d managed to put up a better fight than the other competitors before him had. But in the end, it was still an uneven matchup. Gu Zhenshan was the only one on the offense. The only reason why he was able to put up a resistance for such a long time was due to his equipment and inheritance. He was truly no match for Gu Zhenshan in martial dao.

Ji San was also using his equipment and inheritance to put up a good fight against Gu Zhenshan, but there was no doubt that his innate talent for battle was above Liuxiang’s. The clan lord was a little surprised by that too. He already knew that Ji San was full of potential, and that he was even more capable in a real battle, but after watching the match, he realized that Ji San was even more talented than he’d ever imagined.

Ji San’s control over the entire battle was beyond that of Gu Zhenshan. However, the clan lord didn’t exactly know why. The lad might have incredible innate talent and battle senses, but his opponent was a true disciple to a great emperor! How had Ji San managed to seize control of the fight?

There was actually a reason behind this. Seizing control of a battle was entirely different from winning the battle by luck. If one were to win a match by luck, it could be due to one’s equipment, a small accident, or maybe even the opponent’s mistake. However, seizing control of a battle meant that the opponent had been completely dominated and had nothing to do with luck. The clan lord couldn’t comprehend how Ji San had managed this. He knew the lad’s talents, but what Ji San was doing was obviously beyond his abilities. How could the clan lord know that this was all due to the few hours rest that Gu Zhenshan had taken after his battle with Sunyu Xiaosheng?

Jiang Chen and Ji San had been busy analyzing Gu Zhenshan’s abilities and fighting methods during the short break. They had almost fully comprehended his battle style. With Jiang Chen’s memories and martial dao knowledge from his previous life, he was able to easily point out the flaws in Gu Zhenshan’s martial dao and give Ji San the relevant pointers to achieve victory. This wasn’t a privilege that others had.

Jiang Chen was more knowledgeable about martial dao than anyone present, including the great emperors. After all, he had been surrounded with heaven realm geniuses in his previous life. He’d read countless heavenly books and taught countless geniuses despite being unable to cultivate himself. He’d also had numerous disciples under him. If Jiang Chen claimed that he was second in martial dao knowledge, then nobody in the Divine Abyss Continent could ever be first. Gu Zhenshan’s martial method no longer held any secrets after his analysis and conjectures. It was no surprise that Ji San was able to claim the upper hand when he possessed such knowledge. However, those who had no idea as to what was going on would naturally find this situation very bizarre.

Chapter 952: Veluriyam Capital Needs a New Idol

The seven great emperors were also shocked by Ji San’s performance. There had been many successful challengers to the Ranking of Young Lords in previous Martial Pagoda battles, but their victories were

mostly due to various accidents and mishaps. A disciple from a great clan who could suppress a true disciple of a great emperor in battle was extremely rare. The seven great emperors had previously felt that Ji San was slightly inferior to a true disciple of a great emperor, despite his fame. However, that slightly inferior Ji San was now suppressing Gu Zhenshan in battle!

This dealt a great blow to Gu Zhenshan's conviction. He ended up losing to Ji San after a long and hard-fought battle. Ji San was the first successful challenger to enter the Ranking of Young Lords! He had replaced Gu Zhenshan as the twenty-first ranked genius in the Rankings. Gu Zhenshan would lose his position in the rankings from henceforth. Ji San's victory in the rankings caused a great commotion in Veluriyam Capital. The clan lord was also incredibly pleased by the result. His face glowed with happiness.

The Coiling Dragon Clan had become a topic of various rumors and discussions in recent years because they'd been keeping a low profile due to the clan lord's condition. The Majestic Clan had even encroached upon them. It seemed like they were going to overthrow the Coiling Dragon Clan at any moment. They only had the opportunity to catch their breath when the Majestic Clan caused their own destruction after a fateful encounter with Pill King Zhen.

Pill King Zhen had then showed the clan lord the means to temporarily halt his cultivation dissipation, which temporarily stabilized their situation. However, following these series of events, the clan still continued to be the topic of various chatter and rumors. Ji San's victory today had finally turned the situation around by showing everyone the clan's strength and power. The clan lord understood very well that the victory hadn't just stabilized the clan's position; it was also a stepping stone for his plans to turn the clan into the eighth great emperor faction. The only thing left for him to do was to reach the great emperor realm, catapulting him and the clan up to the next level.

Ji San's victory disappointed many of the other clans. They'd thought that the Coiling Dragon Clan was no longer to be feared as their days were numbered. However, Ji San's victory had proven that the heritage of the leading clan was nothing to be scoffed at. He was now officially recognized by the great emperors as an equal to their disciples after achieving victory in the Ranking of Young Lords. An achievement in the Genius Rankings was nothing compared to this.

All of Veluriyam Capital celebrated his victory. All allies of the Coiling Dragon Clan were also overjoyed. They'd suffered through a great deal of stress in recent years, but now it seemed like everything was worth it in the end. The Coiling Dragon Clan had finally bared its teeth and revealed its towering might to the world.

Mie Chenzi was next in line after Ji San. He had to challenge the twentieth ranked young lord since Ji San had achieved victory. The crowd expected Mie Chenzi to be the next victorious challenger, but their hopes were dashed when he suddenly announced that he would withdraw from the challenge. This had caused another great commotion in Veluriyam Capital. Nobody had expected that he'd withdraw from the challenge!

Everyone was aware of Mie Chenzi's strength even though he'd admitted defeat to Pill King Zhen in the Genius Rankings. Many experts believed that he was more than capable of challenging the Ranking of Young Lords. His winning chances were higher than that of Ji San. For what reason did he have to withdraw from the challenge when even Ji San had managed to achieve victory?

Had he become disheartened and lost his fighting spirit after the battle with the pill king? What other reason was there for him to withdraw? Jiang Chen was deep in thought after Mie Chenzi withdrew from the challenge. He was disappointed, as Mie Chenzi seemed to have decided to run away with his tail between his legs. Jiang Chen could no longer cause any trouble for him. Mie Chenzi left the arena and disappeared into the crowd without a care for the crowd's reaction. Jiang Chen wanted to get to the bottom of his true identity, but now was unfortunately not the time to do so. It was his turn to challenge the Ranking of Young Lords.

The twentieth ranked young lord was a disciple of Emperor Vastsea. His name was Zhuang Jie.

"Brother, be very careful of Zhuang Jie. This man has an innate water and wind constitution. His cultivation encompasses both the towering might of the raging sea and the swiftness of the wind. He's definitely a lot harder to deal with than Gu Zhenshan," Ji San couldn't help but remind Jiang Chen before the battle. He was hoping that Jiang Chen would win so that they would join the Ranking of Young Lords together and become the hot topic of choice in Veluriyam Capital. After all, every single person in Veluriyam Capital knew that they were sworn brothers by now. The entire capital would be singing their praises and there was even a possibility that they would make the annals of history as legendary figures!

The rankings were given after extremely strict considerations. The higher the ranking, the stronger they were. What Ji San had said confirmed Jiang Chen's estimations that Zhuang Jie was much stronger than Gu Zhenshan was, despite having only a one rank difference between the two of them. However, Jiang Chen seemed unperturbed by this information.

He theorized that Zhuang Jie was only roughly as strong as Mie Chenzi because Zhuang Jie was only one rank higher than Gu Zhenshan, and Mie Chenzi was slightly stronger than the latter. However, one had to consider factors other than cultivation level to measure an opponent's strength during a martial dao battle. Jiang Chen was also prepared for the unexpected. He was deep in thought as he climbed the spiraling brick stairs to make it to the top of the arena. It was as though he'd comprehended something new with every step he took. The arena for the Ranking of Young Lords was extremely spacious. There were enough seats for two to three hundred thousand spectators.

Everyone was content with the fight the previous challenger had put up just now. However, they were hungry for more, as they also knew of Pill King Zhen's immeasurable talent. They hoped that the pill king's challenge would be equally as shocking as it was entertaining. The audience was incredibly passionate, but Pill King Zhen seemed unperturbed. It was almost like he felt no pressure from the challenge. He was mentally prepared for a great battle.

To the many cultivators in Veluriyam Capital, the geniuses in the Ranking of Young Lords were all existences beyond reach. They were dragons and phoenixes among men. These geniuses were eminent figures that they could not hope to approach. They were as mysterious as they were godly. However, this didn't mean that the people worshipped them. It was actually quite the contrary. Everyone was hoping for a common cultivator to pull down these young lords from their high pedestals, to bring them down a notch.

These young lords were so high and mighty that they weren't even willing to breathe the same air as the commoners of Veluriyam Capital. They often acted as though it was an insult to mix with the

commoners when they were forced to show their faces. Their actions attracted quite a bit of envy and jealousy.

They very much preferred young lords that didn't put on airs like Emperor Peafowl's true disciple, young lord Fan. Young lord Fan had been a peerless genius but he hadn't been proud or condescending. In fact, he had been incredibly friendly and would exchange pleasantries when others greeted him. He would even occasionally offer pointers to the slower cultivators. He had been a very reputable person and the role model for many young cultivators in Veluriyam Capital.

Jiang Chen had filled in for this need for a new figure to idolize with his Pill King Zhen persona. He'd numbed their regret from losing a great figure like young lord Fan. They hadn't known who he was at the beginning, but the people slowly came to recognize him after the series of issues that had arisen during Taiyuan Tower's opening. His name spread throughout every corner of Veluriyam Capital like wildfire after he'd defeated Pillfire City. He soon became the new venerated figure amongst the younger generation.

The pill king then partook in the Martial Pagoda Battles as a martial dao cultivator and breezed through the New Star Rankings, even ending up first in the Genius Rankings. How could the people not look forward to his attempt at the Ranking of Young Lords challenge? Forget about a measly twentieth ranked young lord, many young cultivators were certain that the pill king could defeat even the top five ranked young lords! This prediction hadn't come from a methodical analysis, but from a strong emotional yearning for his victory. They were rooting for the pill king to topple all the geniuses and become the foremost genius in Veluriyam Capital. They wanted him to become their new idol! Only someone as famous and charismatic as him was qualified to be the leader of the younger generation.

