

Three Realms 971

Chapter 971: The Long Anticipated Lord of the Golden Seal

His Psychic's Head fully active, Jiang Chen monitored the battlefield's every detail. Gao Zhan's terrifying saber emitted not only that noisome bloody air, but a hidden slaughtering aura behind it as well. It was an aura that knew only sharpness and edge.

"Is that... the essence of metal?" Jiang Chen's heart shook. "It can't be. No, I suppose it makes sense after all. Gao Zhan's strongest talent is his inborn mastery over the essence of metal. That gory air nonsense is just a façade. With metal energy like that, no wonder he can take up the path of demonic slaughter."

The essence of metal lay in its utter invincibility and irresistibility. Nothing could withstand it. Amongst the five elements, metal represented a keen sharpness, a force that could sever all. The path of demonic slaughter was a path of killing. Such keenness was what it exactly needed.

Jiang Chen suddenly understood. Gao Zhan hadn't picked the path of demonic slaughter. It was the other way around. That path in particular was assuredly the most appropriate for a genius like him. Jiang Chen was suddenly fired up for a fight.

Essence of metal? What was there to be scared of? He'd had his magnetic golden mountain for ages, and it was still not fully refined. He had gotten it by refining the magnetic heart all those years ago. Although he'd discovered more and more of its hidden strengths, its most powerful treasure remained untapped.

The magnetic golden mountain gave him control over magnetic force, the ability to create magnetic storms, and various others such as the Evil Golden Eye. In a larger brawl, he could even summon golden weapon-shaped monsters to fight for him, though his Soldier Rosary Beads rendered them rarely used. The monsters were much weaker in one-on-one combat than the soldiers from the beads.

However, the greatest treasure was none of these things. Its ultimate prize was the Lord of the Golden Seal. The Lord of the Golden Seal was truly a miraculous being. If allowed to awaken without outside stimulation on its own behalf, it was quite ordinary. Very likely weaker than an origin realm cultivator, even. If stimulated by a powerful outside force and summoned by similar, the Lord would become immensely strong. The magnetic golden mountain's latent power could be tapped into. Therefore, the usefulness of the Lord depended entirely on its summoner and conditions of summoning. More latent power tapped into meant a stronger Lord.

In a fight among men, it was best for the combatants to go head-to-head. Gao Zhan's aggression was almost overbearing. Using his Demon God's Bloodthirster as a medium, he was calling on its master's wrath. Through his Evil Golden Eye, Jiang Chen was able to see what that actually meant. The time for holding back was over.

Flipping his palm upwards, he summoned his magnetic golden mountain. His consciousness flooded into it like a powerful deluge. Summoning the Lord of the Golden Seal required making forceful contact with it with his consciousness. Waiting for it to wake on its own was a fool's errand. Therefore, he decided to take on the maximum amount of risk in order to summon it directly. From his last memory refining the

mountain, the Lord was the final guardian of the mountain, essentially fused to the mountain itself. At the same time though, it had its own intelligence, and wanted to struggle free of the mountain's binds.

Jiang Chen knew that his magnetic golden mountain had remarkable origins. The Lord of the Golden Seal's final form could be nothing short of absolutely terrifying. Abruptly communicating with his consciousness like this was actually quite dangerous. If the Lord was angered by the gesture, it was possible that it would swallow his consciousness outright.

The Lord of the Golden Seal's consciousness was very different from a human's. It was in a chaotic and muddy state, and the possibility of normal communication was uncertain. Indeed, the magnetic golden mountain in his hand shuddered violently. In the next moment, an awe-striking aura blasted out from the inside. Countless rays of light shot forth from the glittering mountain, all of them shooting into Jiang Chen's consciousness. His thoughts were completely refracted outwards by the beams. In the next moment, a voice filled with age called out. "Are you summoning me, human?"

"Long time no see, Lord of the Golden Seal. I thought you were going to stay asleep forever," Jiang Chen communicated.

"Kid, I wouldn't be so impudent if I were you," the Lord snickered. "Our agreement isn't quite that reliable. Killing you is like swatting a fly for me... wait a moment, this can't be right. How are you sky sage realm by now? Hasn't it been only a few years?"

Jiang Chen smiled coolly. "Haven't you heard of the saying, 'a gentleman who's been away for three days should be seen in a different light?'"

The Lord of the Golden Seal smacked his lips. "Not bad. I almost did just swat you to death, but it looks like our agreement has some chance of being realized after all. You're progressing pretty quickly, huh? Well, out with it. What have you summoned me this time for?"

"For you to show off your magnificence, of course." Jiang Chen grinned.

The Lord cackled. "So, you're saying you want free labor?"

Jiang Chen didn't deny it. "I'm just worried that you're not up for much just after waking up." He knew that spirit creatures like the Lord of the Golden Seal weren't as quick or smart as the average human. Though this particular brand of reverse psychology was a bit simple, he didn't mind applying it occasionally.

As expected, the Lord growled. "Are you doubting my ability? Hmph. What grade of opponent is it? Eh? There's concentrated essence of metal... is there a spirit here that's just like me, hmm?"

"Maybe not the same," Jiang Chen chuckled, "but there's definitely a fearsome opponent that also holds the essence of metal. How about it, interested?"

"If I say no, will you be disappointed?" The Lord's mind was clearing up. It noticed that it'd fallen for Jiang Chen's trick.

"I won't be disappointed, but our agreement will be null and void." Jiang Chen smiled serenely.

"I'm sure you know already, kid, but how strong I am in a fight depends on you," the Lord of the Golden Seal cackled once more. "How terrifying I am is directly correlated with how much you can get out of the mountain. Still... this opponent seems somewhat interesting, at least."

The desire for battle was palpable in its tone. For something as hawkish as he was, asking for a fight was pretty likely even without the reverse psychology.

Jiang Chen nodded. Time waited for no man. Gao Zhan's pressure was building up to a peak. If he acted any later than this, he'd be a sitting duck. Jiang Chen wasn't some kind of passive masochist. Out of his mouth came a draconic roar. In the next moment, he tossed the mountain out of his palm. Pushing constantly with both palms, he sent two magnetic storms rolling outwards. Like two black holes, the golden magnetic storms swallowed everything in their path as they rushed towards Gao Zhan.

At the same time, Jiang Chen pushed his consciousness to its limits as well. The more he squeezed, the larger the magnetic golden mountain became. Slowly but surely, it expanded in size more and more. The magnetic golden mountain was also known as ten thousand yards high. Its strength was apparent even in the name. A golden mountain hovering above the stage was painfully dazzling. Its light shone everywhere, the very image of a divine descent. The sheer grandeur of the scene caused a renewed wave of murmurs in the crowd. Each and every person in the audience was shocked once more by the mountain's majesty.

"Wow, what is that? A mountain? An enormous golden mountain?"

"Pill King Zhen has a treasure like this? How unnerving! I guess he's never given a match before his all, huh?"

"Is this Pill King Zhen's real trump card?"

"Do you feel it? This golden mountain is strangely magical. It seems to have an infinite amount of edges... it makes me quiver to even look at it." Even the people who were familiar with Jiang Chen couldn't sit tight anymore. Very few knew that he had a treasure like this at all. He had used the mountain against a large number of enemies, true, but anyone that he'd used it against was also dead.

Jiang Chen wasn't holding anything back this time. The magnetic golden mountain was out in force, and the pressure it exerted was absolutely devastating. It was natural that it would stir up an uproar. Even the people from the Coiling Dragon Clan were goggle-eyed at the gigantic golden mountain floating in midair. None of them could speak for quite a while.

"Is this... a mountain? Pill King Zhen refined an entire mountain as a treasure?" The Coiling Dragon clan lord couldn't contain his excitement.

"This mountain also possesses immense metal energy. It's going to go toe-to-toe with Gao Zhan! This battle is supremely exciting!" Ji San was completely taken by the mountain.

"Hmm. This battle is definitely the most splendid match so far between young lord-level combatants. Yes, they haven't actually fought much, but simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. There is a lot more skill involved in the blows that actually are exchanged, and they're both fighting on a higher level," the clan lord remarked.

Huang'er stood in a corner quietly beneath the stage. Watching her beloved fight like a god amongst mortals filled her heart with pride. After finding such a remarkable man in the wide world, what was there left to regret about life? Every girl had a wonderful prince of her dreams. The only difference with Huang'er was that her noble birth elevated her outlook a great degree. Even the geniuses of Myriad Abyss Island couldn't meet her expectations. She'd met Jiang Chen in the realm of the mortals. He was a man that hadn't deliberately preened his feathers in front of her; nor had he tried to win her over with flattery. And yet it was a man like this who had slowly won her over.

"In only ten years, the son of a duke of an ordinary kingdom has become the equal of the Upper Eight Regions' best geniuses. How many people like that are there in this world, really? A rare occurrence, truly, even in a hundred thousand years." Emperor Peafowl was stirred up by the performance as well. The heart of a man on his level rarely wavered. Still, he found it hard not to in this moment. It was often said that true geniuses answered the call of fate. With respect to Jiang Chen, Emperor Peafowl believed it completely. True geniuses were born by the decrees of heaven and earth, in an hour of need.

No matter whether Jiang Chen won or lost this battle, Emperor Peafowl firmly believed that the youth was the one he was looking for. There was no mistake about it. Cloudsoar Monarch and his peers exclaimed in surprise as well. Judging from the looks they exchanged demurely, they were clearly impressed. His Majesty had the sharpest eyes of all. No one else could possibly dig out such a relative unknown from a crowd and expect immediate results from the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering alone!

Chapter 972: The Pinnacle Of The Battle

A great towering mountain bore down on the arena, suppressing Gao Zhan's demonic aura. A grave expression appeared on Gao Zhan's face, obviously also extremely shocked by the sight. However, a faint leer soon emerged. "Brat, you won't be able to win just by summoning a golden mountain alone! You want to see who's stronger? I'll grant you that wish!"

He brandished the Demon God's Bloodthirster, flaring out its aura. An image of a demon god appeared from the bloody mist. It immediately grew to a few hundred feet tall and charged at the magnetic golden mountain.

"Turn to dust!" Gao Zhan muttered. The demon god image tried to grab onto the mountain with its thirty meter long limbs.

Jiang Chen smiled and made a downward hand gesture. "Crush it!"

The magnetic golden mountain expanded in size again and bore down on the image. The image stopped grappling the mountain and tried to bear the brunt of the force with its shoulder instead. It tossed the mountain away with its massive arms. Jiang Chen made another hand seal and held the mountain in place.

Gao Zhan didn't show any sign of weakness. He immediately tossed the Demon God's Bloodthirster towards the demon god image. The image grabbed hold of the weapon and struck the mountain with full intensity. Crack! The force within the strike was enough to split heaven and earth. It had an aura that seemed like it could split the mountain in half.

Jiang Chen could clearly see great amounts of magnetic force that emerged from the mountain to encircle the demon god image. It so happened that the force intercepted the descending strike. The

sword was able to cleave the magnetic force apart, but the mountain itself was not the slightest bit harmed. He however, was dumbfounded that even the magnetic force was split into two. He quickly collected his thoughts before he pushed his consciousness to the limit and yelled, "How can I let it have all the fun in this battle? Come on out!"

