

Three Realms 1021

Chapter 1021: Stunning Veluriyam Capital

Jiang Chen's words were a moment of enlightenment for the clan lord. It immediately tore apart the paper that had stood in his way and caused boundless inspiration to enter his dao heart. Emperor Peafowl smiled. "Your master is truly an astonishing person, little guy. Some words were all that it took to manifest a new great emperor. Clan Lord, congratulations."

The clan lord spoke in a trembling voice, "Your Majesty, young lord... I... your subordinate is truly about to achieve a breakthrough. I can already feel the fountain of inspiration knocking at my doorsteps. I feel that it's unstoppable and that it'll break through that final barrier."

"Haha, a couple thousand years later Veluriyam Capital finally welcomes its eighth great emperor!" Emperor Peafowl sounded very gratified. The fact that a new great emperor was born to Sacred Peafowl Mountain was invigorating news to the faction.

"Your Majesty, please allow your subordinate to use the precious land of Sacred Peafowl Mountain temporarily. I would like to enter seclusion for several days."

"Go and seek out Cloudsoar Monarch. He will make the appropriate arrangements." There was no reason for Emperor Peafowl to turn him down. The ascension process to great emperor was a critical stage in one's cultivation, so a secular place like the Coiling Dragon main residence was obviously not suitable for a breakthrough. Such a breakthrough demanded a lot from its environment. Most importantly, the strange phenomenon caused by the ascension to great emperor was incredibly shocking. If the breakthrough was completed in the secular world, the Coiling Dragon main residence might be turned upside down.

Neither Emperor Peafowl nor the clan lord wished to see this. The emperor sighed softly. "It seems that my plans to head out must be delayed for a moment longer. Your plans to head out will probably be delayed for several days too."

It was now certain that the Coiling Dragon clan lord was going to break through to great emperor. He would spend three to five days in seclusion and would need another three to five days to stabilize his realm. If the entire process was finished quickly, it could be completed in seven days at the quickest or half a month at the slowest. Once he came out of seclusion, a new great emperor would be born in Veluriyam Capital.

The arrival of every new great emperor was a grand event in Veluriyam Capital. This tradition had been present since several thousand years ago. The new great emperor would be coronated, granted a new title, and allowed to build his own sacred ground. This all required a grand celebration. As the master and young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Emperor Peafowl and Jiang Chen had to attend attend this celebration.

They had to support the clan lord during this celebration because he had ascended to great emperor as a member of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Even after he became the eighth great emperor, he would still be labeled as a member of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He would be a diehard follower of the faction.

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Three days later, a splendid light suddenly shot towards the clouds. Thunderous rumbles followed as countless rainbow lights, clouds, and birds scattered down. The powerful strange phenomenon in the skies covered the entire air space of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It pushed the surrounding clouds ten thousand kilometers away. Inside Veluriyam Capital territory, every country, city, capital, and territory under the seven great emperors' command were alerted by this strange phenomenon. Everyone's gazes were fixed upon Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

"What's this? A strange phenomenon?"

"Considering its strength, does this mean that someone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain has become a great emperor?"

"That's absolutely a phenomenon that only a great emperor's ascension would trigger. The phenomenon caused by a normal emperor's breakthrough doesn't even reach one fifth of its size!"

"Did someone reach great emperor realm in Sacred Peafowl Mountain? Who? Is it Cloudsoar Monarch?"

"That can't be right. We haven't heard of any emperors who were on the verge of ascending to great emperor from Sacred Peafowl Mountain lately."

"What's going on over there?"

"Let's go have a look!" The experts who happened to be closer to Sacred Peafowl Mountain could no longer sit still. The birth of a great emperor was something that happened only once in a thousand years. Not even a great emperor would be able to sit through such a grand occurrence.

Countless experts from all kinds of forces were gathered at the entrance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain in just a short amount of time. Out of all six great emperors of Veluriyam Capital, Emperor Shura was the only who didn't show. Emperor Vastsea especially was wearing an incredibly complex expression on his face. He stared at the strange phenomenon that didn't fade until a very long time later with a wordless frown.

"It really is the phenomenon of a breakthrough to great emperor. It becomes more obvious the closer we are to it." Emperor Void sighed. "To think that someone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain would break through! This is truly a place of crouching tigers and hidden dragons."

He was a diehard supporter of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and also the first person to exclaim his admiration. Despite Emperor Petalpluck's calm demeanor, he too was gladdened by the birth of a new great emperor.

"Sacred Peafowl Mountain has countless talents in their midst. They truly are the strongest power to exist in Veluriyam Capital for nearly five thousand years. Sacred Peafowl Mountain is the indisputable ruler of Veluriyam Capital."

His words caused Emperor Shura's ardent supporter, Emperor Vastsea's heart to skip a beat. This was not good news for their faction at all. It was bad enough that Emperor Shura's ambition had been thwarted again and again. Today, a new great emperor had emerged and shattered the silence that had enveloped Veluriyam Capital for thousands of years. Veluriyam Capital was about to welcome its eighth great emperor. This was an even greater blow to Emperor Shura's ambitions to rule over Veluriyam Capital.

Emperor Mountaincrush smiled. "We're lonely at the top too, aren't we? Today, a fellow great emperor will be joining our fold. This is truly fantastic news."

Cloudsoar Monarch flew out of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's entrance at this moment. When he saw that the five great emperors had gathered outside Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he hastily moved forward and saluted them.

"My greatest apologies for not welcoming your arrival properly, great emperors. Please, come with me for a meeting in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. His Majesty is already waiting respectfully inside." Cloudsoar Monarch was neither overbearing nor servile, but he didn't forgo any etiquette either.

"Haha, Cloudsoar, and here I thought that you were the one who had ascended to great emperor. So, who was it? Was it Wildfox Monarch? Plumscore Monarch? Or Chronobalance Monarch?" Emperor Mountaincrush asked laughingly. He had a straightforward personality.

Cloudsoar Monarch smiled. "Please come with me for a meeting. His Majesty will personally explain this matter to you all. It's not my place to reveal this."