The young lords were incredibly powerful, but not a single one of them was as charismatic as young lord Fan. Veluriyam Capital needed a new young lord Fan, and the pill king was no doubt the best candidate. Because of that, the younger generation cheered him on with all the fervor that they could muster. They even held up signs and chanted words of encouragement.

Chapter 953: Provocation

"Pill King Zhen, the rising star!"

"Pill King Zhen, our biggest idol!"

"Pill King Zhen, sweeping the competition!" Different catchphrases sprouted up all around the arena. Under such an exciting atmosphere, anyone who broke the stifling silence was rewarded with a throng of followers. In that moment, at least a hundred thousand members of the audience shouted in unison. They spoke words of encouragement almost entirely in unison. The clean uniformity of the chant, coming from mouths of the hundred-thousand-strong, carried an astonishing force with it.

It had a kind of magic to it, spreading out from the arena proper into every nook and cranny of the city's streets. In the next moment, the entire Capital was infected by the wild fanaticism in the air. Young and old shouted with one voice from every corner. Veluriyam Capital was like a pot of boiling water. Waves of cheers passed through the air above the city again and again, scaring the birds in the trees into flight.

Jiang Chen was bewildered by the cheering crowd as he walked up the stone steps. He'd always been at the forefront of cultivating his dao heart. The fortitude of his Boulder Heart allowed him to remain calm

in midst of any turmoil. At this particular moment, however, he had trouble holding back his emotions. He cycled through surprise, shock, then affection. Currents of warmth ran through his chest, filling his heart. When else in either of his lives had he received such support and approval?

As the son of the Divine Celestial Emperor, he had been the object of respect by many in his previous life. However, the only reason for this respect had been the loftiness of his station—or rather, his father's. But at this moment, Jiang Chen could feel the people's sincere and heartfelt blessing. There could only be one reason: as a representative of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he had defeated Veluriyam Capital's long-time enemy, the provocative Pillfire City. That victory had won him widespread devotion in the Capital.

Anyone lucky enough to be a resident of the city was proud of that fact. They had no tolerance towards those swaggering outsiders from Pillfire. Pillfire City did surpass Veluriyam Capital in many pill-related matters, history and ability both, but that didn't mean that anyone from Veluriyam Capital was simply going to take the humiliation lying down and totally ignore their harassment.

Jiang Chen had defeated Pillfire City with his strength alone. In fact, his appearance had ended in the utter demolition of Pill King Ji Lang's unconquerable myth, sending the other pill king packing with ease.

The events surrounding this had been propagated as a legend, becoming the storytellers' favorite tale. In Veluriyam Capital's hour of danger, Pill King Zhen had answered fate's call! He alone had come to turn the tide, the destined hero and savior of Veluriyam's fortunes. That was perhaps a little exaggerated, but the battle had propelled Pill King Zhen's fame into the stratosphere when told from the multitude of accounts present. It had directly led to his idolization by the masses. Even yesteryear's young lord Fan hadn't held such a glorious record. In light of this, how could Pill King Zhen's emergence as a martial genius at the Veluriyam Pagoda Meeting not fill everyone with anticipation?

Zhuang Jie's carefree figure was already waiting in the arena. He had arrived earlier than his opponent in order to give a strong impression of intimidation. He wished to overwhelm his opponent with his superior presence from the onset. Though he didn't want to admit it, the pill king who'd hailed from unknown origins was definitely one of the toughest enemies he'd ever face. For someone whom everyone had perceived as only a pill genius, coming so far was no mere coincidence.

Zhuang Jie had no fear of any other genius on the Rankings, even Ji San. There were only two exceptions: Mie Chenzi and Pill King Zhen. Before the battle, Emperor Vastsea had urged him not to underestimate Mie Chenzi, to take him on with complete seriousness. The latter's unexpected forfeiture had surprised everyone. This immediately put Zhuang Jie up against the number one cultivator in the Genius Rankings, Pill King Zhen.

To tell the truth, he would have rather faced Mie Chenzi than Pill King Zhen. Everyone had bore witness to Pill King Zhen's string of countless victories, but no one could see where his limits lay. Not even Emperor Vastsea could make heads or tails of it. However, Zhuang Jie was still the heir to a great emperor at the end of the day. He attached a great deal of mental importance to Pill King Zhen, but he also believed that he had a chance.

A thorny challenger like Pill King Zhen had to be rallied against with every little advantage. Even the respective senses of presence during their entrances were part of that. Thus, the mass cheering on all of his sides devastated him as he stood upon the arena. They were applauding and encouraging the pill

king more and more as time went on! Almost the entire city was in on it. It caused Zhuang Jie's readied bearing to collapse instantly.

None of it could be of any use given the amount of people vocally supporting Pill King Zhen. No matter how tough of a demeanor he put on externally, there was no way he could hope to surpass an entire city's worth of support. Zhuang Jie felt a little sour internally. He refused to accept it! He refused to accept even the pill king in question. How could a mere outsider steal so much thunder? How long had it been since Pill King Zhen's arrival in the Capital? What was the basis for the man's status as the beloved of thousands? It was so unfair.

He was the heir closest to Emperor Vastsea, a noble and a young lord. What did Pill King Zhen do to deserve his accolades, hmm?! Under more ordinary circumstances, Zhuang Jie might not have been so jealous. But because this was happening just before their battle. Zhuang Jie felt victimized and like he had been sent into the background as a result of it.

It was a supreme mockery of him, without question. He was a young lord genius, the heir to a great emperor... but he had to be the background material to this Pill King Zhen? The humiliation sank its fangs into Zhuang Jie like a venomous snake. He was extremely irritated beneath the surface. Most of all, he wanted to decimate his opponent in the arena. He wanted to stomp on the pill king underfoot and mercilessly shame him. Only after that could his hatred be abated!

These short-sighted rats are cheering for a mere pill king! I suppose the only reason for it is because he defeated a so-called genius from Pillfire City? Do they not know that pill dao is insignificant in the grand scheme of things? In the world of martial dao, force of arms is the only eternal truth. I will absolutely steamroll him today. When he's helpless beneath my heel, maybe then these fools will see how useless their object of adoration is before a young lord genius! The thunderous cheering unquestionably incited Zhuang Jie to anger ahead of time. It burned more energetically within him with each passing moment.

Jiang Chen, on the other hand, finally stepped onstage amidst universal ovation. He had never been in such a transparently cheerful mood before. The sounds of cheering and applause enlivened his heart. His horizons were broadened all of a sudden, greatly expanding both his heart and mind. The only thing I did was defeat Pill King Ji Lang in self-defense. I'd only wanted to protect the Longevity Pill that was rightfully mine. I've never done anything for these people, yet they're showering me with adoration. If I'm still going to carry on hiding myself and caring only for my own well-being, how am I supposed to live up to that?

Jiang Chen hadn't treated Emperor Peafowl's call with particular enthusiasm before now. He'd always been running from it, unwilling to shoulder the responsibilities that hadn't originally belonged to him. But he suddenly understood, in this moment, what kind of responsibility was conferred to a real genius. Emperor Peafowl had said this about him: he had a talent that others lacked, but he lacked something else in turn—the vigor of a youth, a certain kind of duty and verve.

Jiang Chen did possess these traits, but he'd always been wary about displaying them. He realized now, though, that he could not shirk the responsibility given to him by fate and fortune. He could not allow himself the cowardice, if only for these people who admired him. When he finally made his way onstage, Jiang Chen felt the final lock sealing his heart click open. He returned a wave to the surrounding crowd, his smile plain and candid. He had made his decision.



Unfortunately, Zhuang Jie took the gesture to be the greatest insult of all. What do you really amount to, Pill King Zhen? That you're posing so pretentiously in front of a young lord genius like me? All of their support is supposed to belong to me. What gives you the right to just come here and take it?

"You're enjoying this, aren't you? A sensationalist, fishing for compliments," Zhuang Jie's tone was cold. His reptilian-like gaze snaked over Jiang Chen repeatedly.

This was when Jiang Chen finally noticed his opponent, his expression freezing with incomprehension for a moment. He tossed his opponent a glance. As a young lord genius, Ji San had rated the other man as someone who was significantly more difficult to deal with than Gu Zhenshan.

"So you're Zhuang Jie?" He frowned when he saw the open hostility present in his opponent's eyes.

Zhuang Jie sneered. "Your pride has been spoiled by only a sliver of favoritism. You're just a puffed-up scoundrel. My name isn't fit to be called by someone as shallow as you."

He was very displeased. Even the act of Jiang Chen saying his name offended him. A genius from the Genius Rankings should have called him 'senior brother Zhuang'. As for whether he needed to grace such an address with a response... that depended on his mood. Even the scions of great clans had to follow that rule when they saw the emperors' true disciples. It was considered discourtesy to do otherwise. In stark contrast, this Pill King Zhen was calling him directly by name! Zhuang Jie dispensed with all civility.

Jiang Chen had evidently not expected his opponent to be fixated on such trivial matters. They were already in the arena, yet Vastsea's young lord was still holding on to every inch of his pride. He could see the steel in his opponent's look. Evidently, Zhuang Jie was not a fan of him. There was no need for him to pretend to be amiable towards someone who treated him with such open hostility. Jiang Chen saw all in the windows to the other man's soul. Moreover, he knew that it was entirely unrealistic for someone who flew beneath Emperor Vastsea's banner to harbor any positive sentiment towards him. It was common knowledge that the Emperors Vastsea and Shura were in cahoots together. Jiang Chen became stern. There was no need to waste words on someone who spouted such abusive language anyway.

"You don't have anything to say to that, huh? I guess you're playing dumb." Raising an eyebrow, Zhuang Jie snickered. "I can't deny that you're reasonably skilled, and you're a master showman to boot. But today, I'm going to tear away your façade. I'll make it clear to everyone that the number one cultivator in the Genius Rankings is useless before a young lord!"