He made a few more hand seals and summoned an enormous golem that emerged from the golden aura of the mountain. The Lord of the Golden Seal had finally awakened after many years. Jiang Chen was taken aback by the Lord's enormously stalwart body. It was currently ten times more majestic than before and didn't look any less impressive than the demon god image. Moreover, the Lord's body was a truly material body formed from an amalgamation of essences. While the demon god image's true body might be an ancient demon god much stronger than the Lord's, it was currently just an image. As such, it was impossible for it to be stronger.

The two metallic giants begun to brawl in the air, shaking the very earth and sky. Jiang Chen and Gao Zhan had become supporting characters in the battle. Summoning the demon god had taken a great toll on Gao Zhan's body. Jiang Chen was in no better condition either. Both of them were extremely focused. They couldn't afford to be distracted for even a second. Jiang Chen already understood the extent of Gao Zhan's abilities, but Gao Zhan couldn't say the same about Jiang Chen. His opponent had just countered his ultimate move with a summon similar to his. How could he not be surprised that both their summons were neck to neck in strength?

Zhen! Are you truly a chess piece nurtured by Emperor Peafowl? The future heir of Sacred Peafowl Mountain? He had begun fostering such thoughts even though he wasn't the sort to care about these issues. It wasn't as though he'd never fought geniuses from Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He'd never thought that anyone was truly more capable than him, except for young lord Fan. However, that young lord no longer existed. Because of that, Gao Zhan was certain that he would one day trump over every single Peafowl genius. Perhaps one or two would be able to put up a fight, but he would crush all the others. This would be a good thing for Emperor Shura's faction. However, Gao Zhan was no longer as optimistic as before. The Demonic Wrath was already his strongest move.

There was still a few other moves in his arsenal, but none as powerful as this one. Victory wouldn't be possible if he failed to end the fight with this move. The very most he could manage was end the fight with a draw after exhausting all of his energy. What do I do? A crack had appeared in his dao heart despite his calm demeanor. The thought that his ultimate move could fail to dominate his opponent had never crossed his mind.

I can't believe how powerful that brat is. Even the Demonic Wrath is no use against him. If this goes on any further, both of us will be heavily injured by the time I've exhausted my inner energy. He wouldn't be satisfied with that ending. He wanted to win. He wanted to take down his opponent. Victory wasn't the only thing at stake here. The foundation of his dao heart and the glory of Emperor Shura's faction was all on the line. He was driven to extremes after such thoughts.

Using his index and middle finger, he stabbed continuously at a few acupoints on his body. A human body contained many acupoints, each with its own specific purpose. After poking himself, a purplish-red miasma began to exude from his body. It looked extremely sinister. His entire body began to transform. Hands, neck, face... drastic changes occurred all over them. It was an extremely dramatic transformation

that made him beyond recognition. His muscles turned metallic and his face a rictus of violence. He was a vile demon that crawled out from the depths of hell. The surrounding air was filled with killing intent.

“Demonic transformation?” Jiang Chen recalled Emperor Peafowl’s advice on the path of demonic slaughter. Those who cultivated this path had the ability to conjure a demonic form. They would gain a temporary increase in strength for the duration of the transformation. Fortunately, Jiang Chen had made preparations in advance to deal with such an eventuality. He didn’t run nor did he cower. His hands moved quickly from one seal to another, summoning two magnetic storms from the Magnetic Golden Mountain. Both of these storms shot towards Gao Zhan, flanking his opponent.

These magnetic storms weren’t ordinary attacks. They were capable of devouring the surrounding air and tearing everything into dust. Gao Zhan roared violently, causing his image to grow several magnitudes larger. Bam! Bam! He launched two fists towards the storms. The storms had an immensely powerful vortex. The fists failed to destroy them, but was able to deflect them towards the arena instead. Wham! The arena would’ve been devoured by the storms if it hadn’t been specially fortified for such an event.

“Die brat!” Gao Zhan no longer cared about the Demonic Wrath. He began to consume the energy within his very blood to continue the fight. His only goal right now was to defeat his enemy as quickly as possible.

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. He understood that his enemy’s strength had doubled due to the demonic transformation and this was no time to fight him head on. He quickly recited a mantra, causing a dazzling light to emerge from his back. It meandered above its head before it materialized into a true dragon image.

“Go!” He commanded with a wave of his arms. The true dragon image contained a great amount of true dragon’s presence. It brandished its claws and charged towards Gao Zhan’s demonic body. Well, it looks like Jiang Chen had chosen to fight head on after all.

The demonic body was incredibly strong, but the true dragon image was no slouch either. It was difficult to say who would win when a demon met a true dragon. The dragon image’s strength almost seemed to defy all logic. Gao Zhan’s body was filled with a great amount of savagery, yet it struggled to break free from the true dragon’s harassment. They were two fated enemies, colliding and pounding each other endlessly. The Lord of the Golden Seal was engaged in intense battle with the demon god image. It was still slowly growing in strength as he had just awoken from slumber. They were very equally matched as the image didn’t even contain a tenth of its body’s true capabilities.

However, the Lord had an endless source of energy thanks to the magnetic golden mountain. It only grew stronger as time went on. The image had no such abilities as it was merely a conjured artifact. Jiang Chen was aware of the situation. He further called upon the mountain to provide the Lord of the Golden Seal with endless amounts of power. The lord was an entity over a hundred thousand years old after all. His power had continued to rise as he regained more of his consciousness. It didn’t take long before the demon god image started losing.

Bam! Bam! Bam! The image had taken the full brunt of the lord’s fists. It was about to be extinguished like a candle flame under a strong gust. The Lord continued to pummel the image like a punching bag,

causing it to shrink as it lost strength. The image's power was even being absorbed by the Lord via the pummeling. It was evident that the battle in the skies was about to come to an end.

"Smash it!" Jiang Chen commanded through his consciousness when he realized that the Lord had gained the upper hand.

The Lord grinned. "Don't worry. It's done for."

It had been sealed in the magnetic golden mountain as its guardian for over a hundred thousand years. A great amount of negative emotion had built up inside of it from the countless years of monotony and boredom. A fight like this was its best chance to vent its frustrations. How would it not take advantage of this opportunity when it was handed to it?

The demon god image continued to shrink as the lord continued to pummel it with his fists. Gao Zhan was overwhelmed by anxiety when he saw what was happening. He was caught between a rock and a hard place. The demon god image was in great danger, while his demonic body had failed to gain an upper hand due to the constant harassment from the true dragon image. Domination crept in from all sides!

Chapter 973: Overwhelming Victory

Jiang Chen further called upon the magnetic golden mountain once the Lord of the Golden Seal had fully gained the upper hand. The Lord's aura continued to strengthen as the mountain grew bigger.

"Destroy it!" Jiang Chen waved his arms, focusing all his strength into a single strike. The Lord did as commanded and viciously pounced towards the wavering demon image with everything it had. It grabbed the image with its great pincer-like hands and tore it apart as though it was nothing but rotten rags. It then raised his colossal arms up high like a triumphant champion. Its victorious roar could be heard throughout the capital. The audience was rendered speechless by its dominance.

Gao Zhan's heart spasmed when the demon god image was destroyed. The Lord laughed as it transformed into a flash of light and rapidly descended down towards the arena. It wanted to crush Gao Zhan's demonic body with its palms. The enormous golden palm made the situation much more dire for the young lord as his demonic body was already being besieged by the true dragon image. The sky was crashing down as a great force of destruction from above. He could feel an immediate danger to his life. He was very sensitive to danger due to the path he cultivated.

He couldn't afford to waste any more time with the true dragon image. He rolled on the ground, attempting to escape the palm strike. He was very quick, but the Lord was even faster. Gao Zhan was fortunate that he didn't try to bear the full brunt of this attack as he was focused on escaping. However, he was still struck by the palm.

Bam! The heavy strike caused him to vomit blood as he was already at the end of his string. He was slapped mercilessly like a housefly and flew off the arena. He landed squarely in the dirt off the stage. The impact of his devastating fall kicked up a plume of dust.

The arena was briefly filled with silence. It was as if the world had frozen and all sound was muted. Everyone was thoroughly surprised by what they saw. The audience only broke into uproarious applause after a few breaths. Their faces turned beet red from the exertions of their excitement. It had been an

incredibly thrilling match. Veluriyam Capital's idol hadn't failed to live up to expectations! His victory was a testament to his immeasurable strength! Even the top ten young lord geniuses were no match for the pill king! He was still capable of dominating the battles!

Every cultivator in the martial dao world dreamed about becoming a hero. Since it was unlikely for them to realize their dreams, they often placed their hopes and dreams on their idols and prayed for their success. The pill king had become a hero of Veluriyam Capital after an overwhelming series of victories. He had gone from a pill dao hero to a martial dao hero, solidifying his legacy within the capital. The entire capital was taken by a celebratory mood. Young lord Fan had been tossed into the back of their minds. Who was young lord Fan? He was truly lacking when compared to the pill king. Sure, he was stronger and more adept at martial dao, but he had less earth shattering achievements than the pill king. The former young lord was also older. The pill king would surely reach greater heights once he'd reach the young lord's age! His achievement of defeating the Pillfire City was something the young lord could never hope to mimic, and so was fighting countless uphill battles as the ultimate dark horse. Everyone was certain that given time, the pill king would eventually surpass young lord Fan in martial dao.

"Long live Pill King Zhen!"

"Pill King Zhen!! Pill King Zhen!!"

"Make Pill King Zhen heir! We support Pill King Zhen!"

"Veluriyam Capital needs Pill King Zhen!"

"The pill king will only lead us a greater future!" The audience yelled with everything they had. They were shouting their lungs out in hopes that the seven great emperors would hear their heartfelt wishes. They wanted the leaders to know the people's choice!

News of the pill king's victory immediately spread throughout the capital. Many citizens left their houses to celebrate in the streets. Not all of them were familiar with Pill King Zhen. In fact, many couldn't even recognize him. However, there wasn't a single person that hasn't heard his legendary stories. The fact that he'd single handedly defeated Pillfire City had already made him a worthy hero to the Capital. Greatly revered heroes were essential in the martial dao world. Rumors ran rampant amongst the commoners, naming the pill king as the Capital's hero. His duel with Pill King Ji Lang was even said to be a duel of national pride and status.

The citizens of Veluriyam Capital had always been more united than those of other places. They needed another great hero to rise from the youths to fill the gaps in their hearts after the loss of young Lord Fan. Jiang Chen seemed to have done just that. Emperor Peafowl had also played a small part behind the scenes, but Jiang Chen had been able to conquer the hearts of the citizens through his own abilities and talent. The crowds' cheers have made Jiang Chen feel like he had fully assimilated into their society. He was being seen as one of them. A man was of flesh and blood, how would he not respond to this outpour of affection?

A warm feeling coursed through Jiang Chen's veins when he saw all these unfamiliar faces celebrate in his stead. They were applauding, cheering, shouting, and sharing all of his ups and downs. So this is what it feels like to be loved and revered by others. It's every bit as great as I've imagined. He was revered in

his previous life because he was the son of the Celestial Emperor. This time however, he had earned it through his own efforts, strength, and charisma. The sense of fulfilment was vastly different.

"It's unfortunate that everyone was only given three challenges in these rankings. Otherwise, the pill king might still have a chance to move up to an even higher rank."

"Yeah. The pill king must've chosen Gao Zhan because he was unfamiliar with the geniuses within the top ten. He would've had a good winning chance in the top five."

"No worries. Eighth place puts him in the first group to enter the Pagoda. He is still young. He will definitely surpass the other geniuses on the ranking in a decade or two. They might even have to make way for him voluntarily by then!"