The great emperors didn't grow angry even though Cloudsoar Monarch was keeping the secret. Instead, they exchanged a smile with each other before flying through the entrance. It was obvious that these great emperors were all itching to know the answer.

Inside Sacred Peafowl Palace, Emperor Peafowl had sensed his guests before they arrived. He had long since given orders to prepare drinks. As the young lord appointed by Emperor Peafowl himself, it was only natural for Jiang Chen to stay right by Emperor Peafowl's side. He didn't turn down the emperor's request. He knew that Emperor Peafowl was purposely giving him the opportunity to gain more exposure.

By now, the seven great emperors had shown up in the hall. Emperor Shura was the only one who hadn't come. Emperor Shura's absence was within Emperor Peafowl and Jiang Chen's predictions. That Emperor Vastsea was here meant that he represented Emperor Shura.

After the great emperors had taken their seats, Emperor Mountaincrush asked impatiently before he even took a sip of wine, "Daoist Peafowl, everyone here is anxious to know the answer. Who is the friend in Sacred Peafowl Mountain who has ascended to great emperor? We are all peers now, so why don't you invite him or her over?"

The other great emperors also had a great deal of questions to ask themselves, but Emperor Mountaincrush had stolen a march and asked what they all wanted to know. Therefore, everyone stared intently at Emperor Peafowl for the answer.

Emperor Peafowl smiled leisurely. "The heavens favor Veluriyam Capital. A new great emperor is born after thousands of years have passed."

"Fellow daoist, please don't keep us on tenterhooks any longer. My heart is itching to know the answer, so why don't you tell us who's the person who has ascended to great emperor before anything else?" Emperor Mountaincrush said.

"Yeah, Daoist Peafowl, let us know the answer already," Emperor Void also asked smilingly.

“It’s the clan lord of the Coiling Dragon Clan.” Emperor Peafowl stopped beating around the bush.

“What? The Coiling Dragon clan lord?”

“How can it possibly be him?”

“He... didn’t they say that his cultivation has dissipated several years ago? In fact, he hasn’t come out of seclusion since the last Veluriyam Pagoda gathering. Everyone thought that his cultivation had dissipated and he passed away as a result.”

Emperor Mountaincrush smiled wryly. “What in the world is going on, daoist? Were the rumors about the Coiling Dragon clan lord false?”

“But it’s true that he is reaching the end of his lifespan. Everyone knows this. This isn’t fake, is it?”

Emperor Vastsea himself looked a little astonished. He could accept it if either one of the four monarchs of Sacred Peafowl Mountain had ascended to great emperor. But the Coiling Dragon clan lord was about to die. In fact, everyone had assumed that he was a dead man already. Now that it was suddenly revealed that he had ascended as a great emperor instead, it was no wonder that this news was slightly difficult to accept.

“It is true that he was nearing the end of his lifespan, but the rumors regarding his cultivation dissipation were fake. If that had truly happened, how could he possibly be ascending today?” Emperor Peafowl smiled. “It was exactly because he was nearing the end of his lifespan that he achieved enlightenment while trapped within the great fear of life and death. Faced with his own mortality, he fought with everything he had and ultimately found the inspiration to go even higher. As a result, his life’s potential became active and actually pushed him to ascend to great emperor.”

The entire hall was silent after he said this. Was there really such a thing? This was actually the first time they had heard of a person nearing the end of his lifespan who was able to unearth such powerful potential. Normally speaking, such a person would appear lifeless and experience a continual degradation of his life force and bodily functions. Logically speaking, it shouldn’t be possible for a person like this to activate his life’s potential. Was this Coiling Dragon clan lord a monster or something?

Although they were doubtful of Emperor Peafowl’s claims, they had no choice but to believe him. After all, it was impossible to hide things in such a manner. The emperor wouldn’t be saying such things if the clan lord hadn’t really ascended to great emperor. Plus, there was no point in lying about such a matter. Most importantly, the clan lord was a man nearing the end of his lifespan, so how had he managed to activate his life’s potential?

This was what they were most curious about. It was because the Coiling Dragon clan lord hadn’t looked like a man who was nearing the end of his lifespan or experiencing cultivation dissipation when they saw him last at the Veluriyam Pagoda Gathering. Although he hadn’t shown any signs that his life’s potential was activated at the time, he definitely didn’t look much different than before.

Emperor Vastsea suddenly asked, “Your Majesty, the Longevity Pill of Sacred Peafowl Mountain can increase the lifespan of a sage realm cultivator, am I right? Is it possible that Sacred Peafowl Mountain has come up with a new pill that can expand even the lifespan of an emperor realm cultivator?”

This question had come out of nowhere. Even Jiang Chen was slightly startled. Emperor Vastsea's intuition is pretty good. However, Emperor Peafowl broke into involuntary laughter. "Ole brother Vastsea, you have a vivid imagination. A pill like this may exist in the world, but at the very least I haven't seen such a pill despite having lived for several thousands years already."

Everyone laughed too. "If there really was a pill like this, Veluriyam Capital's pill business would absolutely be able to compete with Pillfire City's."

"True, setting aside the amount of profit it would bring, how many emperor realm cultivators would Veluriyam Capital attract if we actually had such a pill?"

Chapter 1022: Stirring to Action

Indeed, if the Pinecrane Pill could be mass produced, it would definitely cause many emperor realm cultivators to defect to the Capital. However, the ingredients for the pill were simply too precious. Emperor Peafowl felt that it was a beautiful idea not destined to happen.

"Honorable guests, the appearance of an eighth great emperor is cause for great celebration. I've decided that once Emperor Coiling Dragon comes out from seclusion, we shall immediately perform the coronation, start the construction of his palace, and formally bestow him the title of great emperor. I trust that everyone is fine with this arrangement?"

To be granted the title of great emperor, one had to reach the required cultivation realm and be recognized by other great emperors. It wasn't difficult to find a great emperor to recognize his ascension in a city like Veluriyam Capital. There were seven great emperors in this capital alone. It was unlikely that the clan lord would face any obstructions. However, the formation of a new emperor faction couldn't be completed overnight. First, his sacred grounds had to be cleared, the palace built, authority granted, and news of his title publicized.