#### Chapter 954: The Terrifying Power of an Innate Water Constitution

Though he didn't know why, Jiang Chen had been curious about Zhuang Jie during Ji San's review earlier. But after seeing the man in person and hearing him speak, he now had a much lower opinion of him. Jiang Chen actually understood his opponent's displeasure. After all, the other youth was a genius in the Ranking of Young Lords, and therefore deserved more support and encouragement from the spectators as a person of a much higher stature. Reasonably speaking, he wanted more of the cheering and applause that should be naturally accorded to him. Unfortunately, Jiang Chen had a monopoly over all of these things presently. His opponent had become a mere foil. It would be an awkward situation for any man to face. Being somewhat embarrassed or even angry was understandable. But, at the root of it,

none of this was his problem. Even if Zhuang Jie was secretly dissatisfied, he still should've stuck to a certain bearing.

No matter how upset one was, the arena was always the outlet for it. If his opponent could beat him fair and square in the ring, Jiang Chen would only respond with utmost respect. The fight hadn't even begun yet, but the other man was already spewing poison everywhere. Jiang Chen only looked down on this kind of petty behavior. No fighting was required to see the narrow-mindedness in this person's heart.

Master showman? Useless? Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or scowl at being labeled as such. If the geniuses in the Ranking of Young Lords were all like this, then there wasn't much to be impressed about.

"Your fangs are so sharp, Zhuang Jie. I wonder if the dog is your zodiac sign? You know, your vicious tongue is remarkable, but I'd be a lot more impressed if you could actually beat me in the arena." Jiang Chen smiled faintly, not deciding to squabble in the same way that his opponent was doing. He didn't have any interest doing such a thing.

Zhuang Jie's face contorted. He had thought that it would be easy to rouse Pill King Zhen's anger, but his words had turned out to be entirely ineffective. However, he didn't tone down his behavior. "My victory against you is assured," he jeered, "but that's not the only thing I'm going to do today. I'm going to humiliate you, and crush the myth surrounding you once and for all. The whole world should know—you're just fame-chasing trash!"

Verbal provocation was clearly Zhuang Jie's forte. Having lived two different lives, though, Jiang Chen found it no more irksome than a cloud of noxious air. Aside from placing a hand at his nostrils, it warranted no reaction from him.

Seeing the visible disdain on Jiang Chen's face, Zhuang Jie knew his ultimatum had failed. He was truly furious now. He clapped both hands together. Rays of light burst forth from his palms, the very air around them quivering at the radiance.

"Moonflower Mirage!" Both hands moving in guidance as Zhuang Jie conjured the image of a boundless, rippling pool. It resembled an enormous mirror, smoothly enveloping all. As someone with an innate water constitution, he had a lot of practice and ease with water-attribute arts.

Jiang Chen treated the attack with due importance. He swiftly activated his Cicada Wings, his body soaring into flight. He brought himself above the oscillating waves at once. There would certainly be much more trouble if he was tangled up in the water.

"Running?" Zhuang Jie's eyes were derisive. Another hand sign commanded the pool to swirl, transforming from a mirror into a current in reverse. It swept upwards, roiling in an aqueous chain. It had every intention of vacuuming Jiang Chen into its influence.

Jiang Chen's wealth of experience told him that this was no ordinary chain. If he really was trapped by it, escaping would be laborious. The essence of water contained in the chain was very potent. Its ability to restrain was unrivaled, able to bend the laws of physics themselves. It was widely known that water was yielding, supple, and flexible. However, these were only some of water's traits. In actuality, the essence of water ruled over a very complicated and vast realm. Water was sometimes the exact opposite. It

could be firm and unyielding. Water could destroy all, and yet nourish all. Attack all, and yet defend all. There was nothing that surpassed water in how multifaceted it was.

As someone who possessed an innate water constitution, Zhuang Jie clearly understood the intricacies of the element well. For him, using a water attribute ability came second nature to him. The coiling chain sailed upwards, taking flight like a gigantic, watery dragon. It aimed to constrict Jiang Chen within its rings, then swallow him whole.

With utmost haste, Jiang Chen fled its area of control just before the water pillar snapped him up. Watching his escape filled Zhuang Jie with scorn. Making another hand seal, he clapped once more. Two white pillars of water flew in the air. One went left, the other right, and both acted in unison to seal off every means of escape.

The water pillars surrounded him from both flanks. Jiang Chen could only shift up and down, the evasive airspace available to him becoming more and more limited. The audience held their collective breaths at the scene. Everyone knew that the emperors' true disciples were strong, but no one had expected the extent of strength that was currently being displayed.

Since his first competitive match, Pill King Zhen had faced many a tenacious enemy, but none of them had been able to put on such an oppressive show. None of them had been able to achieve the spectacle that Zhuang Jie was demonstrating. Under the entanglement of the water pillars, Pill King Zhen seemed to be tired to death.

Spectating the battle, Ji San looked positively restless. His lips were pursed, muttering something darkly under his breath. But no matter what his inaudible remarks were, his worry was palpable. Zhuang Jie's prowess had surprised him greatly as well. He'd always thought that Vastsea's young lord was only a little stronger than Gu Zhenshan, that there wasn't much of a difference between the two. On a cultivation level, that was probably true. However, if present indications were accurate, Zhuang Jie's practical combat ability far surpassed Gu Zhenshan's. If Ji San were to go up and face an attack as preposterous as the one that Zhuang Jie was currently displaying, he too would have a headache.

"No way! This Zhuang Jie is quite strong. He's not letting Pill King Zhen have a moment's rest!"

"What do you mean? Pill King Zhen is just feigning weakness. It's not like that hasn't happened before."

"That's right. There were a few opponents before that looked like they were about to overpower Pill King Zhen, but the pill king came through in the end."

"It looks a bit different this time, though..."

"What's different about it? I'm sure Zhuang Jie's capable, but I have every faith that Pill King Zhen will win."

"Yeah, Zhuang Jie is only number twenty in the Ranking of Young Lords. There's no reason for Pill King Zhen not to win."

"You've got that right, eh? I'm still waiting to see him challenge the Young Lords' top five!" Jiang Chen's historically tough battles with Xiao Paohui and Mie Chenzi cemented the audience's conviction. Though it looked like he was currently at a disadvantage, there wasn't much worry coming from the peanut

gallery. It had looked worse than this several times prior, but Pill King Zhen always prevailed without fail. This time was surely no exception!

The audience could accept the possibility of Pill King Zhen's eventual defeat, but losing this early on? That was ridiculous. In the public perception, Pill King Zhen was definitely competent enough to face the top five of the Ranking. Zhuang Jie was only a genius in the top twenty. He wasn't worthy to be the pill king's stumbling block.

Jiang Chen didn't have it as easy as others thought. At the same time, he wasn't as helpless as he looked, either. He'd tried several ways to tackle his current plight, such as using sword aura to cut the water. No matter how he tried to slice the water, however, the most he managed to do was slightly obstruct the water's movement. Its upward flow would not be hindered for long. Magnetism also failed to do anything against the pillars. The power of metal was effective against both metal-attribute attacks and physical blows, but it wasn't of much use against the permeating power of water. None of Jiang Chen's methods yielded much return.

Of course, he had various other untested approaches, the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice being one of them. In particular, the ice lotus had exceedingly absorbent power. But using the Lotus would give him away immediately. If he were to use it, the entire world would know tomorrow that Jiang Chen and Pill King Zhen were one and the same.

Jiang Chen had no fear personally of that happening, but Taiyuan Tower was still experiencing budding growth. Many of the people close to him still needed its umbrella of protection. If he gave away his secret early on, it would be disastrous for those people. They would definitely need to find new hiding places. Jiang Chen wasn't willing to break that particular status quo.

The water pillar was very threatening, but Jiang Chen's speed was enough to counteract its harassment. He couldn't quash it just yet, but it also had a hard time getting anywhere near him. He wanted to use Cicada's Disappearance to escape, but the pillars seemed to have some sort of consciousness. Locking onto his very soul, they allowed him no opportunity to use the ability. Things were looking a little grim for Jiang Chen.

Even as Zhuang Jie continually directed the water pillars to strike at Jiang Chen, his eyes gleamed in thought. Evidently, he was looking for a way to snag the pill king with one final push. Jiang Chen never let his guard down for a second. More than half of his attention rested upon his opponent. Ji San had told him that Zhuang Jie didn't only have an innate water constitution; he possessed an innate wind constitution as well. An enemy with two elemental constitutions should not be underestimated. The attribute of wind in particular held a certain fleetness and unpredictability. Any arts that originated from it were extremely tricky to deal with. Still, staying embroiled in the fight was no solution.

Continually evading the water pillars, Jiang Chen devoted his thoughts wholly towards solving the problem at hand. Suddenly, a voice cursed near his ear, "What are you scared of, you idiot? They're just pillars of water. In terms of protectiveness and ensnarement, elemental water is unfathomably formidable, but it's not like it has no weaknesses!"

Eh? Jiang Chen's ear wiggled. The one who'd called him an idiot just now was Long Xiaoxuan. Though Long Xiaoxuan had always remained at his side, for the most part he generally stayed hidden. Why was the dragon giving him advice now? Did he have a way to deal with his current predicament?

## Chapter 955: Devoured with a Single Mouthful

“Brother Long, do you know of a way to deal with this?” Jiang Chen communicated through his consciousness.

“Deal with what? You have dragon blood coursing through your veins! Don’t you know that us true dragons possess the art of devouring?”

Art of devouring? Jiang Chen seemed to have instantly caught his drift. Unfortunately, he’d never cultivated the devouring ability before. This was a very different ability from a dragon roar. To imitate a dragon roar, all he needed to do was open his mouth and activate his true qi. It wasn’t a difficult ability to master since he possessed the true dragon bloodline. He wasn’t entirely sure that he could learn the devouring ability in such a short time.

“Brother Long! I haven’t learned that art yet!” Jiang Chen replied without beating around the bush.

“You haven’t, but I have!” Long Xiaoxuan proudly stated. “You just make a pose and I’ll materialize myself to the upper corners of your mouth.”