"Mm! I'm looking forward to it. Maybe one day, the pill king will represent the capital to conquer all of the Upper Eight Regions! We will be unbeatable!"

"Heh. The Upper Eight Regions has all kinds of geniuses. But only Pill King Zhen from Veluriyam Capital is exemplary in both martial and pill dao!" Everyone in Veluriyam Capital was proud of the pill king's achievements. There was no doubt that he'd become a person of utmost eminence here .

The top seven were all stunned by Jiang Chen's battle. There were a few that was even secretly glad that he was limited to only three challenges. Since he had used up all three of his chances, their position within the rankings was no longer threatened. They were also glad that the pill king had chosen to challenge Gao Zhan instead. They were almost certain that things would've ended the same if they were in his shoes. They reckoned that the pill king was actually capable of fighting his way into the top three!

"Ah... it's a shame that he chose a little too conservatively. I feel that there was at least a fifty percent chance that he could beat the fifth rank young lord!" Ji San exclaimed in pity and la long sigh.

"Ole Third, the significance of eighth place is a lot bigger than you think. He started from the very bottom and won every single match to get to where he is now. Not even the top five can ignore him anymore." The clan lord was seeing the bigger picture.

Ji San grinned. "That much is true, but it would look nicer if he was ranked fifth instead!"

The clan lord sighed gently. "Some people are meant to be geniuses from the moment of birth. Even without fame or prestige, they will shine as long as there is a stage for them to showcase their skills. Ole Third, becoming his sworn brother is truly your greatest fortune."

Everyone was certain that Emperor Peafowl was going to declare the pill king as heir by now. Ji San puffed his chest up. "Don't worry, clan lord. I will work hard to make sure that the world acknowledges me as a worthy sworn brother to Pill King Zhen!"

He had become increasingly confident ever since he'd obtained the true dragon's blood. Without it, he would never have had the assurance to say such a thing. The clan lord had no idea where this confidence had come from, but he was very satisfied with his reply.

"There probably isn't much left to see in the Ranking of Young Lords. I reckon there won't be any more dark horses like the pill king."

It was very unlikely that anyone else would have an impressive climb like the pill king.

Emperor Shura had nearly failed to contain his rage when he saw Gao Zhan slapped off the stage. He'd lost yet again! Nothing seemed to have gone right ever since the pill king appeared in the capital. Even the disciple he was most proud of had lost to that brat. His thousand year long plan would soon go up in flames if this were to continue.

Chapter 974: End of the Ranking Battles

Gao Shen wasn't dead after being thrown off the stage. He wasn't even heavily injured. But for someone who walked the way of demonic slaughter, only two outcomes were possible when he was physically and mentally injured. Either he found inspiration from humiliation and made more progress, reaching new heights in his martial dao, or this spelled his doom and he was never able to recover. The former required a strong dao heart and resolution to sweep away the demons of yesterday, whereas the latter happened to roughly eighty percent of this path's cultivators.

Although Emperor Shura burned with fury, he didn't lose his composure as he swept a glance around his camp. Beneath Emperor Shura's command were the three monarchs: Sun, Moon, and Star. Below them was his most treasured disciple, Li Jiancheng. The monarchs were the emperor's most trusted lieutenants, holding positions similar to those of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's four monarchs. Li Jiancheng, on the other hand, was Emperor Shura's favorite student and heir: similar to the late young lord Fan.

Young lord Fan had been a youth who'd sought magnanimity, perfection, and popularity. In stark contrast to him, Li Jiancheng valued swagger, dominance, and authority. Thus, he rarely did anything in the pursuit of a wider following. In the public perspective, he was a lofty character high above the clouds, a genius beyond comprehension. Almost untouchable, in a sense. Young lord Fan, on the other hand, was thought of as a more sincere and down-to-earth individual.

Still, if one had to find geniuses among the city's younger generation who could match the late young lord, the first choice would be Li Jiancheng. He had a martial dao that was oppressive to the point of being tyrannical. Even young lord Fan at peak performance could barely overcome it.

Rumor had it that Li Jiancheng had been honing a very powerful technique in the last few years. Once completed, it would have been potent enough to force even young lord Fan to give it proper respect. Having spent so much time refining the technique in recent years, Li Jiancheng had been surpassed by his junior brother Gao Zhan in notoriety. However, it wasn't that his martial dao talent was inferior. Though it tended to manifest itself in imperious, dominant techniques, Li Jiancheng was actually fairly discreet. He was a bit of an opportunist, infinitely ambitious and without scruples. Because of this, the younger generation within Emperor Shura's inner circle all called him 'crown prince' in private. The title made his pretensions self-evident.

"What do you think about Gao Zhan's loss, Jiancheng?" Emperor Shura rested his gaze upon his pupil, his tone austere.

Li Jiancheng was impassive. "Gao Zhan did not lose because of ineptitude, nor did he lack the intrinsic qualities needed to win. Pill King Zhen had too many trump cards up his sleeve. The sheer resourcefulness he displayed disrupted junior brother Gao Zhan's rhythm. It'd be more accurate to call it crushed it outright."

Emperor Shura acknowledged the analysis. "Pill King Zhen's origin remains a mystery, but the fact that Emperor Peafowl wants to push him to the forefront is crystal clear."

"Your Majesty, why does Emperor Peafowl want to make Pill King Zhen the new young lord? Does Sacred Peafowl Mountain want to maintain control of the city for another few thousand years? Are they that unwilling to hand over their current authority?" The Moon Monarch couldn't help but ask. No one in Emperor Shura's faction was happy with their current position—third in prominence nominally, second-in-command in actuality. They prepared every waking moment to take the reins from Emperor Peafowl, down to the preparations of the great clans and houses. The Majestic Clan that was now history, for example. They'd pressured Coiling Dragon Clan step by step as a show of force. They wanted to create the impression that Sacred Peafowl Mountain was under siege from every direction. Alas, the entire faction had sustained loss after loss after Pill King Zhen's appearance. It had begun with the fall of the Majestic Clan, continued with the rumor about replacing young lord Fan, and been supported even further by the decisive victory over Gao Zhan just now...

This series of defeats had dealt a fatal blow to the faction's machinations. Their painstaking designs were shattered overnight. Moon Monarch's question resonated with everyone else present. Was Emperor Peafowl going to pass the throne to Emperor Shura, or not? Leaving such a question unanswered for so long was absolutely heartbreaking for the latter's entire faction.

Emperor Shura was grim. "Emperor Peafowl has never acted with any kind of predictability. Rumors often have a grain of truth to them, and I think there's a fair bit of veracity to this one in particular. Pill King Zhen is an unknown quantity, so anything is possible."

"So... have our plans been for naught, then?" Moon Monarch was frantic.

"Our plans have been stalled temporarily, but it's not as grave as you say," Emperor Shura explained coolly. "Emperor Peafowl has his heart on the wider world. There must be a deeper reason for his hurry to select a new young lord. Furthermore, there's no way that the emperor will simply leave the awakening demons alone. No matter how extraordinary this Pill King Zhen is, he'll still need another century or two to shoulder the burden of the capital at large. If we can't find a breaching point for that long, then we deserve to fail."

Each listener sank into thought at the emperor's words. Before long, Moon Monarch smiled once more. "You're right. No matter how astonishing that Pill King Zhen proves to be, he's only a youth. He has a long way to go before he's able to inherit the throne. Who knows if there'll be some accident before then?"

The other two monarchs nodded in agreement. Emperor Shura glanced towards his favorite disciple. "It seems, Jiancheng, that the young lord Fan of yesteryear and the Pill King Zhen of present have chosen similar paths. They've both invested themselves into winning over the hearts of the people. If you really wish to pursue the throne, you should think about doing so as well."

His student's biggest merit was his willingness to think. He accepted the criticism of others in a constructive fashion. After a few moments of consideration, Li Jiancheng inclined his head. "I will ponder the matter seriously, master."

“Following this, Pill King Zhen will be in the limelight for quite a while. Maintaining the proper state of mind is key for us. The game for power is not played over days or weeks. Remember how glamorous young lord Fan was, and how suddenly he fell!” Emperor Shura smiled faintly. As the leader of his faction, he had to raise his subordinates’ morale.

“Master is correct. These recent engagements are insignificant in the grand scheme of things. As long as Emperor Peafowl is around, the situation in Veluriyam Capital will not change. When that changes, so will the order here.” Li Jiancheng nodded in vehement agreement.

“Well said!” Emperor Shura showed a satisfied smile. “No matter what, you’re still first in the Ranking of Young Lords. Nobody can deny that fact.”

Because of young lord Fan’s death, there was no contest in Li Jiancheng’s position at the head of the Ranking. The second-best disciple under Emperor Peafowl was Zhou Yan, a genius of sword dao. Because of his youth, his renown didn’t quite match either young lord Fan or Li Jiancheng. After the loss of the former, he could still only be placed behind Li Jiancheng as a close second.

Even his current position was held in some doubt. Some said that the spot had been yielded to him out of respect because he was one of Emperor Peafowl’s students. There was some plausibility to that. Shui Rutian, in third place, was the foremost disciple of Emperor Petalpluck. His zen dao had reached the point of forming realms, and it wasn’t a stretch to call him Li Jiancheng’s equal in this regard. Many thought that he was more qualified than Zhou Yan to take second place. Naturally, the ranking battles that followed would reveal the truth to that opinion.

Sitting squarely in eighth place on the Ranking of Young Lords, Jiang Chen became strangely prominent. Ninth and seventh around him didn’t dare entertain the thought that it was undeserved. Quite the opposite: they felt a sliver of pressure just by being next to a genius like him. It was common for people to compare closely-placed things, after all. Under that magnifying glass, even the best of geniuses couldn’t help but be a little self-conscious.

The ranking battles continued. Jiang Chen had begun his challenge from the 20th position. After his set of challenges concluded, it was the 19th ranked genius’ turn.

The proceedings continued another ten days before everyone below the top ten finished their challenges. Jiang Chen’s eighth-ranked spot was entirely secure during this period. Nobody issued a challenge against him. His neighbors were both challenged for their spots. Jiang Chen himself, though, was entirely separate from the conflict, with not a single contender in sight.

His victory against Gao Zhan had sealed his station. His talent and ability had been made known to everyone else in the running for the Ranking of Young Lords. All of them understood how difficult this Pill King Zhen was to deal with. Only the internal struggle among the top ten remained.

There was little ambiguity in the matter. The tenth-ranked genius chose to challenge the ninth-ranked, losing by a hair’s difference. The ninth-ranked skipped Jiang Chen, choosing the seventh-ranked. He lost with a similar breadth of discrepancy, failing to move up in the rankings. This marked the end of Jiang Chen’s work in the Ranking of Young Lords. Since he’d attained his spot through challenging higher-ranked opponents three times, he no longer had any such opportunities remaining. It was, then, the

seventh-ranked's turn to consider his own chances at upward mobility. Because the challenges were restricted to higher-ranked opponents, Jiang Chen no longer needed to have anything to do with them.

After a momentous battle between seventh and sixth, the latter won a pyrrhic victory. He paid a heavy price: he had no strength remaining to contend with the fifth-place genius. Everyone expected there to be fierce competition in the top five, but the result was actually quite peaceful. The fifth-ranked genius, Wang Dongyu, decided to give up his three chances.

Fourth place, Ye Piaoling, was a disciple of Emperor Vastsea. Challenging Zhou Yan in second place, he was soundly defeated by a mighty sword technique.