"The ascension of an eighth emperor is definitely good news for the capital." Emperor Void laughed. "We titled emperors should offer our full support. Emperor Peafowl, if you need money or labor, just ask and I shall give!"

"Haha! This is good news indeed! Count me in as well!" Emperor Mountaincrush followed.

"My faction has always preferred the simple life, but for a momentous moment like this, we wish to offer our assistance too." Emperor Petalpluck smiled.

Emperor Skysplitter was the seventh great emperor and had ascended roughly a millennium ago. The other great emperors had provided him with a lot of support at that time. Therefore, it would be a bit unseemly if he chose not to contribute. "The foundations of my faction have yet to solidify, but I will also offer full assistance, as it is the tradition of our Capital."

Emperor Vastsea had no choice but to agree, "Since it is tradition, the Vastsea faction will not be stingy either."

Emperor Peafowl smiled brightly. "Very good! Our fortune will continue as long as we remain united as citizens of Veluriyam Capital."

News of the clan lord's ascension to great emperor spread throughout all corners of Veluriyam Capital just a few hours after the five emperors had paid a visit. The news spread to even the most remote areas of the capital and to all the other great powers in the Upper Eight Regions. Veluriyam Capital had become even mightier than before.

Great emperor cultivators were few in numbers in even the most powerful sects. A powerful first-ranked sect might have three or four great emperors, while the weaker ones would have two at the very most. The quasi-first-ranked factions had great emperors as a proof of might. Only factions with great emperors could be considered as part of their ranks. There were many powerful factions in the Upper Eight Regions, but there were only so many that were as powerful as the eight foremost sects, Veluriyam Capital, and Pillfire City. In fact, it was actually possible to count the total number of great emperors in the Upper Eight Regions on one hand.

There was only around two hundred great emperors in total if one counted those that were in powerful factions and ignored the recluses. If the hermits and ancient wandering great emperors were added to the count, the numbers might go up to three hundred.

The middle region was much worse off. It would be incredibly impressive if they even had one or two great emperors. The great emperors in the middle regions were all reclusive patriarchs that didn't meddle with worldly issues. The only exception was the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Nobody knew for sure if they even had a great emperor. Most had the impression that the strongest cultivators in the middle regions were only at the peak-level emperor realm. Great emperors were the stuff of legends in that region.

One would only be certain if there was a great emperor if a middle region was on the throes of destruction, and even then it might still remain a mystery. Great emperors were often apathetic to worldly issues by the time they ascended to that realm. They remained solely focused on the study of the heavens and earth so they could make their next breakthrough.

Everyone had different desires and pursuits once they became a great emperor, but none of them were willing to give up the study of the law of heavens and earth. It was the only path they could take. They wanted to understand the heavenly dao and ascend to the empyrean realm. There wasn't much else that could affect them once they had become a great emperor.

Veluriyam Capital was a very frightening force due to its eight great emperors. It was definitely one of the top three most powerful factions in the human domain. The entire Coiling Dragon Clan was over the moon when they heard the news. They had been quite anxious in recent years because they knew that the clan lord was on the verge of losing his cultivation. Their stable future had become fraught with uncertainty. The clan lord had seemed fine during the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering, but matters were worrying. They wondered if the clan lord was only holding on with a final burst of his lifespan.

It didn't help that he had immediately went into seclusion after returning to the manor and no longer handled any household matters. This only further intensified speculation. The number of pessimists increased with every passing day. They had witnessed the strange phenomenon in Sacred Peafowl Mountain as well and figured that it was Cloudsoar Monarch who had ascended to great emperor, but they were astounded by the news they received.

It wasn't Cloudsoar Monarch; it was the clan lord! The atmosphere in the Coiling Dragon Clan instantly reached a new high. Their repressed emotions were unleashed all at once. The sudden reversal of their moods sent them into a frenzy. The entire manor was in a celebratory craze. Even someone as austere as Ji Zhongtang was bawling his eyes out. He knew full well that he had young lord Zhen to thank for all of this. The emotions and excitement had made him an even more resolute believer in young lord Zhen.

Ji San had no clue that this was happening, as he was still in closed door cultivation. The clans and families under the Coiling Dragon banner, especially House Wei, were also in high spirits. But the families that had been on the verge of switching to another great clan were filled with fear and anxiety. They were worried that the clan lord would see through their wavering hearts. Correction, he was now Emperor Coiling Dragon.

The entire Veluriyam Capital was seized in a festive mood yet again. The five great emperors returned to their respective territories with different moods. Emperor Void was happy from the bottom of his heart, Emperor Mountaincrush was excited for the future, Emperor Petalpluck felt gratified, and Emperor Skysplitter felt neither happiness or grief, but his mind was filled with questions. Emperor Vastsea was in the most complicated of moods. He was equally as suspicious as he was envious. Logically, there should be nothing for him to be envious about, as he was a seasoned great emperor. But for unknown reasons, his heart was always filled with envy and jealousy. He envied the Coiling Dragon Clan and Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

"Brother Shura, It seems your plan has become even harder to realize." Emperor Vastsea didn't conceal his emotions one bit when he met Emperor Shura. "The Coiling Dragon clan lord has become Emperor Coiling Dragon. Like a tiger that has grown wings, Sacred Peafowl Mountain has become even more powerful."

Emperor Shura wore a somber expression. "Brother Vastsea, does Sacred Peafowl Mountain possess some kind of magical power? Their heir is already as formidable as they come, and now you tell me that their subordinate clan is just as outstanding too?!"

Constantly comparing oneself with others would only result in anger and disappointment. The Majestic Clan of yesteryear was as powerful and influential, but was now in ruins and destitute. Rumors had long circled that the Coiling Dragon clan lord was at the end of his lifespan, and the clan was at its knees. Yet, their clan remained the foremost clan in the capital after all these years. They didn't rest on their laurels, and in the blink of an eye, the clan lord had become Emperor Coiling Dragon. Words could not describe how depressed Emperor Shura was by the unexpected change.