Jiang Chen was amused by the thought of that. He’s telling me to cheat! Well, beggars can’t be choosers! With Long Xiaoxuan’s guarantee, he increased his speed and leaped onto one of the arena’s pillars. He stood motionless like a mountain atop the pillar and looked down upon his opponent.

Ah? Why has he stopped? The audience was curious. This was clearly not the right time to stop moving.

Zhuang Jie was overjoyed when he saw Jiang Chen perch on the pillar. It seems like the brat has finally lost his patience. Is he planning to use brute force to shove his way through my Dragon Waterspout? He was sure that he’d win if that was the case. He’d never seen an opponent at an equal cultivation level push their way through his attack using brute force alone. There were countless geniuses who thought they could do so, but every single one of them was crushed by the two Dragon Waterspouts.

Those who were aware of the might of Zhuang Jie’s attack were thinking that the pill king had gone mad for making such a bold move. Ji San was so worried that he wanted to shout some reminders to Jiang Chen. However, it was already too late for that. Changes in the battlefield happened in an instant. The battle would probably be over by the time he opened his mouth.

The clan lord gripped the armrests of his chair tightly. Disbelief was written all over his face. He couldn’t understand why Jiang Chen had made such a reckless move when he was normally so calm and composed. The audience’s heart skipped a beat as well as their breathing began to hasten.

A victorious smile had appeared on Zhuang Jie’s face as well. He was certain that he’d won. There was no way the idiot pill king could deal with his Dragon Waterspout through brute force alone!

“Die!” The two water pillars became thicker and thicker. The cyclone had also increased in intensity and sucked in the surrounding air into its vortex. The two waterspouts had turned into water dragons that swept across the void.

Jiang Chen remained incredibly composed. His eyes didn’t waver even one bit. He suddenly opened his mouth wide and a thunderous dragon roar shot towards the two enormous water pillars. The crowd was

dumbfounded then they saw what Jiang Chen had done. They simply couldn't comprehend what he was trying to do. However, the smarter ones soon realized something.

"Is he planning to devour the two water pillars?" one of them suddenly asked hoarsely.

"It can't be! Even the air is being shredded by the water pillars! How could his body possibly withstand such power?"

"It's true! He's going to devour it!"

"No way! There's too much power within the two water pillars. He's seeking his own death!"

"The pill king has overestimated himself." Some of Jiang Chen's supporters sighed. They were not supportive of his reckless move. The two water pillars were simply too frightening. Everyone could sense the furious power contained within the vortex. How big was his stomach? Even if he could manage to nullify all of the power within the vortex, how was his stomach supposed to hold such a large amount of water? However, they were soon dumbfounded yet again.

A strong suction appeared as soon as Pill King Zhen opened his mouth. It appeared as though a dragon was devouring the two water pillars. Whoosh! A mocking smile appeared on Zhuang Jie's face when he saw what was happening. He was almost certain that the pill king was missing most of his brain. There was nothing he himself could do in face of such powerful water pillars even though he'd cultivated a separate space in his abdomen. His attack hadn't just encompassed the power of vortex, but also the power of water origin. The pill king's stomach was going to be grinded into dust.

"You ignorant cretin! Do you truly wish for a quick death?" Zhuang Jie smiled coldly and made a few more hand signs. The two water pillars then descended towards Jiang Chen with the power of nine heavenly waterfalls. Its strength had increased even more now.

Rumble! Rumble! Zhuang Jie continued to inject the power of water into the pillars and brought the attack to its full might. However, the pill king's feet remained firmly planted to the top of the arena's pillar, even though he had taken the full brunt of the attack. The force behind the pillars hadn't even managed to make the pill king budge an inch. The two water pillars gushed into his mouth as though they were being controlled by an invisible force. Jiang Chen's body was becoming increasingly large and sturdy. He'd grown a hundred foot tall and was emanating a golden glow from his body. He seemed like an ancient god that had descended upon the world.

"He really devoured everything!"

"That's impossible! How did he manage to perform such a feat?"

"His hundred-foot-tall golden body can't possibly hold that much water! There was enough water in that attack to fill an entire lake! How did all that water fit into such a small stature?" What shocked everyone even more was the fact that Jiang Chen's body seemed unperturbed by the two furious torrents of water entering his body. He didn't move at all or give off any signs of discomfort. The audience stared at his stomach, wondering what it was made of. Why was his stomach not expanding after taking in so much water?

This wasn't logical at all. Did he have an alternate dimension inside of him as well? Zhuang Jie's face turned ashen as he stared at Jiang Chen. The smirk was wiped off his face, replaced with shock and

distress. How did he devour my water pillars? He couldn't believe his eyes. He could've accepted the reality of things if Jiang Chen had sucked away his two water pillars with some kind of treasure, but he hadn't!

Pill King Zhen had devoured it simply by opening his mouth! This was something that went against logic! He wasn't willing to accept this. Not even the other geniuses under the seven great emperors could manage such a feat. What irked him the most was the pill king's reaction. He was so casual about the whole thing that it seemed like he had merely drunk two cups of water.

Zhuang Jie had the ability to control water and strengthen its power, yet he couldn't even manage to penetrate his opponent's defense. The product from all his hard work and struggles had turned out to be like a pebble that had been thrown into the sea. He'd merely created a ripple instead of a large wave. Despair flooded his mind.

Jiang Chen had just devoured the water pillars whole in front of tens of thousands of people. Nobody understood what had happened, nor did they know how Pill King Zhen had managed to accomplish such a feat. Zhuang Jie's ashen face was an indication that he was similarly in disbelief like everyone else. There wasn't even a bulge in the pill king's stomach after he'd devoured the water. It was as though the two water pillars had disappeared into the void after entering his stomach.

Jiang Chen's hundred-foot golden body slowly returned to its original size. "Thank you. That was refreshing," Jiang Chen said mockingly.

Refreshing? The audience quickly broke into raucous laughter. The pill king had used Zhuang Jie's incredibly frightening water pillars as a thirst quencher? This was clearly a slap to the face!

Zhuang Jie was incredibly resentful as he stared at Jiang Chen standing on top of the pillar. He had never felt so much shame in his entire life. Laughter from the hundred-thousand-strong audience was the biggest slap to his face. His opponent's words were like a sharp knife to the heart. A furious blaze began to surge in Zhuang Jie's heart. However, the anger soon turned into calmness and deep thought.

How did Pill King Zhen manage to devour the water pillar? His ability to control water was his biggest asset in battle. He would have to go on the defensive if water abilities were useless against his opponent. Even the Coiling Dragon Clan was shocked by what he'd done.

"How did he do that?" Ji San muttered to himself while looking bewildered. Unfortunately, not even the clan lord had an answer for him. He was a half-step great emperor, yet he still couldn't figure out how Jiang Chen had managed to perform such a feat.

Many geniuses amongst the audience, including the subordinates to the seven great emperors, were in deep thought. It was evident that they had no idea how Pill King Zhen had managed this feat either. Their guess was that the pill king had cultivated some kind of palace in his stomach. However, it wasn't easy to possess this skill. They'd heard about similar martial techniques as well, but none of the cultivators of such techniques were able to devour Zhuang Jie's water pillars as easily as the pill king had done.

Chapter 956: Attaining Eighth Level Sage Realm

Jiang Chen had thoroughly flabbergasted the audience yet again. Everyone knew that Pill King Zhen was a martial dao genius after watching his battles. Even so, Jiang Chen's heaven-defying abilities never seem to fail at shocking the audience time and time again.

Jiang Chen had made a truly risky move just now because he trusted Long Xiaoxuan. After all, Long Xiaoxuan was capable of instantly killing Zhuang Jie, as he'd already broken through the emperor realm. If Long Xiaoxuan said he could do it, then he definitely could. There was an unconditional trust between them. It was a small gamble that worked out incredibly well in the end. Jiang Chen was overjoyed when he saw the horrified look on Zhuang Jie's face. He hadn't just physically defeated Zhuang Jie, but mentally as well. The overweening young lord was obviously taken aback when his water pillars were devoured. He tried very hard to hide this fact, but the sense of defeat was already deeply ingrained into his mind.

Just as Jiang Chen had expected, Zhuang Jie's attacks were no longer as powerful after a crack had appeared in his dao heart. His attacks were still very ferocious, but they were no longer as effective as before. It didn't matter how strong his water elemental abilities were, as they were all nullified by the heaven-defying Long Xiaoxuan. His strongest attacks were no longer of any use. Without any other choice, he had no choice but to rely solely on wind elemental attacks. The fundamentals of wind elemental attacks lay in speed. Blinding speed.

However, Jiang Chen had never been concerned when it came to a competition of speed. His Featherlight Mirror was the archenemy of all speed cultivators. Zhuang Jie wasn't able to fully utilize his two killer abilities. The battle between the two geniuses had become lopsided all of a sudden. Zhuang Jie grew incredibly frustrated as the battle continued. There was no doubt that he had his own special abilities, as he was a true disciple of a great emperor. He'd lived through thousands of battles, big and small. However, this was the first time he'd ever encountered such an opponent.

His original plan was to crush his enemy through the use of his incredibly powerful abilities, but things had gone out of his control. His opponent seemed to possess a counter to every single move he made. He had no doubt that his enemy was the bane of his existence, an emissary sent by the heavens to destroy him. His confidence was shredded to pieces after such a one-sided battle.

Emperor Vastsea frowned when he saw what was happening. He never imagined that his third-ranked true disciple would meet such a potent adversary.

"Honored master, what is Pill King Zhen's background? Why do I sense such limitless potential in him? Even Junior Brother Zhuang is about to lose to him." The person who had spoken was Emperor Vastsea's foremost true disciple. He was amongst the top five of all the true disciples of the great emperors.

Emperor Vastsea frowned slightly. "The pill king's true identity is still a mystery to Veluriyam Capital. I've tried asking Emperor Peafowl but he wasn't willing to disclose the truth. I highly suspect that he is a chess piece planted by Emperor Peafowl long ago to be used as a replacement for young lord Fan."