Third place, Shui Rutian, chose the first-ranked Li Jiancheng as his target. After a vicious fight, the latter came out slightly better in the end.

The second-ranked Zhou Yan met the same fate. His challenge to first place took place three days afterwards, when Li Jiancheng had sufficiently rested. Just like Shui Rutian, his loss was narrow but certain. With that, all of the challenge battles in the Ranking of Young Lords concluded.

The top seven were exactly the same as the preliminary rankings. The eighth was Pill King Zhen, the darkest horse of this year's entire Ranking! The second-darkest horse was young master Ji San, finishing at twenty-first place. He was the only scion of the great clans to make it into the Ranking of Young Lords.

Chapter 975: Proclamation of Young Lord

With the battles for the Ranking of Young Lords finished, the months-long Veluriyam Pagoda gathering was almost at an end. The next order of affairs was awarding the victors their spoils. The top 36 of the Pill Pagoda battles were eligible to study within the Pill Pagoda. The top 36 of the Martial Pagoda battles were permitted to cultivate within the Main Pagoda, and those in the Genius Rankings, the Martial Pagoda.

There were three pagodas in the Veluriyam Pagoda complex. The Main Pagoda was flanked by the Martial and Pill Pagodas. Martial geniuses had a slight edge in the competition: those in the Ranking of Young Lords could enter the Main Pagoda, but those in the Genius Rankings had the Martial Pagoda as a consolation prize. The benefits and opportunities available in the Martial Pagoda were inferior to those in the Main Pagoda's, but they were still quite attractive for those in the Genius Rankings.

The three pagodas opened only once every sixty years, and many people competed for only a few chances at entry. The three hundred were chosen out of countless cultivators were recipients of utmost honor. Their attendance and victory represented the entire Veluriyam Capital on this occasion. Of course, there were still a few ceremonies to go before the pagodas actually opened. It would be slightly anti-climatic to go without, given the event's rarity. It was also a time where all seven emperors would make an appearance.

There were at least three hundred thousand congregated upon the enormous square in front of Veluriyam Pagoda. All the geniuses who'd been able to stand out from the crowd had their own place in the center of the square, ready to receive the emperors' examination and plaudits. Aside from the seven emperors' factions, the twenty-eight great clans and a few of the more powerful aristocratic houses had places as well. In addition to the recognition that came with the event, there were a few rewards ready to be gifted as well.

Compared to the prize of being able to cultivate and study within the Veluriyam Pagoda, these rewards were only symbolic. Nevertheless, they still represented a hard-fought glory that no one would refuse. Dressed in opulent, five-colored robes, Emperor Peafowl was in high spirits. His commanding presence revealed the head of Veluriyam Capital's style in full. Their breaths held, the audience awaited the emperor to give his speech.

Smiling serenely, Emperor Peafowl began to speak. "We at Veluriyam Capital have many traditions both ancient and sacred, and the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering is one of the oldest, most splendid, and liveliest! This year's gathering has brought us another wave of promising geniuses and was an extremely successful festival. It's been a show unmatched for almost a thousand years! Whether pill or martial dao, we have seen abundant talent in both fields. More notably, two dark horses have made their way into the Ranking of Young Lords. Their stirring of the pond has set a wonderful example that I hope more are able to follow. Relating to this, I have an exciting announcement to make..."

The emperor took an intentional pause at this point in the speech. The bubbling chatter everywhere around the square ceased at once. Heavy silence set in instantly. The audience's collective gazes burned in the emperor's direction. An exciting announcement? Was there finally going to be a clear statement about Pill King Zhen? Was his ascent to Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord decided at last? The collective expectations of the common people rested upon Emperor Peafowl.

As for the seven emperors: some were surprised, some thoughtful, some looked like they'd expected it all along, and some furrowed their brows in abject sullenness. Emperor Peafowl didn't seem to take note of any of that. His expression remained as laid-back as ever. "I believe that you've all been troubled by a rumor lately. So, I have a formal declaration to make. On Sacred Peafowl Mountain's behalf, I appoint Pill King Zhen as my foremost successor. Thus concludes the conflict over our Mountain's heritage."

These words reverberated in everyone's ears as if a bell's gong, hammering on their very hearts. Thunderous applause came from every direction. Tides upon tides of cheering rushed forth.

"Young lord Zhen! Young lord Zhen!" Countless cultivators shouted the name aloud with all passion and emotion. They were happy, wholeheartedly happy, for both Pill King Zhen himself and the wisdom of Emperor Peafowl's decision.

Despite being informed beforehand, Jiang Chen still felt a small quake in his heart when he heard Emperor Peafowl utter the words aloud. He locked eyes with Emperor Peafowl across the square, the two minds mingling for just an instant. Rising from his own seat, Jiang Chen cupped his fist in greeting to the entire square. He'd received only the utmost support, only the best treatment, from the entire Veluriyam Capital.

He'd heard their encouragement and applause in each and every battle. Though it had displeased his opponents, it was also the highest of honors for him personally. How could they support him with such heartfelt abandon without truly holding him in love and esteem? Waxing emotional, he felt the immense pressure on his own shoulders. The better the treatment, the weightier the responsibility. Jiang Chen knew that as well as anyone. The four monarchs of Sacred Peafowl Mountain strode up to offer their goodwill.

“Congratulations, Pill King Zhen! I am simply astounded by your skill,” Cloudsoar Monarch exclaimed. “A genius skilled in both pill and martial dao! It’s hard to find more than a handful in Veluriyam like that, even in a thousand years.”

Chronobalance Monarch was a rough man. “Work hard! I expect great things from you,” he boomed.

“Don’t let His Majesty down,” Wildfox Monarch said.

As the only woman among the four monarchs, Plumscore Monarch stared at Jiang Chen the longest. “It’s hard to find youths who’ve accomplished things as great as you have. I only hope that you don’t let it get to your head too much.”

Jiang Chen smiled and nodded politely at all of their words. As the number one disciple at Sacred Peafowl Mountain after young lord Fan’s fall, Zhou Yan had the most mixed of feelings of anyone present. He had hoped for a chance at becoming young lord himself, one day. Alas, it turned out that the title was passed to Pill King Zhen instead. Depressingly, Zhou Yan remained second place. As someone deathly loyal to Emperor Peafowl however, he hailed every decision from the emperor as a stone-set law. This was no different. Though it was very harsh to him, he convinced himself internally to give his blessings anyway.

“Senior brother Zhen, I wish you all the best. Even though I have a few doubts still about His Majesty’s choice of you as the new young lord, I hope that all of them will be dispelled in the coming days. When that happens, I will absolutely be one of your staunchest aides. I promise that our relationship will be a problem-free one.” Zhou Yan was quite honest about what he thought. There was no false courtesy in his speech.

Jiang Chen exchanged a long look with the youth. The sword dao genius’ gaze was plain and honorable. “We’re going to spend many of the coming days together. There’ll be many opportunities to prove ourselves to each other, no?” He inclined his head, smiling.

Returning the smile, the second-best disciple returned to his seat. Zhou Yan wasn’t the biggest conversationalist, but his heart was cloudless and lucid.

“My compliments to you, Pill King Zhen! It can be said that I was your guide to Sacred Peafowl Mountain, so I still find it hard to believe that you’re one of them now. You’re really making your way up the world!” This was the Coiling Dragon clan lord .

“I sincerely thank the kindness of your recommendation.” Jiang Chen grinned in acknowledgement.

Wei Tianxiao edged over shakily as well. As a member of a ninth-ranked aristocratic house, he wasn’t usually permitted to speak on occasions like this. However, Pill King Zhen was still nominally the guest pill king of House Wei. Thus, the house’s young master worked up the courage to go up and put in a word. “Pill King Zhen, House Wei thanks you from the bottom of our hearts. You were the one that rescued us from a perilous situation and improved our outlooks so much over these past couple of years. Our house will pass down the tradition of our cooperation with you over many generations.”

It had been only three winters and summers since Jiang Chen’s initial arrival in Veluriyam Capital. He had needed to watch his actions and words in front of Wei Tianxiao, back then. But now the latter had to call himself subordinate in front of the former. Such was the way of the world. It often changed in the blink

of an eye. Still, it was clearly a desirable change for House Wei's young master. There was only good in it. If House Wei could receive Pill King Zhen's continued assistance, what was there to worry about the house's future?

No matter whether they had any relations with the pill king prior to this, all the great clans allied with Emperor Peafowl came to congratulate Jiang Chen as well. No matter what they thought internally, it was hard fact that Pill King Zhen was Sacred Peafowl Mountain's new young lord. Nobody wanted to leave a bad first impression. Even those who weren't necessarily aligned with Sacred Peafowl Mountain stepped forward in greeting. Their words were warm and affectionate.

Jiang Chen had received a formal title today, directly from Emperor Peafowl's own mouth. This act carried significant meaning.

Before, he had been Pill King Zhen, the guest pill king of House Wei. Now, he was elevated far above that, into the company of Veluriyam Capital's loftiest. In terms of position and status, his current and former states could not be compared. Beneath the seven emperors themselves, even the great clans and monarchs had to accord a measure of respect to a young lord. Though it was slightly exaggerated to say the young lord was second only to the emperor, he was definitely more than equal to just about anyone else. Moreover, besides Emperor Shura and Vastsea, every other emperor and their corresponding faction was largely supportive of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's decision to name a new young lord.

At the end of the day, Veluriyam Capital under Emperor Peafowl had always been stable and strong. What was wrong with letting Sacred Peafowl Mountain continue their rule over the city? Yes, Emperor Shura was very powerful, but he was still missing something compared to Emperor Peafowl. On the other hand, Pill King Zhen had many of the same qualities as Emperor Peafowl himself: mysterious, indecipherable, and full of surprises. He also had an advantage that Emperor Peafowl lacked: he was skilled in both martial and pill dao! If Pill King Zhen really did come to power after another few centuries, Veluriyam's pill industry would surely be taken to a higher level. There was more than a little hope of being able to challenge Pillfire City. It was no wonder that a young lord like this would receive so much approval from the entire city.

Chapter 976: The Most Popular Young Lord

Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea had no choice but to present their congratulatory speeches to Jiang Chen as well. They congratulated him with a smile even though it was the last thing they wanted to do. After all, one was expected to show poise and respect at all times when one reached the level of a great emperor. Cordiality had to be maintained even if there was some conflict behind the scenes. Things were finally settled after they had given their felicitations.

Emperor Peafowl smiled at Jiang Chen. "Big events like this don't happen too often. Go give a speech or two so that people can familiarize themselves with you."

Jiang Chen didn't decline. He made his way onto the stage and waved his hands in all directions. "Ever since the first day I've stepped foot in this capital, I've had an intense feeling that this was no ordinary place. That day was also the very day which all of you were grieving over the loss of young lord Fan. I could immediately tell that the citizens here are all of one heart and possess faith just by the amount of

sadness and grief in the air. That was the exact moment when I decided that this place was worthy of a longer stay.”

Jiang Chen speech was immediately interrupted by the crowd’s deafening applause. His voice was drowned out by the crowd. The eyes of some of the older cultivators were red. They busied themselves wiping tears off their cheeks. It was evident that Jiang Chen’s speech had touched them. It was true. Veluriyam Capital was full of believers. Every single one of them was proud to call this place home. They were family. Everyone worked hard for the betterment of this place.