Was Sacred Peafowl Mountain blessed with great luck? Emperor Peafowl had already ruled for a few thousand years. It should be his turn now. But this luck was simply too indomitable. If this went on, they would likely still be the ruling faction for the next few thousand years. He couldn't accept this. His ambition had already taken root in his heart and grew stronger with each passing day. The flower of ambition couldn't be stopped after it had bloomed.

"Brother daoist, maybe it is time that we resort to backhanded methods." Bloodthirst flashed across Emperor Vastsea's face.

"Backhanded methods? What kind do you speak of?"

“The most extreme kind, of course. Normal methods would never be able to topple Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s luck.” Emperor Vastsea carried a somber expression. “Emperor Peafowl is stronger than both of us. In other words, he is the main pillar of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Without him, young lord Zhen or Emperor Coiling Dragon would be no match for either of us.”

“Are you saying that we should start dealing with Emperor Peafowl?” Emperor Shura was shocked by the proposition.

Emperor Vastsea laughed coldly. “Neither of us are a match for him. Even if we team up, it isn’t likely that we’ll defeat him. Fortunately, he’s an overambitious person who always puts up an altruistic act. Because he wants to be the world’s savior, he believes that us humans are in danger and that the demonic calamity will soon be upon us. We can take advantage of this.”

Emperor Shura mused deeply. He understood that the discrepancy between their strengths was simply too big to be made up with ambition alone. Even if he teamed up with Emperor Vastsea, they would be evenly matched at best. However, there was a lot more they could do if the demon race was added into the calculations.

Chapter 1023: A Bit of Surprising News

“Sage brother Vastsea, this foolish brother plans to head out on a trip,” Emperor Shura suddenly said.

“Oh? Where do you plan to go, brother?”

“The Eternal Celestial Capital,” Emperor Shura suddenly said. “Some time ago, its master sent me an invitation. I’ve been wondering about his intention since then to no avail.”

“Oh? This happened?” Emperor Vastsea exclaimed. “Where’s the invitation?”

Emperor Shura waved his sleeve, sending a note straight into Emperor Vastsea’s hands. However, Emperor Vastsea frowned when he read the letter. “The tone of this invitation is sincere, but there’s not much to it at all. It only requests your presence at the Celestial Capital. I wonder what his intentions may be?”

Emperor Shura responded indifferently, “I am just as puzzled as you are. That being said, I cannot find any malice in this invitation.”

Emperor Vastsea pondered. “The way things are going right now, brother, it will be difficult for you to rustle up any more support within Veluriyam Capital. Perhaps a trip outside may yield some pleasant surprises.”

“That is true. Perhaps I really should consider a different way of doing things. Oh right, sage brother, a grand celebration will be held to celebrate the Coiling Dragon clan lord’s ascension to great emperor. I don’t wish to participate, so I’ll head out instead. When the time comes, just inform the others that I went out traveling some time ago.” Emperor Shura was in no mood to participate in Emperor Coiling Dragon’s grand celebration.

Emperor Vastsea could understand Emperor Shura’s feelings. “Don’t worry, brother. Just leave these trivial matters to me.”

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The Coiling Dragon clan lord's ascension to great emperor, establishment of a new sacred land, construction of a new palace, crowning ceremony, and all other kinds of celebration took almost two months of preparation before everything was on the right track.

A new emperor faction wouldn't rise to be on par with the other emperor factions sans tens to hundreds of years of development. However, Emperor Coiling Dragon's right to speak had become a lot stronger than before. Although he wouldn't be on equal standings with the other great emperors just yet, there was no doubt that his words now meant something. However, having newly risen to great emperor, he couldn't simply build his palace within Veluriyam Capital either. It would have to be built in a more isolated place. Thus, the Coiling Dragon Clan's main residence was being used as temporary quarters and hadn't been dismantled just yet.

After Jiang Chen finished participating in the crowning ceremony, he prepared to head to Pillfire City. Right now, the young lord residence still needed Huang'er to oversee things. Therefore, Jiang Chen ultimately decided to head to Pillfire City alone.

"Huang'er, the young lord residence still requires your management skills. Also, if Elder Shun were to return from Myriad Abyss Island, Veluriyam Capital would be his priority destination. I'm sorry for leaving you behind at Sacred Peafowl Mountain."

Huang'er was a sensible girl. She understood that currently, there really was no one but her who could manage the entire residence. Although both Gouyu and Xue Tong were very smart and hardworking, neither of them were qualified to manage a property at this level. It wasn't that their abilities were lacking, but that they came from a small place like the Eastern Kingdom. Although he had no qualms letting them manage a small group or two, this was a little beyond their scope of abilities. Everyone else's abilities and qualities were simply inferior to Huang'er's.

"Don't worry, Brother Chen. Huang'er will definitely keep everything in the residence neat and tidy. Come back soon, and take the utmost care of yourself. Please don't take risks, and should you run into certain matters, remember that we are all waiting for you to return," Huang'er reminded.

"Don't worry, I still have a lot of things that I haven't accomplished, and favors to repay. I'll stay safe," Jiang Chen said smilingly.

"Mm. Huang'er believes in Brother Chen."

Jiang Chen made sure to settle everything before his departure. Other than Huang'er and a few personal bodyguards, not even the servants of the residence knew that Jiang Chen was about to head out.

Once everything was ready, he decided to depart Veluriyam Capital the next morning. However, he received a visit the night before. Surprisingly, the visitor was none other than young master Ji San. The fellow had been cultivating in seclusion ever since he had exited the Veluriyam Pagoda. He hadn't come out of closed door cultivation even during Emperor Coiling Dragon's crowning ceremony. But here he was today.

"Congratulations for emerging, Brother Ji! It seems that your strength has improved tremendously." Jiang Chen only needed a single glance to notice that young master Ji San's strength had improved enormously.

"It's all thanks to your gift, brother. Speaking of which, I hear that you conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk but ultimately failed to obtain the empyrean decree and relic. What a shame. The mere thought of it makes me want to protest against this injustice!" Ji San wrung his hands and let out a long sigh.