"A replacement for young lord Fan?"

"Yes. Emperor Shura even theorized that Pill King Zhen was Emperor Peafowl's true successor. Young lord Fan was merely a front so that Peafowl could nurture his true successor away from everyone's sight. He was the genius that Emperor Peafowl had truly wished to nurture all along."



Emperor Vastsea's subordinates were flabbergasted when they heard what he'd just said. This was simply too much! Emperor Peafowl's would need to have powers of extreme foresight to plan such a thing. It was beyond what was humanly possible.

Young lord Fan had been an incredibly talented genius back then. However, some unknown occurrence had claimed his life. The reason for his death was still a mystery to this day. Many had conjured their own theories to explain young lord Fan's death, and a majority of them had blamed Emperor Shura. Everyone knew that Emperor Shura was trying to overthrow Emperor Peafowl. He had every motive to murder Emperor Peafowl's incredibly talented successor.

As Emperor Shura's greatest ally, Emperor Vastsea was certain that Emperor Shura had nothing to do with young lord Fan's death. Young lord Fan was such a genius that he'd dominated every other great emperor's disciple. His death had caused a great deal of commotion amongst all the other disciples. Many were secretly glad that the great mountain on top of their heads was finally gone. These people suddenly realized that another frighteningly powerful mountain replacing young lord Fan had arisen under Emperor Peafowl's side once again.

The young lords had occasionally talked about Jiang Chen when he participated in the Martial Pagoda battles, but none of them had taken him seriously. Jiang Chen still hadn't attracted their attention even after his series of victories consolidating his position in the New Star Rankings. After that, he became the champion yet again in the Genius Rankings. The high and mighty geniuses of the Ranking of Young Lords no longer had a choice but to notice the champion of both rankings. They'd begun to notice him, but they still weren't concerned about the threat he posed.

They were cream-of-the-crop geniuses! Every single one of them possessed incredible talent and a superior cultivation base. They owned trump cards and battle techniques that no one else had. However, their confidence and pride had begun to crack a little as they watched the current battle. They still didn't believe that Pill King Zhen posed any sort of threat to them, but they had no choice but to admit that he was at least qualified to challenge them. The fact that he could dominate Zhuang Jie in battle was proof of that. The result of a battle was normally set when one side was dominated by another side.

Zhuang Jie put up a struggle to the very end, but he still eventually lost. There was now another successful challenger in the Ranking of Young Lords! Ji San leapt with joy. He was even happier than the time he'd won the challenge himself. There wasn't any other upsets from the challengers in other groups. The young lords behind the rankings were slightly weaker, but only in comparison to the other young lords. They were still unapproachable existences to the cultivators from the Genius Rankings. All challengers apart from Ji San and Pill King Zhen failed in their attempts in the Ranking of Young Lords.

The only exception to this was Mie Chenzi. Everyone believed that the mysterious cultivator was capable of challenging the young lords. However, he had withdrawn from the challenge and disappeared without a trace. With that, the thirty-six finalists of the Ranking of Young Lords were set.

Next were the battles. Everyone was given a short two week period of rest before the ranking battles. This two week period was incredibly important for Jiang Chen. He'd gained a lot ever since he'd joined the formation trials and fought through the many battles to become the champion of both the New Star and Genius Rankings. Now, he had finally claimed a spot in the Ranking of Young Lords. He felt signs that

he was now ready to break through to the eighth level sage realm. These two weeks would be a perfect time to do so.

He'd basically shown all of his available trump cards in the previous battles. The remaining ones were either off limits or too heaven defying to be shown, like the palace. Every single battle was going to be extremely challenging from now on. He wanted to continue fighting and moving up the ranks. However, the advantage his trump cards gave him was becoming smaller and smaller. He would have to rely on his abilities and foundation in martial dao to achieve victory from now on. Innate strength was going to be very important from this point onwards.

His cultivation level was without a doubt the lowest amongst the geniuses in the Ranking of Young Lords. This wasn't his fault, as he had a lower start in position than most, not to mention that he was also younger than all of them. It hadn't even been ten years since he'd reincarnated in the Eastern Kingdom. Becoming an eighth level sage realm cultivator from the true qi realm in such a short time was already incredibly heaven defying. His body's original foundation in martial dao was extremely weak. His knowledge and foundation of martial dao from his previous life was the only reason why he was able to become what he was today. Because of that, Jiang Chen wasn't too critical of his own achievements.

Even though the difference between his cultivation level and the young lords' cultivation levels was quite big, he was comforted by the fact that they were cultivators who had grown up with a golden spoon in their mouths. They had a hundred or perhaps even a thousand times more resources than him. Jiang Chen was very satisfied with his own achievements after putting all of this into consideration. He could definitely climb the ranks for a better ranking if he broke through to the eighth level sage realm.

He wasn't terribly concerned about his rank. He was more worried about being able to have a clash with the top geniuses of this world. He was finally able to encounter the strongest geniuses now that he'd climbed to the top of the rankings. He could finally validate the essence of his cultivation through these geniuses!

Jiang Chen enclosed himself in a secret room for the entire two weeks of interlude. He was going all out to break through to the eighth level sage realm. He had a sufficient number of Heroic Sage Pills, but they were no longer enough to satisfy his cultivation appetite. His primary source of inner energy now came from Long Xiaoxuan's dragon crystals. The Heroic Sage Pill was used as a supplement instead. Jiang Chen had many sources of energy; there were many heaven-defying treasures and sources of energy in his possession. There was a large possibility that he would successfully breakthrough to the eighth level sage realm since he had accumulated a large number of Heroic Sage Pills and also possessed dragon crystals.

#### Chapter 957: A Revitalized Taiyuan Tower

For the Ranking of Young Lords, it was impossible to decide the specifics via round robin.

Geniuses who competed at this level were able to fight for over seventy-two hours without a decisive victor. If each contestant had to fight every other, the entire competition could take more than a year and a half to conclude. Moreover, the aftermath of the battles would undoubtedly be disastrous.

The numerical placements of the Ranking of Young Lords were preliminary, with the seven emperors' factions ordaining the positions. Strictly speaking, it didn't particularly mean anything, but it was still

somewhat useful for reference. Most possessed rankings that were close to their true placements, but this appraisal was untested by the rigor of combat. It was actual fighting that would decide the final ranking. Thus, the battles were an outlet for geniuses who were dissatisfied with their placements to confront those with higher standings, as well as an opportunity for those in the reverse circumstance to prove their caliber.

The staff of Taiyuan Tower congregated outside of Jiang Chen's secret room. The competition for the Ranking of Young Lords was about to begin, but the head of the Tower still hadn't emerged from seclusion. Everyone was worried to some degree. It was common knowledge that this year's Veluriyam Pagoda gathering was particularly crucial. If Jiang Chen distinguished himself in the Martial Pagoda battles, it was likely that he would be made young lord by Emperor Peafowl. Originally surfacing as an insubstantial rumor that circulated amongst a few people, this particular piece of news had made broader and broader rounds as the battles proceeded. Thanks to Pill King Zhen's increasing fame, the story was supported and corroborated by more and more people. Now, it was the most popular topic of conversation for the entire town.

Those who worked at Taiyuan Tower treated the gossip with some suspicion. They'd never heard Jiang Chen bring up such a thing. Aside from Huang'er who'd received a passing hint, no one else had a clue about its veracity. The news understandably energized them completely. Whether it was legitimate or only hearsay, it was enough to bring them happiness all the same. The young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain! Even thinking about the possibility made their blood boil.

If the news was truly authentic, it would be a momentous occasion for Taiyuan Tower. Though it was growing more and more in scope, the Tower was still nominally only a pill faction in collaboration with House Wei. It still lacked a heavyweight backer. But if Jiang Chen could become Sacred Peafowl Mountain's heir, Taiyuan Tower would skyrocket in status because of this association. They would become Veluriyam's foremost faction without contention. Every member of the Tower would benefit from the change.

Taiyuan Tower's core membership consisted of Jiang Chen's companions. Ten hand-picked slave attendants were also part of the group. When they'd first been rescued by Jiang Chen a while back, they had been forced to agree to serve the Tower for three decades as its protectors. The Tower's lively growth had changed their minds. Its master, Pill King Zhen, was the recipient of an increasing amount of acclaim. Beneath him were Pill King Lu Feng, Pill King Bu, and Lin Yanyu—three eminent pill masters, all top-ranked experts of their craft. The store's prosperity was evident. The unwillingness in the ten attendants' hearts had disappeared completely, replaced with a deep gratefulness and pride. As Taiyuan Tower's brand grew stronger and stronger, so too did their prestige grow with it. They saw hope, a future, and a wonderful road ahead.

Before, they'd been bent on carrying out their agreements as quickly as possible in order to leave. Now, they wouldn't leave even if the Tower held them at knifepoint. Even they themselves had to admit that they were unreservedly aboard the Taiyuan Tower ship. The Tower's glory, future, and prospects were unquestionably tied together with their own.

Aside from these ten servile protectors, Taiyuan Tower's main force included Regal Pill Palace disciples as well. They had places of honor at the Tower—Shen Trifire most of all—and comprised the core of the store's power. They lived beneath Taiyuan Tower's wing and were the establishment's biggest

beneficiaries. Without Jiang Chen's salvation, they would have all been slaves by now, soulless zombies under the command and direction of others, estranged in strange lands. Out of all their peers from the Palace, they were undoubtedly the luckiest.

Most of the others from the sect had died. A few more were scattered to the winds, their livelihoods uncertain. That these people had safe and steadily-recovering lives wasn't simply good fortune, but rather, a luxury. Jiang Chen and Taiyuan Tower had given them everything they had.