Jiang Chen calmly waited for the applause to die down before he continued. “I’ve only received great hospitality and support ever since I’ve opened Taiyuan Tower. There have been some obstacles along the way, but all of you have been impartial and took the side of justice, instead of discriminating an outsider like me. Such traits are incredibly rare. That was the precise moment that I fell in love with this place. I am proud to be of Veluriyam Capital.”

“After that, I was fortunately able to overthrow Pillfire City’s scheme and defend the pride of our capital. To be honest, I only did what I thought was right as a pill master. However, what I received in exchange was an incredible amount of love and respect from all of you. To this day, I still stand by my view that I’ve received too much for what I’ve given. What have I done to deserve such undying support in the Martial Pagoda battles?” His voice began to tremble at this point. What followed next was endless applause. Emperor Peafowl had to raise his hands to temporarily quiet the crowd.

“I could feel the amount of support and care just by looking at your expressions and your actions. I will not speak empty words now that I am crowned heir of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. All I wish to say is this. As long as I am alive, I promise to never bend at a task and spare no effort for the sake of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Veluriyam Capital. I will never betray the trust and support I’ve received from everyone!” Jiang Chen bowed deeply after he was done with the speech. The crowd applauded yet again. There had been three segments to his speech and he’d received three rounds of applause, each one longer than the previous one.

“Young lord Zhen, don’t be modest! You’ve already done plenty for the capital!”

“Yeah! You’ve defeated Pill King Ji Lang and Pillfire City! This reason alone is enough for us to cheer for you!”

“Not only that, but the Longevity Pill is also a very important contribution to the capital. It is a ray of hope for sage realm cultivators, and also greatly increases the appeal of our Capital!”

“That is true. Taiyuan Tower has released many new pills and broken much ground. Their contribution to the pill market here shouldn’t be ignored.”

“Mm. And what about the numerous lectures? He has also taught us a lot about the demon race. Isn’t that a great contribution as well?”

“Yeah! Young lord Zhen, you definitely deserve our hospitality!”

“Young lord Zhen! We support you!”

“We will forever be your supporters!” They were shouting their lungs out, as though worried that Jiang Chen might not hear them. Emperor Peafowl was pleased by what he saw. He been silently helping Jiang

Chen build his reputation so that the crowd would support the pill king when he was announced as heir. His plan was an evident success. Jiang Chen's contributions had truly added up over the years. The citizens of Veluriyam Capital greatly revered their heroes and also respected people with much contributions to the place. A high position within the capital didn't guarantee respect from the citizens. It was the bigger the contribution, the greater the respect they would receive. This was also the most important factor in Emperor Peafowl's strategy.

It was supposed to be Emperor Peafowl's speech, but Jiang Chen occupied the limelight instead as he'd just been made heir. Nobody thought that it was inappropriate except for Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea's factions. However, they didn't want to dampen the crowd's spirits with their opinions. They would surely become public enemy number one if they chose to criticize the pill king now.

"Alright. It's time that we move on and show recognition to all the winners..." Emperor Peafowl finally decided to bring the crowd back onto topic. The crowd had yet to regain their senses after the announcement. They weren't done expressing their joy yet. Show recognition to other geniuses? The other geniuses were of little importance to them. The pill king was the only worthy existence in their minds.

Emperor Peafowl made another announcement after the ceremony. "The 36 finalists of the Pill Pagoda Battles shall enter the pill pagoda. You will enter your respective regions according to your rank. Three months, six months, one year, and 2 years. That's the amount of time you're respectively allowed in the pagoda according to your ranking."

The lower the ranking, the less time one was given within the pagoda. The same rule was applied for the Genius Rankings, as well as the Ranking of Young Lords. Their identities were thoroughly looked into before they were allowed into the pagoda. The investigators were much more thorough with the young lords, especially since the integrity of the main pagoda was at stake. Jiang Chen had no issues whatsoever with the investigators as he was now the young lord of the capital.

The three pagodas would open three days later. The geniuses were given that window of time to make proper preparations before entering the pagoda. The shortest anyone would be in one was three months. The ceremony could finally end after the proper arrangements were made. However, the crowd didn't seem to want to leave. The gap between each Veluriyam Pagoda gathering was simply too big. They didn't want it to end so quickly. Excitement still lingered in the air. Numerous cultivators swarmed towards Jiang Chen to greet him. He waved at them in appreciation of their support. He couldn't afford to be too discourteous now that he was the heir of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. His status was no longer the same as before. He remained there for over four hours before finally returning to Taiyuan Tower. It would be difficult for him to frequent Taiyuan Tower from now on. He would have to oversee Sacred Peafowl Mountain now that he was heir. Also, he would need to familiarize himself with the people there.

He summoned the Wei father and son before he left. It was now incredibly difficult to speak to them as equals. It wasn't his fault. The other two simply couldn't do it. A young lord should always be respected as a young lord, even if Jiang Chen was easy-going by nature. They simply couldn't act casual around him.

Jiang Chen knew that he couldn't force this matter after seeing their expressions. "House Lord Wei, Sir Jie, I hope that Taiyuan Tower's plans remains unchanged," he said sincerely.

Wei Tianxiao hesitated before he spoke. "Young lord, you are now the venerated heir of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. We are merely your subordinates. Taiyuan Tower has always been your own venture. Truth be told, House Wei hasn't contributed much to the business at all. All we have ever done is provide a place of business for you..."

Wei Tianxiao felt ashamed of himself. He understood that it'd be best that he lowered himself in front of the young lord. It was the smartest move he could make right now. He'd spoken nothing but the truth. Moreover, Jiang Chen was the one who'd won the shop across from them after a bet with the Majestic Clan. He could easily have a change of heart and cut all ties with House Wei by moving his business to the opposite shop.

However, Jiang Chen didn't do any of that. What did it mean? It meant that Pill King Zhen was a man of loyalty. However, this was not a good excuse for them to take advantage of him. Taking advantage of a young lord was the last thing they would ever do. Jiang Chen smiled. He'd instantly discerned what Wei Tianxiao was worried about. "Don't overthink it. We will always be equal partners of Taiyuan Tower. The one across the street is mine. It's a good time to give my subordinates a place of residence as well."

Jiang Chen was no longer a loner. He was now responsible for the livelihood of many. The ten sage realm slave protectors, Pill King Lu Feng, Pill King Bu, Lin Yanyu, the disciples from Regal Pill Palace, and also some other followers. Even though Jiang Chen was going to bring some of them with him to Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he still needed an outpost in the secular world so that he could collect information, increase his web of influence, and make preparations for the reconstruction of Regal Pill Palace.

Wei Tianxiao nodded. "We will listen to your every word. Without you, House Wei would never be what it is today."

"Young lord, my father has said nothing but the truth. The family elders are a lot more restrained now thanks to you. They no longer bare their fangs at us," Wei Jie added.

Jiang Chen laughed. "That's proof that both of you have finally gained some authority. Alright, I suppose everything is settled. You need not worry about the Taiyuan Tower matter. House Wei should keep on working hard and set your sights on becoming a great clan one day."

It wasn't too difficult for House Wei to join the ranks of a great clan now that they have a powerful backer. However, the foundations of their clan was slightly lacking for now. The internal conflict from back then had caused great damage to the clan. House Wei would surely be on the decline if it wasn't for Taiyuan Tower's rapid growth. All members of the clan was well aware of that fact. The clan's future was only going to become brighter as long as they followed the young lord's footsteps.

Chapter 977: Who Stays And Who Goes

"Huang'er, I've neglected you during this time." Jiang Chen looked at Huang'er as the two were alone in the rear gardens of Taiyuan Tower. He always let his guard down around her.

Huang'er smiled delightfully. "I've been so happy during this time, seeing your momentum on the stage and witnessing everyone's support and love for you. I'm deeply touched as well."

She wasn't exaggerating. She'd seen a great deal of exemplary geniuses during her time on Myriad Abyss Island. However, Huang'er had never cared for any of those so-called geniuses. She'd always felt that they were somehow frivolous. Jiang Chen didn't have a hint of that at all. He had the unique charisma of a young man that was indescribable, but it helped him win over whoever he encountered. He always occupied the limelight no matter where he was, becoming a central figure and venerated by all. In Eastern Kingdom, he'd been one that fought to save the kingdom against all odds. He'd been a kingmaker in the shadows in Skylaural Kingdom, offering critical help for fourth prince Ye Rong. In the Precious Tree Sect, he was a top genius that directly affected the sect's fortunes. In the Regal Pill Palace, even the palace head depended on him. When the sect had fallen and the palace head's whereabouts unknown, only he had survived and had searched high and low, rescuing many fellow disciples and leaving behind a spark of hope for the sect.

Now at Veluriyam Capital, Jiang Chen was once again the center of attention, whether in House Wei or later taking the field for Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Later on in the desolate wildlands, his every move had unknowingly impacted an entire region and even a race's fortunes. This level of charisma was able to impact the greater picture with everything he did.

"Huang'er, I'm afraid I'll have to move to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Will you go with me?" Jiang Chen asked gently.

Huang'er laughed softly, her gaze clear and pure. "I'll be with you wherever you go. I'll be by your side even up mountains of blades and oceans of fire." Her tone was genuine and sincere. Although soft, it was suffused with moving resolution. The two locked eyes, time seeming to stop in this moment. Everything in the world seemed to be holding its breath.

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In a secret room Taiyuan Tower, Ling Xiao and Ling Hui'er were arguing over something. The girl was much different from her older sister, Ling Bi'er. The younger sister had a cute and innocent personality suffused with a few hints of stubbornness.

"Daddy, I'm senior brother Jiang's junior sister. Why can't I go with him to Sacred Peafowl Mountain?" Ling Hui'er pouted as her chest heaved, her cheeks pink with emotional exertion.

Ling Su smiled wryly. He knew that his younger daughter had simple thoughts and had been spoiled throughout her entire life, making her a bit oblivious to how the world worked.

"Hui'er, your senior brother Jiang bears great responsibility after moving to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It won't do to follow him. Not to mention, Miss Huang'er..." Ling Su sighed. He was well aware that both of his daughters quite liked Jiang Chen, but the youth already had such an outstanding Miss Huang'er by his side. Even with his wide breadth of experience and pride in his excellent daughters, he had to admit that Miss Huang'er's bearing was one that of which no other could reach. His daughters may have feelings, but they were doomed to not receive any reciprocation.

Perhaps his innocently naive younger daughter wouldn't do much as she didn't understand much of relations between man and woman, but his older daughter would never falter or waver once she'd given her heart. Therefore, he was more worried about Ling Bi'er. Because her personality was colder and her

self pride stronger, she was more restrained as well and would keep these matters to herself. When it came to love, she would only fall deeper with the passage of time.

Ling Su knew that matters of the heart were the most difficult to resolve. He was powerless even though he was their father. Therefore, he wanted to convince Ling Hui'er not to go to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Time would make everything distant. But judging from her attitude, she would go no matter what.

"Daddy, big sister Huang'er's not going to eat me. Besides, we're of the same sect as senior brother Jiang. It's completely natural and fine if he takes us with him. Why would big sister Huang'er protest?" Ling Hui'er continued.

Ling Su felt a headache throb as he dealt with this daughter who thought too simply. "Hui'er, some things must be avoided. Miss Huang'er and your senior brother Jiang are already a couple and are dao partners. Don't you think she'll take it amiss if you just follow her like this?" Ling Su decided to lay things out clearly for his daughter. He knew that she had a one track mind and likely wouldn't even understand why her father was opposing this course of action if he didn't explain things.