"Didn't you almost conquer the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk too?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"That's hardly the right way to describe it. The only reason I said I 'almost' succeeded is because I didn't want to look too bad. The truth is, the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk was so mighty that I nearly broke down on the spot. I doubt I can endure the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk's pressure even if I had another ten years to cultivate." Ji San didn't try to hide his failures and spoke of everything honestly. "But you, you conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk, and failed at the last step. I can't help but feel sorry every time I think about it. Considering your level of talent and smarts, I've always thought that there is no better inheritor for the empyrean decree and relic than you. Unfortunately..." He couldn't let this go.

"It's alright. Everything in this world has its own fortune and destiny, so perhaps this empyrean decree and relic are meant for someone else. Speaking of your clan though, your fortune has been soaring up to the heavens lately. Not even the heavens can stop the Coiling Dragon clan now," Jiang Chen joked.

"Thank you, thank you. We still have to thank you for our fortune, however. The reason the Coiling Dragon Clan was able to reach where they are today, why the clan lord was able to ascend to great emperor realm, and why my martial dao potential has increased exponentially is all thanks to you. There are very, very few people who I've submitted to in my life, and you are one of them. You have my complete respect." Ji San might not be an arrogant person, but he was not lacking in a basic level of pride. However, there really was nothing that he could put on airs about before Jiang Chen.

"Ah, Brother Ji, is there something urgent you'd like to talk about since you've come at this time?"

Ji San smacked his head. "Man, my memory, I nearly forgot what I came here for. It's like this. Didn't you tell me about your father a few years ago? I've used every avenue the clan had to search for clues, and just as I exited my seclusion today, I learned that a man asked about a few things at an information station about four to five years ago. It seems like he was inquiring about your mother."

"What?!" Jiang Chen was shocked. "Can you tell me more?"

"The clan's nations and cities in Veluriyam Capital all have their own intelligence systems. This came from a station in a northmost country. A middle-aged man posted a bounty at their intelligence station a few years ago, searching for a woman born in the Upper Eight Regions who had wandered to the Myriad Domain when she was young and returned to the Upper Eight Regions some time later. The woman's real name was not available in the bounty. There was only her nickname, Ah Huan."

"Ah Huan?" Jiang Chen frowned. His father's letter hadn't mentioned his mother's name. In fact, there was almost no exact information about his mother at all in the letter. Jiang Chen knew that his father had been trying to stop him from coming to the Upper Eight Regions on purpose, which was why the letter had been vague. Therefore, he had absolutely no clue if this 'Ah Huan' was his mother and if the person who had posted the bounty was his father.

Still, Jiang Chen couldn't help but feel a bit spirited about the news. It was a clue regardless. Although searching after a clue like this was no different from finding a needle in a haystack, even the vaguest clue was still a clue. Maybe there were a lot of people who had wandered from the Upper Eight Regions

to the Myriad Domain when he was younger. Maybe the person who had issued a bounty to search for a woman wasn't his father at all. But Jiang Chen wasn't willing to let go of a chance like this.

"Tell me, Brother Ji. What is the exact location of that intelligence station?"

"Are you really going to seek out that place, brother?" Ji San couldn't help but ask.

"I must. I am the son of my father and mother. How can my mind be at peace if I were to ignore a clue like this?" Jiang Chen said firmly.

"Alright, I'll come with you tomorrow." Ji San volunteered himself.

But Jiang Chen said, "The Coiling Dragon Palace has just been built, and Emperor Coiling Dragon cannot lose a powerful helper like you. Greater numbers will not help solve this matter faster, so I believe I should go there alone and investigate slowly."

Ji San hastily said, "Family business is important, but your business, my brother, is important too. My family can function without me, but your business—"

"Brother Ji, I still think that this investigation should be conducted with a low profile." Jiang Chen turned him down gently. "You only need to tell me the address, that's all."

Hearing how firm Jiang Chen's tone was, Ji San sighed. "Alright. Take a look, the address and the map is inside this jade token. Do you remember the Silver Dragon Medallion the clan lord gave you last time? The medallion will be even more useful now. Once you're there, flash the Silver Dragon Medallion and you can get anything done."

The Silver Dragon Medallion represented the Coiling Dragon Clan. Back then, Jiang Chen had lent the medallion to Liu Wencai and little fatty Lu to ease their passage to Veluriyam Capital. It was thanks to the Silver Dragon Medallion that they were saved from a lot of unnecessary trouble.

Even if they did run into trouble, the medallion ensured that it would be nothing but a small scare. Apart from the seven great emperors, the Coiling Dragon Clan was the greatest power within a ten-thousand kilometer radius of Veluriyam Capital. Although the great emperor factions were powerful, they seldom interfered with the secular world. Therefore, their secular powers were actually weaker than the number one clan of Veluriyam Capital.

Later on, Liu Wencai had returned the Silver Dragon Medallion to Jiang Chen. He'd kept it with him since and had added the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's Progeny Feather Medallion as well.

Practicality wise, the latter was infinitely more useful than the Silver Dragon Medallion. There might be factions out there who weren't very familiar with the other great emperors in Veluriyam Capital, but Sacred Peafowl Mountain had been the most powerful faction to exist in Veluriyam Capital for almost a thousand years. They were the totem and emotional harbor of the people's hearts. However, the Progeny Feather Medallion might not necessarily be needed on smaller occasions. After all, it represented him, Jiang Chen. Revealing the Progeny Feather Medallion was the equivalent of revealing that he was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It would no doubt be detrimental to his attempts to keep a low profile.

Chapter 1024: The Prancing Pony

“Northern region of Veluriyam Capital, Bluesky Nation, Goldtower City...” By next morning, Jiang Chen had memorized all the roads and pathways on the map in the jade token. He kept a low profile when he left Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Once he’d exited the main territory of the Capital, he activated Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, which increased his speed by three times.

The feeling of absolute speed cheered him up a little. He was worried about his father, but there was little he could do. Worrying wouldn’t help the situation one bit. The only thing he could do right now was find his father as quickly as he could. Father, the heavens will surely favor a good person like you. Please be safe so that we may reunite one day. If someone really took mother away, you can rest assured that I will set things straight. It doesn’t matter how powerful mother’s family is. I will not turn a blind eye to this!