Describing these disciples as fellows drowning in bliss would be a bit much. However, they were assuredly fixated on Jiang Chen as their benefactor and mental bulwark. He was a figurative tree that provided the canopy beneath which they sought shelter. Thus, they were entirely invested in Jiang Chen's own future. If senior brother Jiang Chen could become Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord, Taiyuan Tower would definitely become more prominent as a result. The future effort put into rebuilding Regal Pill Palace, whenever it occurred, would be relatively painless. Neither the Eternal Celestial Capital nor the Great Scarlet Mid Region would be able to stop it, given Sacred Peafowl Mountain's clout. All of these hopes lay with Jiang Chen! As the foundation of their existences, he gave meaning to their work at Taiyuan Tower. Without him, any self-improving endeavors undertaken by the rest of them were mere busywork. Given their talents and skills, no amount of personal development would allot them the necessary strength to oppose the aforementioned hostile factions. Everything was different with Jiang Chen.

The possibility of his advancement to Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord merely sweetened the deal. With all this in mind, Jiang Chen's half-month seclusion was everyone's concern. And he was still in it! If Jiang Chen stayed in seclusion for much longer, he would miss the battles for the Ranking of Young Lords. It would directly affect his actual placement, and thus, Emperor Peafowl's judgment of him. From their perspectives, the ranking battles were an outstanding stage for his skills to be showcased. Missing it would surely affect his stature.

"Everyone, please return to what you were doing," Huang'er suddenly spoke up. "Whether it's about the Ranking of Young Lords or Sacred Peafowl Mountain's heritage, Jiang Chen has everything under control. What's the point of standing around here? Returning to your responsibilities is the best thing you can do."

The girl was typically demure, but the entire Tower knew that the mysterious Miss Huang'er was Jiang Chen's partner. Her words carried a lot of weight.

"Let's disperse," Gouyu agreed. "The young master knows the limits of everything. So what if he misses the ranking battles? If his strength continues to increase, he will overshadow the rest of the young lords later on regardless. There's no need to use a single competition to prove his absolute ability."

Her words were echoed by many others.

"Yeah, we should go back."

"Okay, okay." The surrounding crowd gathered themselves slowly for departure.

It was at this moment that the secret room's door gently opened. A reinvigorated Jiang Chen greeted those present with a sanguine smile. "So, everyone's here, huh?" His tone was serene.

“You’ve finally left seclusion, young master?” Gouyu was overjoyed.

“Greetings to the young master!” The ten guardians came forward to salute Jiang Chen as well. These old coots were each more cunning than the last. Their prior unwillingness had transformed into pure, unbridled worship. They almost wanted to take their hearts out in an attempt to put their loyalty on display.

Jiang Chen gave them a small nod and looked over the ten codgers with some vexation. He knew that they’d always been a bit resentful and unruly about working at the Tower. A bit of dejection about their situation was understandable. There was something different about them today, though. Why were they so freshly enthusiastic? Was the short span of fifteen days enough to produce such mind-boggling change?

Shen Trifire and the Regal Pill Palace disciples also came forward in greeting, as did Liu Wencai and company. Just like the protectors, they were greatly encouraged by the sight of Jiang Chen leaving seclusion.

“Young master, there’s been a rumor circulating in the city during these past few days. Apparently, His Majesty the Emperor Peafowl has plans to make you Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s young lord? Is that true?” Ever the hasty youth, Qiao Shan couldn’t help but blurt out the question. It was a question that everyone wanted to know the answer to, with preferably a clear-cut response from Jiang Chen himself. It was an answer that could determine the destinies of both Taiyuan Tower and themselves.

All eyes were on Jiang Chen, aglow with anticipation. Sweeping his own gaze mildly across each person’s face, Jiang Chen suddenly understood the ten codgers’ unusual fervor. It was because of this rumor, of course! Eyes unaverted and grinning a little, Jiang Chen decided to be very direct. “Does everyone know about it already?”

Gouyu’s pretty eyes widened. “Then, it’s true?”

The lack of refusal from the young master jolted everyone’s hearts into action.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “You people knowing about it internally is enough, I think. There’s no need to announce something like this. Let’s try to keep a low profile, hmm?”

Emperor Peafowl had mentioned the matter to Jiang Chen many times before, and they even had an agreement in place. Nevertheless, Jiang Chen distinctly wanted to avoid blabbering about it before the emperor’s own announcement. He only let a little bit slip because of Taiyuan Tower’s collectively intense interest. His listeners were smart. Jiang Chen’s words were verification enough. It simply wasn’t time to reveal something like this to the public yet.

In the midst of conversation, the sound of loud footsteps came from outside. “Brother, you’re certainly a calm one. The ranking battles are about to begin! Even His Majesty has asked you why you’re not there yet.” It was young master Ji San. Pushing to the front of the crowd, he blinked when he saw Jiang Chen. “Aha! Have you broken through into the eighth level sage realm now, brother?”

Ji San had very sharp eyes. He saw the improvement in Jiang Chen’s cultivation level in an instant. Everyone else was shocked by this, their gazes echoing their reactions. Another breakthrough? He’s doing that way too often, isn’t he?

“The half-month’s work wasn’t wasted, thankfully. Let’s go. I... I’ve waited for the ranking battles for quite a while.” Jiang Chen was chomping at the bit for blood. His attitude brought new heights to the excitement of Taiyuan Tower’s staff.

#### Chapter 958: Jiang Chen Challenged

After a half-month interlude, the ranking battles for the Ranking of Young Lords recommenced. This final set of ranking battles didn’t have any complicated rules. The thirty-six cultivators currently on the Ranking of Young Lords each had three opportunities to challenge someone else. The battles began from the 36th ranked contestant. The 36th ranked cultivator could challenge someone at most three ranks ahead of him, so he could only target geniuses from ranks 35 to 33 in his first match.

If he won the first bout, he would earn the right to challenge someone up to six ranks ahead. Similarly, if he succeeded in the second bout, he could then proceed to challenge twelve ranks above him. On the other hand, if he lost in the first match, his remaining opportunities would be taken away, and he would be forced to stay in the Ranking’s last place. No matter how much the rankings ahead of him changed, he would have no part in them. Moreover, the cultivators who were ranked ahead of the challengers could only be challenged once per day. If a challenge was successful, then the challenger and the challenged would have their rankings swapped. Someone who lost a challenge would be permanently placed in the challenger’s spot, and there would be no further change to his ranking.

Being defeated by a challenger was the automatic mark of a loser. According to the regulations of the Ranking, after a loss, their right to issue challenges would be taken away. Take Gu Zhenshan and Zhuang Jie as an example, both of whom had been defeated by Ji San and Jiang Chen, respectively. The result of their losses had been even more severe. They’d been outright eliminated from the Ranking of Young Lords. Thus, a defending cultivator who couldn’t protect his ranking had no choice but to settle at the bottom.

Since the initial ranking incorporated many considerations from the seven emperors, its accuracy was generally quite reliable. One or two places’ difference was of course a surprise, but an error of three or six ranks’ difference was unlikely. If someone higher lost to someone lower with a three or even six-rank difference, then he could blame nothing aside from his own inadequacy.

The seven battles from ranks 36 to 30 carried few surprises. Though each initial challenge spanned only three ranks, there were no instances of success. Following these initial battles, the 29th ranked genius challenged the 26th. After a grueling battle, this challenge became the first instance of a successful challenge. His opponent was unceremoniously shifted back to the 29th place and was given no opportunity to contest the result while the now 26th ranked genius had the privilege of continuing his challenge. The second time, he could challenge across six ranks. The other contestants’ thoughts became more lively as a result.

Clearly, the guy had quite a few choices ahead of him. If he wanted to challenge someone five ranks up, there was young master Ji San. Six ranks? Pill King Zhen. Compared to challenging other geniuses, Ji San and Pill King Zhen were two dark horses who’d come from the Genius Rankings. Due to this fact, there was a greater chance of defeating them. Though they’d exhibited great strength in their qualifying matches, the common opinion was that they still lacked in both fundamentals and fame.

On paper, a fight against them could work out. If the now 26th ranked contestant could challenge either of them and win, it'd be a great coup for him. The result would be a climb that started from 29th place and ended at 21st, or even 20th. It was a shockingly large gap to bridge. For the Ranking of Young Lords, even the space of one or two ranks was exceedingly difficult to surmount for prospective challengers looking to move upwards.

"Should I challenge young master Ji San or Pill King Zhen?" The genius was named Fang Yuan, hailing from Emperor Void's faction. He had a difficult choice ahead of him. He probably had a higher chance of winning against young master Ji San, but if he picked Pill King Zhen and was successful in his challenge, it would result in a larger outcry. His final ranking would be a bit higher as well. After some consideration, Fang Yuan finally decided to make full use of his opportunity. He would challenge Pill King Zhen! It was the highest number of ranks he could jump, as someone ranked 26th. Pill King Zhen was ranked 20th.

Jiang Chen was unsurprised at the challenge. Chances like these were hard to come by, and it was logical that his opponent would want to maximize such an opportunity to its fullest extent. He wasn't afraid of battles. His victory over Zhuang Jie had shown him the approximate depth of the heirs to the emperors' ability. The formerly 20th ranked Zhuang Jie was at the half-step emperor realm. There was a sliver of difference between him and a true emperor realm cultivator. Likewise, Fang Yuan was at the same level, at the half-step emperor realm.

Though Fang Yuan and Zhuang Jie were nominally on the same level, there was a marked disparity between the two. It was impossible for Fang Yuan to surpass Zhuang Jie in terms of strength. Jiang Chen had been able to defeat someone like Zhuang Jie while he was still at the seventh level sage realm. Now that he'd broken through to the eighth level sage realm, he wasn't optimistic about his new opponent's chances. But, it was a convenient excuse for him to test just how much he'd improved. In his personal opinion, he'd reaped great rewards from breaking through to the eighth rank sage realm. The extent of his rewards' benefits, however, was yet to be determined. He'd have to verify his growth through actual combat.

Fang Yuan's preferred weapon was a black spear for missile attacks. He pointed its head at Jiang Chen from afar. The pressure the spear exerted melded into his own aura.

"Pill King Zhen, I know how powerful you are as an opponent. Even so, I've worked many decades on honing my skill with the spear. All of the glory I've accumulated in my life thus far hinges on this battle. I'm willing to burn my lifeforce for the sake of victory. I'm going to go all out today and show off the full extent of what this spear can do!"