Ling Hui'er widened her eyes and looked at her father in confusion. "Daddy, you seriously are conservative! I'm not going to steal big sister Huang'er's man, why would she take it amiss? Besides, isn't it common or a man to have multiple dao partners in the world of martial dao?"

"You!!" Ling Su suddenly discovered that he was at a loss for words. His daughter wasn't just your typical straightforward, single-minded person. A man with multiple dao partners? Ling Su grinned ruefully. Judging from his daughter's tone, she didn't mind sharing her man with another at all. It was rather the parent who couldn't accept this. He wanted to protest, but couldn't say anything. Disagree? Force her to stay?

Girls couldn't be kept at home once they grew up, and his stubborn daughter might break out into a tantrum if he use strong methods to force her to stay. By then, something rather innocuous would become part of the Capital's gossip mill.

Support her? Ling Su doted on his two daughters the most in this life. If two girls wanted to share a husband, he'd manage to bear it as Jiang Chen really was extraordinary. But... he didn't dare think further. He readily admitted that Jiang Chen was very distinguished. So exemplary that he wanted to marry off his daughter to the lad straight away to tie down this son-in-law. However, reason told him that the lad already had a dao partner and the two very much in love. It'd be incredibly awkward if his daughter forced her way in. Besides, although Jiang Chen was a fellow disciple with his daughters, there was no rule that said peers had to become dao partners. Ling Su suddenly felt incredibly muddle headed and didn't know what to say.

"Daddy~" Ling Hui'er swung Ling Su's arm. "Big sister Huang'er isn't as miserly as you say. Don't think too much. Besides, if you have me stay, I'll be able to only talk to those stinking men everyday."

"What only men? Isn't there Miss Gouyu and Wen Ziqi?" Ling Su's comeback was quite weak.

"Big sister Gouyu and Wen Ziqi are all senior brother Jiang's followers!" Ling Hui'er cried out. "They'll definitely be going to Peafowl Mountain! Daddy, are you at ease in leaving just me at Taiyuan Tower? Hui'er isn't used to being around so many stinky men!"

Ling Su was at a complete loss for words and incredibly irritated. He waved his hand. "Hui'er, I can't convince you, so just do as you will in this. No matter what you're thinking, don't forget that you're a Ling daughter and have the dignity of our family."

Ling Hui'er giggled. "Daddy, are you worried that I'll force senior brother Jiang to accept me? You're really thinking too much. It's not as complicated as you think."

Contrary to Ling Bi'er, Hui'er simply admired Jiang Chen and felt greatly reassured whenever she was close to Jiang Chen. She didn't have the urge to hang onto Jiang Chen no matter what, and didn't feel that he was the only one she'd marry. She didn't even have the strongest understanding of these kinds of matters.

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Shen Trifire and the others were also feeling very conflicted. They really wanted to go to Sacred Peafowl with Jiang Chen, but they had a multitude of duties at Taiyuan Tower. There was much to be gained if they went to Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but likewise if they stayed. In fact, they would undergo more experience if they stayed and have many more opportunities to strike out solo.

Jiang Chen also had his own plans. After chatting with Huang'er for a while, he summoned all of his people. He knew that everyone had their own thoughts, and that matters at Taiyuan Tower needed to be stabilized first. "Apart from my personal guards, everyone else should remain at Taiyuan Tower first. All of you have your matters to attend to, and Taiyuan Tower also needs all of you to continue expanding."

"Honored master, you should at least bring your disciples, no?" Pill King Lu Feng frowned worriedly. He was a pill king of Emperor Shura's faction after all, so he was too embarrassed to bring up that he wanted to go to Sacred Peafowl Mountain as well. After all, his identity was a bit awkward.

"Yanyu will also come with me. However, you need to make a stay in the Pill Pagoda, so let's talk when you emerge." Lin Yanyu was young and had a great deal of potential, so Jiang Chen decided to keep the fellow by his side for further guidance.

"Senior brother, what about me?" Ling Hui'er's timid voice sounded from a corner. She looked rather aggrieved as her little face was flushed red, almost to the point of tears. "Hui'er wants to go to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. I want to spend time with big sister Huang'er, Gouyu, and Wen..."

Jiang Chen started. He really had forgotten about this junior sister.

"Senior brother, it'll be only men left here. How depressing would it be for me to be without companions! Senior brother can't leave me behind before we find our sister... Wahhh..." Ling Hui'er started sobbing profusely.

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He looked at Ling Su, wanting to see the man's intentions. But Ling Su only responded with a wry smile, obviously having no idea what to do. Huang'er laughed softly at this point. "Younger sister Hui'er is innocent and a delight. We'd have another to keep us company if she comes with us."

Ling Hui'er was overjoyed and immediately stopped crying. She sidled up to Huang'er and latched onto Huang'er's arm. "Big sister Huang'er dotes on me the most. Teehee, then it's settled! I'm going to Sacred Peafowl Mountain!"

Everyone started laughing when they saw Ling Hui'er thus.

"Don't worry, Uncle Ling. I'll take good care of Hui'er if she comes with us." Jiang Chen comforted when he saw the worry in Ling Su's eyes.

Chapter 978: Taking Up Residence in Sacred Peafowl Mountain

Jiang Chen had no plans to bring Liu Wencai and Lu Yali with him. The former, especially, would benefit from further tempering in the outside world. Though talented, Liu Wencai lacked a degree of necessary experience. Jiang Chen had no need of his assistance around Taiyuan Tower. The only task he delegated to the budding swordsman was for Liu Wencai to refine his own strength. The quicker he unearthed his talents and perfected his skills, the better. Jiang Chen firmly believed that Liu Wencai had it in him. He would pull it off sooner or later.

Fatty Lu Yali, on the other hand, was decidedly average in all aspects. His potential was far outstripped by Liu Wencai's. Jiang Chen gave him a post at Taiyuan Tower that was both comfortable and had a little authority. It was a place to stay, and a comfortable arrangement. The little fatty did not have any particularly lofty goals. He was quite happy with this kind of lifestyle. Because Taiyuan Tower was on the path to become Veluriyam Capital's leading pill faction, his own status would increase accordingly. He was living much more enjoyably than he had at Myriad Spirit Sect, at any rate.

After finalizing the list of people that would leave with him, Jiang Chen took Shen Trifire aside separately for a few extra words of encouragement. "You have a lot of responsibility on your shoulders, Trifire. Many things are not accomplished in a day, but you must also have a clear purpose in mind that you can work towards. I hope that someday soon, you can take the reins yourself."

Shen Trifire was a man that Jiang Chen valued greatly, beginning from the day of the former's arrival at the Tower. He knew that the weighty assignment in his hands was there to forge him through future trials. There was no way he could refuse. He nodded to Jiang Chen, "Senior brother, do not worry. It is all thanks to you that my life is even my own right now. Whatever you ask, I will do it."

"I rescued you because we are peers of a single sect. If you want to repay me, do it by working towards our common goal of resurrecting our sect. I hope that you all pitch in good effort, no matter how hopeless re-establishing and rejuvenating the sect might seem." Jiang Chen did not want the disciples of Regal Pill Palace to be lost in Veluriyam Capital's decadence. After all, the Palace was a sect with its own beliefs and tradition. Jiang Chen wanted his peers to reflect it through their actions. Unfortunately, the others lacked somewhat in that regard. If Shen Qinghong or Ling Bi'er were here, the hope of restoring the sect would be much improved. Of course, Mu Gaoqi could be counted among that number as well. Jiang Chen was a little sad when he thought of his old friend. After his business in the Veluriyam Pagoda was finished, it was time for a trip into the Upper Eight Regions' various places.

He had two things to do there: one of them was to rescue Mu Gaoqi, and the other to find his father Jiang Feng. His father's whereabouts was one of the heaviest things on his mind over the past few years. A spirit realm cultivator daring to wander the Upper Eight Regions... Jiang Chen didn't want to think of

the possibilities, sometimes. The more he did so, the more they scared him. But as a fellow man, he understood his father's decision.

No hot-blooded man could simply stand around when his wife was taken away forcefully by another. Anyone who could remain impassive in the face of such a tragedy wasn't fit to be called a real man. As for rebuilding Regal Pill Palace, Jiang Chen knew that it wasn't something to be done overnight. When his strength was perfected and he could finally reveal himself in broad daylight, only then would the time be ripe. Where were the others from the Palace now? Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie? He harbored no small concern for them, thinking of them now and again.

The palace head had treated him with generosity and kindness. He'd been one of the visionaries regarding the Myriad Domain's fate. He had even prophesized that the future of the entire palace lay in Jiang Chen's hands. Jiang Chen felt mildly apologetic towards the palace head whenever he remembered the past. Yes, Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region's invasion had been wholly unrelated to him, but he still felt that he'd let the other man down. It wasn't out of moral reasons, but emotional ones. That was why he rescued Regal Pill Palace's disciples at any cost. Doing so soothed his guilt, if just a little.

After putting Taiyuan Tower's matters in order, Jiang Chen headed towards Sacred Peafowl Mountain with his guards and attendants. This was a mythical place, and a sacred existence for many. Before now, they'd never even dreamed that they would one day have the chance to stay there long term. Cloudsoar Monarch was awaiting him outside the Mountain. "Young lord Zhen, His Majesty is occupied for the moment. That is why I have been sent here to greet you."

Jiang Chen had met the monarch several times before. "Is His Majesty not in at the moment?"

The monarch sighed. "He's here, but His Majesty is... taking care of some business." As if to avoid misunderstanding, Cloudsoar Monarch explained further. "His Majesty is speaking with the Spirit Branch clan lord. Apparently, the clan lord is here to arrange a marriage... one that His Majesty is none too pleased about."

"Arrange a marriage?" Jiang Chen was flabbergasted. "With whom?"

Cloudsoar Monarch smiled wryly. "You haven't been here much before, young lord, so you may not know. His Majesty has a foster daughter that he's raised as his own. Not many know, to tell the truth, but anyone under our wing generally does."

"Are you talking about Miss Dan'er?" Jiang Chen suddenly remembered something. Hadn't he visited someone like that alongside Ji San? There'd been a quarrel with Spirit Branch Clan's young lord, Miao Suo, as well.

Cloudsoar Monarch was stunned. "Young lord Zhen, you know Miss Dan'er?"

"I've both heard of her and paid her a visit with young master Ji San, but we haven't actually met. Doesn't she have a maid called Cui'er?"

"Yes, that's her. The Spirit Branch clan lord has overestimated himself a little. He thinks that just because Emperor Peafowl found Miss Dan'er in the outside world, Miao Suo is somehow qualified enough to be her match. His Majesty doesn't intentionally interfere with others' relationships, but Miss

Dan'er has no interest in that young master whatsoever. Personally, I think Miao Suo is trying to reach a bit beyond his grasp." Cloudsoar Monarch seemed a little unhappy about the affair.

Jiang Chen smiled, but stayed silent. Miao Suo was tall and burly. It was unlikely that someone would fall in love with him based on his looks alone. Because he hadn't actually seen Miss Dan'er, much less made her acquaintance, he wasn't in a position to judge her opinions on things. Still, from his point of view, there was no way Miss Dan'er would find Miao Suo attractive. Even someone like young master Ji San was outside her consideration. How could Miao Suo have any hope whatsoever?

"Hah, well, sometimes His Majesty has to deal with some pretty minor things. Anyways, you can come with me."