He was no longer the same person as before. He had improved by leaps and bounds and could now hold his own in the Upper Eight Regions. Also, he was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, the future ruler of Veluriyam Capital. Nobody would ever dare to ignore a person of his stature.

In the past, Jiang Chen would have taken three to five days to travel from Veluriyam Capital to Bluesky Nation. But now, he reached his destination in just half a day’s time. There was at least a hundred cities and nations, big and small, under Veluriyam Capital’s rule. Each nation or city was on par with a third-ranked sect. There were some even on the same level as a second-ranked sect, but not that many of them. Veluriyam Capital’s most important stronghold in the northern region was a notable nation on par with a second-ranked sect.

The gate checks were much more lenient this time because Jiang Chen was traveling to Goldtower City from the inner regions of Veluriyam Capital. When he entered the city, he realized how influential the Veluriyam Pagoda was in the entire region. There were also three pagodas in the middle of Goldtower City. They copied the layout of the Veluriyam Pagodas at a one-third fraction.

It seems that Bluesky Nation has a great sense of belonging with Veluriyam Capital. That’s a good thing. Jiang Chen immersed himself in the hustle and bustle of Goldtower City. It couldn’t be compared to the main district of Veluriyam Capital, but this was the most bustling city Jiang Chen had ever seen outside of the Capital.

The Prancing Pony was a second-rate inn in the city. It was a place mostly visited by wandering cultivators and located in a more isolated part of Goldtower City. It was built on a bigger piece of land because of the distance, which was why the inn grounds spanned further than most. When he arrived at the inn, he matched it with the map in his mind. Brother Ji said that the information station is right over here.

Jiang Chen was dressed plainly in a disguise. He seemed just like a common wandering cultivator. The associate didn’t seem particularly enthused when he saw him.

“Will you be staying? That’ll be three thousand spirit stones for a night in the sky grade rooms. There’s a five percent discount if you stay more than three days. The earth grade rooms are one thousand spirit stones a night, and the regular rooms are three hundred spirit stones a night. The same discount applies for all three rooms.” The associate had memorized his lines well, but there wasn’t the slightest hint of a professional smile on his face at all.

“I’m looking for someone.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

The associate immediately frowned when he heard those words. “You can register for bounty missions over there.” The Prancing Horse Inn ran as an inn and also as an information station. They also provided bounty and headhunting services.

“I’m looking for Niu Wuhua.”

“Niu... you’re looking for Steward Niu?!” The associate was surprised at first, but his surprise quickly turned into mockery. “There are at least ten cultivators looking for our shopkeepers every day. However... they don’t recognize these visitors most of the time. Esteemed guest, you’re not asking for our shopkeeper so you can ask for handouts, right?” It was evident that the associate didn’t think that Jiang Chen was qualified to meet the shopkeeper. He was judging based on appearances.

Jiang Chen smiled and didn’t mind. He swept his eyes across the counter to find someone easier to talk to. Someone dressed as a manager coincidentally walked out from a door behind the counter and heard the associate’s words. He frowned immediately. “Xiao Wang, you’re not minding your tongue again! How many times must I tell you to not be impudent and disrespectful to the customers?!”

The manager was clean shaven and seemed a little scholarly. He was much more likable than the associate.

“My sincerest apologies, dear customer. This associate is new and is still rather unfamiliar with our rules.” The middle-aged attendant apologized.

The Prancing Pony was a business. They would never want to offend their customers. Besides, one should never judge others by their appearances. There was no need to offend others, even if they were only a wandering cultivator. The world of martial dao was simply too chaotic. Offending someone could potentially result in a series of disasters. The associate had been too tactless and in fact usually offended at least five customers every day. He would have been fired from the inn in less than ten days if his brother-in-law wasn’t one of the shopkeepers here.

The associate felt humiliated after being reprimanded. “Manager Qiu! What do you mean by being new? I’ve been working here for at least eight months, alright? You have no right to say that I’m unworthy! This one here doesn’t know the rules, alright? All he talks about is looking for someone, and even mentioned Steward Niu by his name! I’m only teaching him manners! Is that such a big deal?”

Teaching him manners? Manager Qiu snorted coldly. How could he teach something he knew nothing about to others? That was the joke of the century! However, the manager didn’t want to pursue matters further in front of the customer. He didn’t want others to think that the inn had management issues.

“Xiao Wang, just let it go for now,” he responded noncommittally and looked back over. Manager Qiu promptly got back to Jiang Chen. “Honored customer, you’re here to see Steward Niu?”

Jiang Chen smiled, as he had a good impression of Manager Qiu. “Is Niu Wuhua the shopkeeper here? I’m not sure if we’re speaking about the same person.”

This complicated things a little for Manager Qiu. “Dear customer, why are you asking to see Steward Niu if you don’t know his identity?” he asked with a wry smile. Manager Qiu was starting to agree with Xiao Wang. Was this unremarkable guy here to ask for handouts? Steward Niu was well known for being

charitable. He had helped many with their financial woes and was loyal to his friends and generous to the needy. He was actually a heroic figure in Goldtower City.

“Is he here or not?” Jiang Chen was running out of patience.

Manager Qiu sighed gently. “It’s been a few days since he’s come to the inn.”

“Oh? Doesn’t he own this inn? Why wouldn’t he come? Has he run into some trouble?” Jiang Chen frowned.

“His inn? That won’t be true in a short while,” Xiao Wang interjected with a cold laugh.

Manager Qiu was obviously unamused by Xiao Wang. He conveyed his displeasure thoroughly with a cold hard glare. Xiao Wang was also incredibly thick faced and just leered back, as if he had done nothing wrong. He obviously didn’t respect Manager Qiu very much.

Jiang Chen sniffed coldly at Xiao Wang. “With an associate like him, I can understand why the Prancing Pony is going under.”

It was almost as though he had stepped on Xiao Wang’s tail. The associate recoiled in fury and began to throw out expletives like a firecracker, “You damn bastard! What are you trying to imply with that? Are you here to pick a fight? Somebody get in here! This man is here to pick a fight with the Prancing Pony!”