Manners maketh the man. Though Fang Yuan probably wasn't actually stronger than Zhuang Jie, he certainly surpassed the latter in terms of both character and demeanor. Jiang Chen nodded slightly, the look in his eyes heating up as well. "Brother Fang, there is no need to speak of win or lose in the arena. Seek only peace and satisfaction with yourself. Please, go ahead."

Fang Yuan's own eyes shifted rapidly. He inclined his head in response. "Then, as a lower rank challenging a higher, I will make the first move!" He was perfectly candid, offering no further pretense or elocution. With a shake of his arm, he stuck out with the yard-long spear. Its projected point surged like a black serpent of lightning, almost extending past the boundaries of space itself. The weapon was in front of Jiang Chen in the next second. Most importantly, the spear's intent had no flair or flourish to

it. The action was simple rather than complex and showy. Each and every detail and movement had been clearly displayed in this lethal spear-strike.

Jiang Chen had given Fang Yuan his full attention from the instant the man jumped on stage. He felt a sense of threat from the spear. It was entirely instinctual, a kind of sixth sense shared between experts. Thus, Jiang Chen reacted instantly to the attack with a flash of his own sword. He deflected it aside in a single smooth motion. Clang! Sparks erupted forth from the point of collision between his Pentecolor Sword and the spear's head.

The forward thrust of the spear carried terrifying power behind it, but Jiang Chen's sword swing parried it with surprising facility. Both combatants' bodies swayed from the impact. Fang Yuan's heart sank. His attack had merely been an opening strike. Things would have been very different if his opponent had decided to evade or deal with the attack head on. The ensuing flood of pressure from his spear would have swelled like the tide, each blow more powerful than the last. That was the most potent thing about his spear. Each form flowed into the next, their relentless assault pushing ever forward. Additionally, each successive movement was accompanied by a sizable increase in power. In this way, his opponents would be exhausted and dismantled by the endless aggression.

But this time, Jiang Chen hadn't dodged the attack or tried to take it with his tempered body head on. Instead, he had deflected both the spear and the pressure behind it. It had looked like a simple turn of the blade, and certainly that was what the audience thought. There was no evidence whatsoever of the mastery behind the gesture to the untrained eye. Only true experts with an extremely keen eye could discern the truth. As for the opponent himself, well, Fang Yuan was devastated. Jiang Chen's casual riposte directly disrupted the momentum of his spear. It unsettled his offensive tempo, cutting a string of future attacks at their knees.

Whenever momentum was disrupted like this, the attacker had to build it up all over again. All of Fang Yuan's prior posturing and preparation was wasted, meaningless. Though it had looked simple, the deflecting blow actually contained a lot of martial dao wisdom. Was it a coincidence? Or did his opponent see through to the attack's substance? Fang Yuan was both dismayed and uncertain.

Again! Brandishing his spear, Fang Yuan began to work up a storm once more. In the blink of an eye, he'd thrust his weapon forth eighty-one times. Like a shower of meteors, the eighty-one thrusts transformed into a piercing storm. In the fight prior, Zhuang Jie's wind constitution had granted him supernatural haste. Thus, it was remarkable that Fang Yuan matched Zhuang Jie bit for bit in terms of speed. Moreover, the haste of his movements were incorporated much better into the impetus behind his spear.

Jiang Chen's eyes moved. The Divine Pentecolor Swords split from one blade into five, their kaleidoscopic radiance dispersing through the air. "Reverse Heaven and Earth!" he cried. Just like the Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords, this was also part of the Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique. Though it wasn't as flashy as the former, it possessed a subtle power all its own. Five colorful streaks of sword light transformed into a dazzling air current. Distorting the fabric of space itself, it sucked in all eighty-one strokes.

The technique pitted sword against spear, and yet crushed its competition utterly. As its name suggested, 'Reverse Heaven and Earth' warped natural order itself. It twisted space in such a way that



no technique, whether offensive or defensive, could continue operate any longer wherever it went. This was a technique that could rival an emperor realm cultivator's domain technique. A half-step emperor realm genius could barely grasp the basics of domain power. Jiang Chen's sword strike, on the other hand, possessed prototypical characteristics of an emperor realm technique. In terms of how esoteric and arcane the ability was, ordinary emperor realm domains couldn't hope to match up to it at all.

Most of the time, emperor realm domains required an expert's own power and the formation of a force field taken from that power. They typically required a certain amount of time for setup. But Jiang Chen had demonstrated an emperor realm domain power with just a mere sword technique! All seven emperors showed expressions of slight astonishment at this sudden turn of events.

#### Chapter 959: The Grace of a Strike

It was beyond common sense for a sword technique to have the same effect as an emperor domain. Even eminent figures like the seven great emperors had never heard of such a thing. After all, an emperor domain was commonly formed by combining an emperor's inner energy with his own will. A non-emperor realm cultivator could never generate such incredible energy. Even a half-step emperor could only barely create an emperor realm domain. Moreover, it would merely be an imitation and not a true domain. In fact, it was already an incredible achievement if they could create a defective domain. To imitate an emperor domain with a sword technique was unthinkable even if it wasn't a true domain.

However, the crowd also knew that Pill King Zhen was only a sky sage cultivator. He wasn't even a half-step emperor yet, let alone a true emperor! Yet he was already able to fight above his level with his ability to imitate an emperor domain! Or at the very least, he was now capable of putting up some resistance against the restraining powers of an emperor's domain. Not a single sage realm cultivator in Veluriyam Capital was capable of such a feat.

A sage realm cultivator would never have the ability to fight an emperor realm cultivator on equal footing. This was common martial dao logic. Talent or cultivation level didn't matter. Even a peak sage realm cultivator could never win without relying on equipment or other factors. The strongest and most incredible sage realm genius would never claim that they could defeat an emperor realm cultivator barehanded.

An initial emperor realm cultivator was definitely capable of taking on five to ten peak sage realm cultivators or three half-step emperors at the same time. The reason for such a discrepancy in strength was due to the emperor domain. It was truly that potent a tool in battle. It might not seem so when watching a battle between two emperors, but the advantage was much more evident when an emperor was battling a sage realm cultivator. This was the reason why Jiang Chen's simple-looking technique had rendered the crowd speechless.

Fang Yuan was flabbergasted when Jiang Chen deflected his spear. This was one of his most potent attacks, one that encompassed his insight of heaven and earth! This was a spear attack that even Emperor Void's foremost disciple wouldn't dare receive head on! Pill King Zhen hadn't only received the attack head on; he'd deflected it with an unbelievable method as well!

Is he... really a sky sage realm cultivator? Fang Yuan's heart had begun to waver. He couldn't help but think that he was facing a monster. A formidable monstrous genius that nobody had ever heard of. A crack appeared in his wavering dao heart. He'd finally begun to regret his brashness. He should've

jumped only five places and challenged Ji San instead. Judging by his own skills, there was a fifty percent chance he could win. Challenging the pill king was the worst decision he'd ever made in his life! He could no longer see himself winning after the pill king had deflected his spear.

Even the seven great emperors were shocked by what had just occurred, let alone Fang Yuan. How can a sage realm genius execute a technique on par with an emperor's domain? Was he an emperor realm cultivator hiding his abilities all long? However, such thoughts were shot down as quickly as they arose. It didn't seem possible that anyone could possibly suppress their emperor realm cultivation all the way down to the sage realm. Even if were possible, someone would've noticed by now. But how could one explain Jiang Chen's emperor realm strength? Fang Yuan wasn't the only one having such questions. The seven emperors themselves also were wondering how Jiang Chen had managed such a thing.

The six of them had even begun to feel a little concerned. They'd more or less viewed Jiang Chen as Emperor Peafowl's successor and also a chess piece that the emperor had secretly placed before. They were even more certain of their theories after they saw Jiang Chen's heaven-defying performance. Based on their understanding of Emperor Peafowl, they were certain that he would never be so quick to accept a genius that had appeared out of nowhere and make him the successor to Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

He had done such a thing because this was all part of his elaborate plan. He already knew Pill King Zhen like the back of his hand. The cautious Emperor Peafowl would never allow a foreigner that had only arrived for less than three years become the successor of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Due to how widespread the rumors were, everyone had arrived at this tacit conclusion, even though it hadn't been made official yet.

The other six emperors had taken the rumor with a grain of salt when it had just begun spreading. It was common knowledge that the pill king was talented in martial dao, but he wasn't a towering talent, nor did he have an overwhelming advantage over the other geniuses at that time. They were certain that the geniuses in the Ranking of Young Lords were stronger than the pill king in every single aspect. Sacred Peafowl Mountain might've lost young lord Fan, but would the other true disciples show allegiance to Pill King Zhen who had appeared out of nowhere? Everything was still up in the air. The other six emperors really didn't think too highly about the pill king, nor did they truly believe the rumors. They theorized that it was just sleight of hand that Emperor Peafowl, his subordinates, or maybe even Taiyuan Tower had purposely created. However, everyone now suddenly began to believe in the authenticity of the rumors after what had just happened.

Pill King Zhen was simply too monstrous! His peerless sword technique alone was enough for the world to clearly see his talent and potential. Maybe he still wasn't strong enough to garner notice from the seven emperors or dominate multiple formidable foes with just his strength alone, but the talent and potential within that sole sword technique had overthrown the beliefs of everyone present.

Jiang Chen had caused a great commotion when he was crowned champion in both the New Star and Genius Rankings. However, his fighting style and abilities hadn't been truly acknowledged by many cultivators. This was also partially due to Jiang Chen purposefully suppressing his powers to hide his true talents. He was an incredible fighter with a keen eye for details, but his strength was still limited by his sky sage realm cultivation. It was inevitable that some would suspect that he'd won those battles due to cheap tricks. Some even believed that he hadn't perfected his battle skills yet. That wasn't too far from

the truth. After all, Jiang Chen hadn't been able to cultivate in this previous life. He was finally able to in this new life, but he wasn't able to achieve perfection in every step.