Nodding, Jiang Chen followed Cloudsoar Monarch into Sacred Peafowl Mountain's interior grounds. Sacred Peafowl Mountain occupied a huge expanse of land. Though it was secluded from the outside world here, there was no atmosphere of desolation. There were many residences available within. Naturally, the one reserved for Jiang Chen was one of the best. The conditions therein were ten times that what Regal Pill Palace could offer, all those years ago.

"Young lord Zhen, are you satisfied with your new home?" Cloudsoar Monarch chuckled. He was here to guide Jiang Chen around a while.

The new young lord returned the laugh. "If I say no, I would be a liar."

The monarch nodded. "Good, good. His Majesty instructed me to help you settle down, so come to me if you need anything. Ah, that's right, you're a young lord now. Besides the guards and attendants that you're bringing in yourself, you can also buy a few slaves. It does not fit a man of your station to not have a few hundred at your beck and call."

Jiang Chen smiled. He knew that Veluriyam Capital, as many places elsewhere, demanded ostentation and grandeur. Personal guards were only brought along on excursions, being otherwise free in terms of day-to-day tedium. Most menial jobs were assigned to slaves. The term 'slave' was one of the more undignified ways to address such people, and they were typically called 'servants' instead, or perhaps 'laborers'. Though followers and servants were both servile in nature, they were actually quite different. Followers just followed one around, but servants were basically slaves, with little autonomy as to their work.

Staring at his enormous residence, Jiang Chen knew that the few followers he did have weren't going to cut it. He didn't like to keep slaves around, but he had to bring in new people somehow. Seeing that his charge was satisfied, Cloudsoar Monarch hurriedly waved goodbye. "Young lord Zhen, there's not many things left for me to do here. His Majesty will host an audience with you tomorrow. Please, do rest awhile before then. I have other duties I must attend to, so I will not disturb you any longer."

Though he found it a little strange, Jiang Chen didn't probe the monarch further. He was perfectly happy with his new home. It was ten times better than his old place at Regal Pill Palace, and he had been content with it even back then. Thus, his satisfaction was magnified tenfold here as well.

"This residence is enormous, Gouyu. I'd like to task you to manage the details of our accommodations, just for the next while. Let's try to fill this place up in the next couple of days."

Gouyu nodded. She was an expert at dealing with such matters. "Young lord, how many slaves and servants do you intend to acquire?"

"Cloudsoar Monarch said at least a few hundred, but I think that's a bit too much. One or two hundred is enough." Jiang Chen grinned.

"So, we'll have to make another trip off the mountain, right?" Gouyu giggled. "I wonder what particulars we have to pay attention to when buying them?"

Jiang Chen inclined his head. "We'll talk about the details later. Let's settle everyone in first."

Not many people had accompanied him to Sacred Peafowl Mountain, so the task of settling them down wasn't difficult. Still, the residence seemed a little empty. On the plus side, it was quite a well-designed home. There were specific areas for growing spirit herbs, refining pills, and cultivating martial dao. Living areas were abundant as well, with no function missing from the complex.

After his friends were settled in, Jiang Chen wanted to take a short break before he went to visit Emperor Peafowl. Surprisingly, the first guest knocked at his door as soon as he was done. It was the eternal second-place of Sacred Peafowl Mountain: Zhou Yan. He had been second when young lord Fan was around, and he was second once more now that Jiang Chen had moved in. Zhou Yan clearly had a strong mentality, though. There was no hint of sadness on his face.

"Senior brother Zhen, my arrival may have been a little hasty. Is my visit an inconvenience, perhaps?" The other young lord was the image of politeness.

"We are sect brothers, Brother Zhou. There is no need for so much courtesy. Please, come on in." Though he hadn't expected Zhou Yan's visit, Jiang Chen returned the civility in equal measure nonetheless.

[Sovereign of the Three Realms \(WN\)](#)

Chapter 979: Miss Dan'er

The two walked outside and headed for the rear mountain. Zhou Yan sighed as he looked down at the residence. "Senior brother Zhen, you probably don't know that this is the residence His Majesty lived in when he was young. No one's lived here since. Even senior brother Fan didn't have the honor of living here."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen had no idea. Cloudsoar Monarch certainly hadn't mentioned it to him.

"Haha, His Majesty has high hopes for you. Higher, I think, than what he'd had for senior brother Fan. Many people believe that my choice of master is unfortunate. If I weren't studying under Emperor Peafowl, perhaps I would have been another emperor's heir. Understandably, there's no shortage of provocations both open and concealed... they want to make me jealous." Zhou Yan laughed as he said this. He glanced at Jiang Chen before he went on. "To tell the truth, I do feel a little frustrated. However, just like I said onstage, my feelings of relief are far stronger. There's no one else in my position. I always have a powerful genius that I can challenge just in front of me, a mountain that I can try to climb. Don't you agree?"

Jiang Chen gazed across at his junior brother, silent but smiling. Zhou Yan's way of thinking was rather unique and remarkable. Sacred Peafowl Mountain's second-best genius sighed softly again. "I have no

doubts whatsoever in His Majesty's prudence or vision. That's why I'm here to tell you this. I'm a disciple of Sacred Peafowl Mountain first, your rival second. There's no need to worry about any backstabbing from me, nor will I hold you back."

"Oh, I'm not worried." Jiang Chen smiled placidly. "You have His Majesty's confidence, so what need is there for worry?"

Zhou Yan evidently hadn't expected his new senior brother to be so easygoing. Jiang Chen clapped his shoulder. "We both seek to advance the interests of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. I wouldn't be so fixated on empty titles given by others. If I say that I'm not interested in being the young lord, you'd think me a hypocrite. Honestly though, I couldn't care less who the young lord is—you or me, it doesn't matter. His Majesty may think that I'm better suited for it in the short term, but who knows what'll happen in the future?"

Zhou Yan was amazed. He thought that his words had been candid enough, but his counterpart was even more direct about things. Moreover, his new senior brother's words were nothing short of abnormal. Anyone else acting like this was probably a faker, but he found it hard to disbelieve the clarity in Jiang Chen's eyes. No, he instinctively wanted to trust the other youth.

"Oh, yes, er, Sacred Peafowl Mountain seems quite lively today. What's happening?" Jiang Chen was inquisitive.

"The same as always, hah." Zhou Yan laughed wryly. "A herd of imbeciles that want a quick path to the top. Miss Dan'er has no interest in any of them."

"Them? I thought there was only Miao Suo?" Jiang Chen blinked.

"There was only Miao Suo at first, but more and more clans showed up. Now there's even two emperors! All here to ask for Miss Dan'er's hand for their young geniuses, of course." Zhou Yan groaned. "If it were only Spirit Branch Clan, His Majesty would have sent them packing long ago. The presence of two emperors warrants serious treatment, however."

"Which two emperors?" It was impossible for Jiang Chen to imagine that two emperors would be drawn out by a matter as simple as marriage. Two emperors!

"One is Emperor Vastsea, the other Emperor Void." Zhou Yan exhaled. "Those two majesties got into a pretty heated fight. His Majesty can't take either side, so he's been trying to put out the fire instead."

Jiang Chen didn't know what to say. Wasn't it better for marriage to be proposed between two willing parties? If Miss Dan'er has zero interest in marrying, what were they even going on about?

"Have you seen Miss Dan'er, senior brother Zhen?" Zhou Yan queried.

"No, I haven't." Jiang Chen shook his head. "Have you?"

Zhou Yan nodded. "A single glimpse. Admittedly, Miss Dan'er is both charming and graceful. Like the fair ladies that poets speak about, she is simply extraordinary."

Jiang Chen was speechless. Did Zhou Yan secretly admire Miss Dan'er as well?

His senior brother's strange look made Zhou Yan uncomfortable. "Senior brother Zhen, please don't misunderstand. The only thing I seek in my life is the paramount dao of the sword. I, ah, I'm not going to waste my days on lesser matters like this. It's just that a thought crossed my mind. Given Miss Dan'er's high standards, perhaps only a genius like senior brother Zhen can meet her expectations?"

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Was Zhou Yan planning to play the role of a part-time matchmaker? He hadn't even seen Miss Dan'er in person. He had no energy to consider such things. As the two young lords spoke, a beam of light cast down from the clouds. It was a message glyph, landing squarely in Jiang Chen's hands. Opening it, he grinned. "His Majesty is calling for me. Shall we go see His Majesty together, Brother Zhou?"

Zhou Yan wanted to decline, but mulled it over for a few moments before changing his mind. "Alright," he nodded.

Leaving the residence, the two of them hurtled through the air towards Emperor Peafowl's palace. The emperor was in a bit of a bad mood. Around him, the four monarchs had complicated expressions as well.

Plumscore Monarch was particularly indignant. "What a bunch of ridiculous morons!" She smacked her hand on the table. "They have no right to lust over Sacred Peafowl Mountain's noble miss! What a bunch of immodest buffoons."

Cloudsoar Monarch smiled wryly. "Daoist Plumscore, there's no need to be so angry. Hasn't His Majesty sent them packing just now? Maybe this is the best we can do for now."

"Rubbish. What part of it is 'best', or even good?" Plumscore Monarch would not relent in her fury. "Those bastards know no shame. Why else would Dan'er announce that she's locking herself away in closed door cultivation for the next three years?"

It was at this moment that Jiang Chen and Zhou Yan walked in. The youths' appearance wiped away some of the female monarch's anger from her face.

"Ah, you're here." Emperor Peafowl let out a soft sigh.

"Your Majesty." Jiang Chen and Zhou Yan came forward, bowing.

"No need for such formalities. Make yourselves at home." Emperor Peafowl waved a hand. "Today was a bit sudden, I think. I definitely didn't expect that Emperors Vastsea and Void both would come asking for my daughter's hand in marriage. If things had gone differently, I think it could have had a positive influence on Dan'er. It's a pity that it turned out so poorly. Instead of undoing the clasp over her heart, this has only tightened it." The emperor was not fundamentally opposed to an arranged marriage. If he were, he could easily have scared everyone off merely by darkening his face. As a matter of fact, he hadn't pressured anyone he'd spoken with today. He wanted Dan'er to open her heart once more. Meeting Veluriyam Capital's young geniuses was an undemanding social activity that might have served as the first step to recovery. Alas, Dan'er would not loosen the knot sealing her heart. She couldn't cast aside the shadows of her past at all.

The propositions of marriage quickly turned into a farce, concluding with Dan'er's declaration that she would shut herself away for three years. It taught Emperor Peafowl a valuable lesson: The troubles of

youth weren't things that he, a senior, could simply counsel away. Emperor Peafowl commanded the fate of Veluriyam Capital and the lives of many, but he had no power over passion and love. Casting aside the awkwardness in the air with a sweep of his arm, Emperor Peafowl broke the silence once more. "Feel free to take your leave for now. I'd like a moment with young Zhen alone."

Saying their farewells, the four monarchs withdrew from the room. After a courteous salute, Zhou Yan wisely followed suit.

"Shall we take a walk, lad?" Emperor Peafowl smiled.

Jiang Chen knew that something was on the emperor's mind, nodding in agreement to the request. The image of young and old, strolling side by side, had the savor of an intergenerational friendship. The two of them slowly toured the palace's corridors, gradually ascending higher and higher. The increase in elevation gladdened their hearts.

"This isn't like you, Your Majesty. Love and affection are the passions of youth. Such emotions cannot be forced. No matter how much you dote on Miss Dan'er, shouldn't you steer clear of running this particular show?" Jiang Chen was different from everyone else. Even the four monarchs dared not speak so in front of Emperor Peafowl, but he had no such reluctance. He knew that the emperor saw him as a friend and confidant. He hadn't been kept behind for mere flattery and praise!