A group of fighters swarmed into the inn from behind after they heard Xiao Wang yell. They seemed incredibly vicious.

“Which bastard is it? Where’d he get all that brazenness from? How dare he cause trouble in our inn?!”

“Little brat! Is it you?!”

Manager Qiu immediately tried to resolve the situation. “Leave, all of you! This is the front of the inn! We’re here to do business! How can you be so rude in front of our guests!”

The fighters glanced at Manager Qiu, but none of them backed down. Xiao Wang yelled arrogantly, “This bastard is clearly not here to do business! I’m almost certain that he’s only here to pick a fight! Our inn’s reputation will be ruined if we don’t show him who’s boss!”

There wasn’t all that many people in the inn’s hall. A few wandering cultivators were there, but none of them wanted to be involved. They were only interested in watching from the sidelines.

Jiang Chen clicked his tongue disapprovingly. A manager powerless against a mere associate! Moreover, the fighters were ignoring the commands of a manager and instead following the orders of an associate. Management here was a mess. He began to doubt the authenticity of the inn. Did Brother Ji make a mistake? How can a place as disorganized as this have valuable information? It wasn’t that he didn’t trust Ji San. His first impression of the inn was simply rotten beyond belief.

The group of fighters was actually quite strong. Three of them were at initial sage realm, while the other three were at half-step sage realm. They were good enough to serve as punching bags. Jiang Chen’s gaze swept across the fighters. “What, are you going to fight me?” He sounded cold and ruthless.

“Brat, you’ve insulted our inn! I’ll let you go if you kneel before us and apologize.”

“If you don’t, we’ll break your legs and make you crawl out of the inn!”

Chapter 1025: Forcing Me to Beat You Up

Jiang Chen didn’t want to stir up too much trouble, but he wasn’t about to wait around for someone to step on his toes. The fact that such two-bit characters dared to be so boisterous right in front of him was slightly upsetting. Normally, he would have laughed it off. But he hadn’t just come in here for lodgings like he would have usually. He had worries weighing on his mind... It was a very poor time for anyone to get on his bad side. The act of provocation infuriated him.

“Crawl?” Jiang Chen smiled angrily. “Try and make me.”

“You son of a bitch! Pretending like you’re some big shot, huh?”

“Come on, buds, get ‘im!”

“Don’t hold back! Dead or maimed, count it all on me!”

Manager Qiu knew that the thugs weren’t exactly a friendly bunch. The Prancing Pony hadn’t been cluttered with such debris in the past, but the past several months had changed it for the worse. The atmosphere here was quite awful now—a public brawl was about to start! He was both pained and anxious. “Taking a step back is both the safest and wisest choice, friend. Why not retreat for a bit?” he called out.

He didn’t want guests to be injured at his tavern. Both the commotion and the inconvenience to the involved parties were very undesirable.

“Retreating? I don’t think I’d be allowed to leave, anyway.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Rather than that, I’d prefer to move forward.”

He really did stride up as he said this, footsteps crunching upon the floor. The thuggish cultivators grinned ferally to each other. They exchanged a few glances before pouncing in sudden synchronicity, charging at Jiang Chen all at once. They looked like a ragtag bunch that often fought together. The way they moved and attacked in unison was impeccable. In an instant, they shut off Jiang Chen’s every path. He was surrounded. Renewing his smile, Jiang Chen raised a foot. An indistinguishable shadow flickered across the space. And then—

Slap, slap, slap, slap, slap, slap! Six resounding slaps were followed by six agonizing shrieks. The six vicious cultivators were sent flying out the door like sandbags.

Thump, thump, thump. They fell on the ground heavily. Some clutched at their faces, others at their behinds, and none of them were left with a shred of composure. In fact, they looked positively helpless.

Manager Qiu’s mouth was agape with shock. He had foreseen the onset of a bloodied and battered scene when the six cultivators charged. There might have even been the drawing of blades. But the result was jaw-droppingly different. The six heinous thugs were punted like sacks of ballast, swatted out the door like flies. They hadn’t even reacted in time, much less been able to resist.

This... A sliver of curiosity crept into Manager Qiu’s eyes. They expressed a blend of wonderment, wariness, and worry. Associate Wang was white in the face and bitter in the mouth. He stared at Jiang Chen with a faceful of disbelief, his expression as uncomfortable as could be.

Jiang Chen looked at the associate through a half-smile. "I've seen my fair share of inns on my travels, but an associate who's more puffed-up than his employer is a first. I know you enjoy the feeling of pretending like you're the boss here, so go ahead. Go call the rest of your thugs out, hmm?"

Like most people of his ilk, Xiao Wang was a simple bully—strong against the meek, meek against the strong. The might that Jiang Chen had displayed at the drop of a hat scared him senseless. Call in reinforcements? He had them, but he had doubts that they would be able to beat his problem away.

The associate was both petrified and cursing loudly. Where did this bastard come from? He has such terrifying strength, but he pretends to be some nobody. He shouldn't prey on us weaklings like this... what's the point of him disguising himself in the first place? It was quite depressing, really. It was the first time in a long while that he had the chance to flex his muscles. He hadn't expected to do so and run into a brick wall.

"F... friend," the associate stuttered, his face all red, "don't... don't be too impulsive. I... I'm... I'm Grand Steward Dong's... brother-in-law, at the Prancing Pony."

"Grand Steward Dong?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

"Right, right, Grand Steward Dong Sheng." Xiao Wang unconsciously puffed out his chest as he said the name. There was a magic in it that gave him courage and resolve.

"Dong Sheng? Don't know him." Jiang Chen smiled impassively.

"You... you don't know Dong Sheng? But he's... the grand steward! That's impossible?" Xiao Wang's eyes widened. This was too incredible for him. How could this strange customer know Niu Wuhua, the steward's second-in-command, but not the boss in charge?