Moreover, he hadn't displayed his true capabilities due to a multitude of reasons. The seven emperors viewed him as a flawed jewel because of this. However, he had inadvertently showed his true talent when he executed his last move. That sword technique was testament to Pill King Zhen's peerless talent in martial dao as well. People realized that he was equally talented in both paths. He also possessed an incredible sense for battle. He'd already grasped Fang Yuan's fighting style after only a few exchanges.

Fang Yuan excelled at using the spear, with it being his most powerful trump card. The special characteristic of a spear was its ability to dominate and overwhelm the enemy. Unfortunately, Jiang Chen specialized in controlling the flow of battle. It didn't matter how dominating the spear was. It could never work up a storm when the battle was under Jiang Chen's control.

Fang Yuan couldn't bring out the spear's full potential due to the constant disruption. The sense of defeat within him was growing by the minute. He held many powerful methods, yet he hadn't been able to fully utilize any of them. It would be a gargantuan task to win against an opponent of the same level without his spear techniques.

"Ole Third. Your brother's talent in martial dao is simply inconceivable." The Coiling Dragon clan lord sighed. He was now thoroughly convinced of Jiang Chen's talent in martial dao.

"If I was the one receiving Fang Yuan's spear techniques, I'm not sure that I would have the necessary strength and skills to deflect his spear, even if I knew how to. Yet the pill king seemed to have already made countermeasures before Fang Yuan even moved. I can't help but be impressed by his judgement," Ji Zhongtang murmured quietly. Ji Zhongtang was a man of few words. However, it seemed like he had to speak those words this time. He'd already begun to admire Jiang Chen greatly after his own battle with him, and now his reverence had reached greater heights after witnessing this fight.

Ji San smiled wryly. "I'd thought that it was just a careless swing of the sword in the beginning. Never did I imagine that it was actually all part of his plan. It's as though he saw through Fang Yuan's spear before the fight had even begun. Fang Yuan isn't able to bring out the full potential of his spear at all. The flow of his attacks have been thoroughly destroyed by my brother."

"What he did was actually a testament to his eyesight and foresight, as well as his decision-making skills, all of which are at a level that should only be attainable at the great emperor realm," the clan lord commented with a solemn expression. Jiang Chen's sword technique was now the hottest topic amongst all factions in Veluriyam Capital, including the wandering cultivators.

#### Chapter 960: Brotherhood

Fang Yuan's spear technique was the only reason he was able to challenge the higher-ranked young lords. His power and lethality were greatly reduced once this was out of the equation and the rhythm of his attacks disrupted. No longer able to attack, he resigned himself to fate and went on the complete defensive.

Jiang Chen wasn't in a hurry to use his ultimate moves, as he didn't have a bad impression of his opponent. It was impossible for Fang Yuan to withstand the Torrent of Ten Thousand Swords now that Jiang Chen was at the eighth level sage realm. The Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique contained

much profound meaning and encompassed exquisite sword techniques. However, he didn't have the time to polish these techniques due to the tightly-packed schedule of the tournament. He felt Fang Yuan could be used as validation of his mastery over the technique.

How would Fang Yuan ever have imagined that he'd become Jiang Chen's sword-testing dummy? An hour later, he was finally brought to his knees. The results had already been set in stone when Fang Yuan's spear was countered. However, his loss had still caused some commotion within the crowds. After all, he hadn't even been able to put up the slightest fight.

The crowd was also incredibly awestruck by the profoundness of the techniques used within the battle. This was a different kind of battle. There was no use of heaven-defying equipment or trump cards. It was purely a clash of martial methods and martial dao. Clashes like these were the most entertaining and sophisticated of battles.

The audience much preferred exciting battles like these over displays of trump cards. Trump cards and heaven-defying equipment didn't necessarily correlate to a cultivator's cultivation, nor did it reflect a cultivator's true talent and skills. It was only a reflection of the strength and power of the cultivator's patron. Not only was a pure clash of martial dao the most rewarding, but it also provided them with inspiration for their own cultivation. This was the reason why the crowd hadn't jeered at Fang Yuan after his loss. In fact, they even gave him a huge round of applause. He had lost this battle honorably without losing his temper or resorting to underhanded tricks. Jiang Chen naturally received an even larger round of applause. He too had defeated his opponent honorably and used no underhanded tricks.

Geniuses were greatly revered in the world of martial dao for their talent and finesse. They weren't revered for their heritage, and definitely not for the power behind their backs. Jiang Chen hadn't just won over the crowd; he'd won over their respect and adoration. The entire Veluriyam Capital, including those who had criticized him in the past, now admitted that he was definitely a worthy successor to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. The rumors began to seem substantial after this battle.

Jiang Chen's victory meant that this was the end of Fang Yuan's climb in the ranking. His placement at the 26th rank in the Ranking of Young Lords was now set in stone. The ranking battles continued. Jiang Chen didn't have to entertain another challenger today. Every young lord was only allowed to be challenged once per day. This was done to protect them from being endlessly challenged by multiple opponents. None of the subsequent challengers were able to create another miracle.

This situation continued all the way until the 23rd ranked young lord. He picked Ji San, who was the 21st ranked young lord, as his opponent. Ji San seemed to have expected this as well. He entered the arena with the fires of battle burning inside of him. There was no doubt that he possessed incredible talent since he was able to defeat Gu Zhenshan.

Jiang Chen could also tell that the clan lord had also given his brother some special training during the short period of rest. He was immediately impressed by the might of Ji San's attack as soon as the battle had started. Brother Ji's battle potential is extremely startling. His chances of winning are definitely higher now that the clan lord has given him some pointers. With his potential, I'm optimistic that he can obtain a position within the top half of the rankings. Jiang Chen's deep familiarity with martial dao allowed him to conclude after less than ten rounds of exchanges that Ji San had a sixty percent chance of winning.

The odds were quite reasonable. After all, the Coiling Dragon clan lord had set his sights on becoming the eighth great emperor faction in Veluriyam Capital. A powerful successor was needed for this goal. Liuxiang had proven to be less than useful during crucial moments, while Ji Zhongtang was too young to bear such heavy responsibilities. Ji San was his best choice for a successor.

It was only natural that Ji San would improve greatly now that the all-powerful clan lord had decided to focus all his efforts into guiding him. He was no longer the same person that he'd been two years ago. Jiang Chen thought quite highly of his battle methods as he watched further. There was no hesitation at all in the young master's attacks. His fighting style was a little harder to fathom. The stronger his opponent, the more powerful he became. There were times where his strength would even exceed his innate talent!

This was only bolstered by his brazen, yet meticulous nature. His attacks would often seem impulsive, but he always seemed to plan for every contingency. Most importantly, his dao heart was extremely firm and resolute. Ji San's opponent was also very strong, but he wasn't as confident in himself.

None of the young lords were easy to deal with. Ji San's biggest disadvantage right now was the fact that he was not as experienced in fighting young lord ranked geniuses. Even though he was genuinely stronger than his opponent, the lack of experience had caused him to miss many opportunities that would have otherwise won him the fight. Thus, it became a drawn out battle with a great deal of back-and-forth exchanges.

Ji San wasn't afraid of prolonged battles. The reason the Coiling Dragon Clan could become the foremost clan in Veluriyam Capital was due to the special lineage they possessed. Their lineage allowed every clan descendent to maintain their strength and power during lengthy engagements. In the end, Ji San managed to squeeze out a win after a long and arduous battle.

The sky had darkened by the time they were finished. The battles were done for the day. Jiang Chen immediately visited Ji San to praise his brother for what he'd done right, and to give advice on his errors. Ji San gained much from the conversation, and his martial dao knowledge reached new heights. His high comprehension won Jiang Chen's praise and surprise. They'd had many conversations with each other as sworn brothers, but they hadn't conversed much about martial dao.

Jiang Chen had only just realized that Ji San's talent and comprehension of martial dao was actually no less than that of the young lords. He was surprised, but not as much as Ji San was. Ji San had seen many of Jiang Chen's battles and therefore knew about his monstrous talent in martial dao. However, his knowledge and foundation in martial dao surprised the young master even more so.

"Brother, how were you taught by your master? Why does it seem like you are no less knowledgeable than my clan lord in martial dao?" Ji San couldn't be blamed for being so surprised. Jiang Chen had inadvertently revealed his monstrous knowledge and observation skills when giving advice.

Jiang Chen smiled but said nothing else. He handed a small bottle over to his brother. "Brother Ji, I will give this to you on the grounds that we're brothers. It's very important that you don't tell anyone."

"What is it?" Ji San seemed a little startled.

"The blood of a true dragon."

“What? Blood from a true dragon? You’re joking!” Ji San thought that he’d heard misheard him.

Jiang Chen took back the bottle and smiled wryly. “You don’t want it? Never mind then.”

Ji San quickly grabbed his arm. “S-stop fooling around! Is it... really true dragon blood?”

“Your Coiling Dragon Clan possesses a dragon lineage. However, the bloodline is no longer as pure as it used to be due to the passage of time.”

“That’s our clan’s secret! How did you know?” Ji San was astonished.

“Is your Coiling Dragon Clan’s bloodline a secret?”

Ji San laughed. “The outside world has always had their conjectures, but we’ve always denied them. The truth is, we really are a dragon clan lineage. However, as you’ve said, our bloodline is no longer pure due to the passage of time.”

“The thing inside this bottle should be of use.” Jiang Chen nodded.

“The blood of a true dragon?!” Ji San stared at the bottle with his eyes wide open. He was still arrested by disbelief.

The blood of a true dragon! Such rumors had once circulated in the Upper Eight Regions, but nobody had truly heard about it for the past few thousand years. How could a young person like Jiang Chen possess true dragon blood? Did his teacher give it to him?

“The true dragon blood can cleanse and increase the strength of your bloodline. You will also be able to summon the heritage of a true dragon. If you manage to awaken these powers, you will definitely surpass every genius in Veluriyam Capital one day. This is absolutely no exaggeration,” Jiang Chen said confidently.