Emperor Peafowl smiled wryly. "You're certainly fearless in your words, young man. To tell you the truth, I've always been the lighthearted type, but Dan'er in particular hangs on my heart. She's not my biological daughter, but might as well be... I certainly treat her like my kin. Perhaps this too is the machination of fate. No matter how strong a person is, he always has some small flaw or weak point. Maybe the girl is mine, hmm?"

Jiang Chen listened to the emperor quietly. A lump formed in his throat. He suddenly thought of his father from his previous life. He hadn't perceived it all those years ago, but thinking back on it now, perhaps he was his father's only weakness back then? It was this sole weakness that prevented someone as noble as the Celestial Emperor from being able to stop that world-shattering catastrophe. If his father hadn't had that single vulnerable spot, would the results have been different? If he had been able to exert the full extent of his power, the Celestial Emperor would have had ample leisure to deal with the disaster. But reality did not have room for 'what ifs'. Jiang Chen's heart spasmed at the very thought. Emperor Peafowl's words cut him to the bone. He didn't think that the emperor was simply moaning and groaning over nothing.

"Fate decrees all, Your Majesty. Miss Dan'er isn't your real daughter, but perhaps a filial thread ties her to you regardless?"

"Perhaps." Emperor Peafowl's look softened, his eyes full of the kindness that only a father could have. He was showing a soft side that no onlooker could have imagined he'd possess. Despite holding the title of Veluriyam Capital's strongest for the last three thousand years, the emperor was still a mortal man. Suddenly, a thought seemed to strike him. "That's right, you're from the Myriad Domain, no? She says that she's from there as well. Do you know if there's a sect in the domain that had someone called Dan'er in it?"

“Dan’er?” Jiang Chen frowned. His own mind was roused in remembrance of an elegant figure—Dan Fei. He took a deep breath before he posed the question. “Your Majesty, are there any other clues besides her name?”

“She has a daughter, called Nian’er.” Emperor Peafowl furrowed his brow as well.

“She... has a daughter?” Jiang Chen broke into a wry smile. The sliver of curiosity he had was gone. Dan Fei had been an unmarried girl. Where would she have gotten a daughter from? He was thinking too much. Surely, there was a myriad of girls called Dan’er from the Myriad Domain.

[Sovereign of the Three Realms \(WN\)](#)

Chapter 980: The Main Pagoda's Secre

Emperor Peafowl laughed. Was he searching for a needle in a haystack? How could there be such a big coincidence? Was every person from the Myriad Domain supposed to know Dan’er? He was certain Jiang Chen didn’t know who Dan’er was after seeing his expression.

“Your Majesty, do you have information that’s more substantial?”

Emperor Peafowl smiled wryly. “She refuses to tell me anything. She only told me that she’s from the Myriad Domain. Her identity, background, and the sect she originated from are all but a mystery to me.”

“She’s probably a girl who’s suffered heartbreak.” Jiang Chen sighed gently.

Emperor Peafowl shook his head. “No she hasn’t. Her heart still seems to be occupied by a man who I imagine is the father to her daughter. I wonder how many tragedies like hers have occurred due to the destruction of the Myriad Domain? To think that the Eternal Celestial Capital is behind all this suffering.”

Emperor Peafowl knew not of Dan’er’s origins, but his instincts told him that the man in Dan’er’s heart had probably lost his life during the destruction of the Myriad Domain. Dan’er had shut herself off to the outside world because she was unable to escape from the traumas of her heart. Her love for that man had been too deep.

A vicious light flashed through Jiang Chen’s eyes when he heard the Eternal Celestial Capital’s name. It triggered his memories of the past and reminded him of the catastrophe that had befallen the Myriad Domain. He’d passed through the domain during his journey to the Desolate Wildlands. The place was filled with the scars of battle. Devastation was extremely widespread. It was no longer the same vibrant place of yesteryear. Emperor Peafowl was right. The Eternal Celestial Capital had simply caused too many tragedies like the one Dan’er had experienced. How many tragedies had occurred in just Regal Pill Palace alone? The Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region were the perpetrators behind all this suffering.

The emperor realized that his words had touched a sore spot. He quickly spoke words of comfort, “Tragedies like hers occur almost everyday in the martial dao world. However, the destruction of an entire domain is so rare that it only occurs once every few hundred to a few thousand years. The Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region only do evil and no good. They will surely pay for their sins one day and find themselves in the same spot as the Myriad Domain.”

Jiang Chen smiled in response. “Their fortune may soon run out, but a true cultivator will never wait for the heavens to punish their enemies. One day I will make them pay for what they did.”

The emperor laughed. "You might not be able to destroy the Eternal Celestial Capital yet with your current abilities, but the Great Scarlet Mid Region should be an easy target."

"I don't want to preemptively alert my enemies." Jiang Chen could tell that this was a test by Emperor Peafowl. He immediately cast away such thoughts. He was going to temporarily refrain from seeking revenge. His wings had yet to harden. He wasn't strong enough. Even though he was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he was not going to abuse his power for the purpose of his own personal revenge. It wasn't that he couldn't; he just simply didn't want to misuse his authority at Sacred Peafowl Mountain as soon as he became the emperor's heir. Moreover, it was not yet the opportune timing for such matters.

The emperor was pleased when he saw how calm Jiang Chen was. What he said earlier was indeed a test. He wanted to see if power was going to influence the young man into making a brash decision and was glad it didn't. He smiled for a while before he went back on topic. "I've summoned you today to talk to you about the main Veluriyam Pagoda."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen looked at the emperor curiously.

"The main pagoda has over a hundred thousand years of history. There was only one during ancient times. The Martial Pagoda and Pill Pagoda were both built by powerful cultivators from a later generation. Because of that, the inheritance found within those two towers are all from a later generation. Only within the main pagoda can one find ancient techniques and inheritances. The empyrean decree from the progenitor of Veluriyam Capital is also found within the main pagoda. It bears the fate of this several hundred-thousand years old capital."

"Within the main pagoda is a separate world. You may view it as a world built upon by formations or a secret quadrant. But to sum it up, it is a place where not even I can do as I wish. The great ancestors who built it are the only people who know all the secrets that lay within. Many powerful cultivators have been inside since then, but every single one of them reported a different experience. Moreover, everyone is only given one opportunity to enter, and they must be below sixty years of age. The tower will repel anyone that is over that age. For that reason, I've only been in there once during my youth."

Jiang Chen was confused. "Is that so? But didn't the seven great emperors watch the ranking battles from within the main pagoda?"

"Haha! That was indeed the case, but we were limited to the outer regions of the pagoda. We aren't able to enter anywhere beyond the main pagoda's formation. One will have to go beyond the formation to enter the pagoda. There are four different quadrants within the pagoda. The nine strongest young lords are allowed entrance into the quadrant of the highest grade. I don't know what you might encounter in there, but it is a place where a day's cultivation is equivalent to a month in the outside world. Even the lowest grade quadrant is equivalent to five days in the outside world. This is the reason why everyone competes for a spot in the Ranking of Young Lords. After all, every Veluriyam Capital citizen is only given one chance to enter the pagoda when they are younger than sixty years old. This is an opportunity that will change their fates forever." The emperor looked at Jiang Chen at this point. "Do you understand now?"

"A day inside is equivalent to a month outside? If that's the case, then entering the highest grade quadrant for two years would be like cultivating for sixty years!" Jiang Chen was flabbergasted.

Emperor Peafowl laughed. "This is true only in theory. Your progression will be extremely quick during the first few months, but your progression will begin to slow down somewhere around the third month. In reality, two years inside is slightly more equivalent to thirty to forty years of cultivation. However, if you can make good use of your time, it isn't impossible to fully make it equivalent to fifty to sixty years. However, the world inside isn't entirely peaceful. You will be met with dangers that could threaten your life. Of course, danger will also come with all kinds of accompanying fortuitous encounters. In conclusion, I want you to view the pagoda as a separate world or a secret realm. Think of it as training. Do not be careless or expect everything to go your way. But at the same time, do not fear everything either."

"Mm." Jiang Chen nodded.

"The world inside is huge, but there are still possibilities that you could come across others. You should be mentally prepared for that. The human heart is ugly and full of evil. The geniuses in the Ranking of Young Lords are not as harmonious as you'd think." The emperor reminded.

Jiang Chen smiled in response. He didn't need the emperor to tell him how much competition there was between the young lords. Emperor Peafowl had been inside the main pagoda of Veluriyam Capital, but he had gone inside a few thousand years ago, and he had only been in there once. Thus, he could only talk about it in general terms. Jiang Chen would have to find out the rest of the details himself.

"Alright, three days of preparation isn't exactly the longest time. Your residence is very big. You better start looking for servants to take care of it."

He threw a medallion over to Jiang Chen as soon as he was done speaking. "That is the Progeny Feather Medallion. Its authority is only second to my Progenitor Feather Medallion. There are only two such medallions in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. The one in my hand is first, and I've just given you the second. The owner of these medallions have the authority to mobilize the Peafowl Guard, including the four monarchs. Also, you have power over every great clan that has sworn allegiance to Sacred Peafowl Mountain."

Including the four monarchs? Jiang Chen was surprised. He never thought that he would suddenly gain so much authority. No wonder Cloudsoar Monarch had been so courteous just now. Jiang Chen immediately took the medallion without any reserve. Being reserved would hold no merit since he had already become Sacred Peafowl Mountain's heir. Back then, the Majestic Clan and the Shura Guard had been incredibly arrogant during Taiyuan Tower's reopening. The Peafowl Guard's appearance had quickly taken them down a notch. Even the Majestic Clan's father and son duo had been arrested. The Shura Guard didn't dare stop them. The Peafowl Guard was definitely a strong faction in Veluriyam Capital.

"Go make your preparations. There is still a lot you need to learn about Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but time is of the essence. Preparing for your entrance into the main pagoda is your biggest priority right now. The rest can wait for when you return two years later." Emperor Peafowl was so worried about the demon race that he'd already begun to make all kinds of preparations. However, two years was still an acceptable wait. The same couldn't be said if it had been eight or ten years.

Jiang Chen cupped his fist. "If that's the case, then this junior will be taking his leave. I intend to visit the market to purchase some servants."

His residence was too empty. He needed a few more people to liven up the place and perform the menial tasks. He wasn't going to let his trusted aides do those tasks. They had been loyal followers throughout his journey. He planned to train them and help them further their cultivation accordingly.

Emperor Peafowl didn't have anything else to say. He nodded and gave Jiang Chen a reminder.

"Remember that you are the owner of the Progeny Feather Medallion from now on. You represent the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Your medallion will reflect your identity no matter where you go. We are now your greatest ally and your most powerful support."

Jiang Chen nodded. He understood the hidden meaning behind the emperor's words. He returned to his residence to make proper arrangements before he left for the Fish and Dragon District to purchase some slaves. Gouyu and Xuetong accompanied him there. Ling Hui'er made a huge ruckus and wanted to follow along when she heard that they were leaving.

Jiang Chen didn't have a good impression of the Fish and Dragon District. He had stolen a few thousand slaves a while back, but he secretly returned all but a few to House Sikou's Myriad Puppets Pavilion. It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't want to rob them blind, but because the slaves had all been branded by the Myriad Puppets Pavilion. If he didn't return them, the Myriad Puppets Pavilion could crush their jade tokens, instantly killing every single one of them. He simply didn't want to implicate the innocent.