"Why should I know him?" Jiang Chen was incredulous himself. Beating up the miscreants had lightened his mood. This Xiao Wang was a harsh talker, but Jiang Chen wasn't going to give him the same kind of martial treatment. He had beaten up those thugs only because they had started the fight. There was no need to give someone who had only run his mouth a thrashing.

Manager Qiu noticed easily enough—the unassuming youth before him was a tough nut to crack. Worried that Xiao Wang's mouth would get either the tavern or the associate himself into trouble once more, he stepped out from behind the counter.

"I am the manager on duty today, friend. If you're looking for Niu Wuhua, I'll take you to him." Both his look and tone were sincere. The manager knew that upsetting the young man to any degree would be catastrophic for the Prancing Pony. Despite Jiang Chen's unremarkable appearance, he instinctively felt a strange power within the youth that was likely capable of burning the entire building to ash. It could have been a hallucination, of course, but Manager Qiu generally trusted his intuition implicitly. Therefore, he saw no reason to risk crisis over a few trifles.

"Manager Qiu, I respect that you're a man with some common sense. I'm looking for Niu Wuhua. I don't know anyone else, nor am I interested in them. If you know where he is, please take me to him. Don't worry, I'll make it worth your while." He grinned winningly.

Manager Qiu, meanwhile, was here purely to avoid future conflict. "That would be part of my job description, friend." He tried to return the smile, but it came out as more of a grimace. "I'd do it whether you made it worth my while or not. This way, please."

"Hold on!" Xiao Wang piped up, slamming the counter angrily.

Manager Qiu's eyes looked at the associate chillingly. "Are you going to continue being so impudent, Xiao Wang?"

Xiao Wang was full of suspicions about every which thing. In fact, he suspected that Manager Qiu might have invited the youth to act out the scene, with him as the audience.

"Why are you taking him away like this, Manager Qiu? He was boisterously rude and even harmed our people. Are you even part of our tavern? Are you favoring outsiders instead?" His tone became more and more harsh.

"Absurd!" Manager Qiu's own face fell. As an honest gentleman, he had no interest in debating with arbitrary ruffians like the associate. Taking in a deep breath, he turned to Jiang Chen again. "Friend, he's just arrogantly abusing his own position. He's a youth that hasn't experienced life's difficulties. Let's not take him too seriously, eh?"

He'd said this in a very low voice. Xiao Wang failed to overhear any of it, regardless of his eagerness to eavesdrop.

"I wasn't going to in the first place. There's no reason for me to teach an employee anything on your behalf." Jiang Chen smiled heartily. He strode out the Prancing Horse's door as he said this, following closely behind the manager.

"Don't you dare run, kid!" Xiao Wang was at his wit's end.

Jiang Chen paused. The manager was staring him with an almost begging look, and he couldn't respond with much else than a wry smile. "I'll give you some face, Manager Qiu."

"If you know Steward Niu, then please give him face instead, friend. Xiao Wang is a rude one indeed, but he was put here intentionally by Grand Steward Dong Sheng to stir up trouble. To put it plainly, he wants to supplant Steward Niu and force Steward Niu to give up his portion of the business. That way, Grand Steward Dong Sheng will become the tavern's only boss."

"So the Prancing Horse has two owners, then?"

"There are a few more than that, but they're the most prominent. Grand Steward Dong Sheng has a forty percent stake, and so does Steward Niu. The remaining twenty belongs to the other few bosses combined."

"You have some stake yourself, don't you, Manager Qiu?" Jiang Chen asked with a half-smile. He had observed easily enough that the manager was more mindful about the tavern's business than most. Without his own horse in the race, there was no reason for him to be so tense or careful. Grand Steward Dong Sheng's brother-in-law was the troublemaker in this situation. Someone not directly benefiting from a solution wouldn't make an enemy of someone like him.

"You have sharp eyes. May I ask how you're related to Steward Niu?" Manager Qiu inquired curiously.

“We’re not related.” Jiang Chen shook his head. “Though I suppose we might be, after today.”

These words confused Manager Qiu quite a bit. He had no idea what the young man meant.

Jiang Chen followed the manager on a thirty-minute walk to Niu Wuhua’s private residence. The opulence of the place belied how much wealth the steward was raking in. Its craftsmanship was artful and luxurious. A lot of work had been put into the home.

The servants and inhabitants of the residence were wary of the fact that Manager Qiu had led a stranger here. The Prancing Pony was in a complicated state of affairs. There were visible flashes of steel beneath a quiet surface.

“You’re not here without good reason, Manager Qiu. What have you come for today?” The guard-captain of the residence had the surname Niu as well. His name was Niu Ben.

“Captain Niu, this friend asked to see Steward Niu. He’s had a misunderstanding at the tavern with Xiao Wang, and I’m worried that it’ll escalate into something bigger. That’s why I took him here straightaway. Please excuse the lack of notice.” Manager Qiu was a polite man, measured in every regard.

Captain Niu scrutinized Jiang Chen cautiously. “Do you know the steward that lives here, friend?”

“I don’t know him, nor he I,” Jiang Chen smiled, “but maybe he’ll know what this is.” He took out a box as he said this. “Take this inside. Let him have a look at it.”

Chapter 1026: The Arrival of Steward Niu Hoped Savior

The box looked very average. Nothing could be assumed from its appearance. However, Captain Niu was experienced and knowledgeable. He noticed that Jiang Chen’s bearing and manners didn’t quite match his ordinary appearance. Normally, the only explanation for this was that this was a purposeful disguise. Captain Niu didn’t dare slight Jiang Chen. He accepted the box and quickly delivered it inside.

Ultimately, Steward Niu was just a shopkeeper in the Prancing Pony. He wasn’t actually an all too important figure of Goldtower City. That was why the people of Niu Manor didn’t dare act too ostentatiously. When Manager Qiu saw the calm smile on Jiang Chen’s face, he couldn’t help but ask, “Did you store a treasure in that box, my friend? Are you planning to use it to bribe Steward Niu? Listen, Steward Niu is a person who’s loyal to his friends and generous to the needy. He seldom accepts gifts from his friends.”

Jiang Chen shook his head with a wry smile on his face. “I doubt he’ll dare to accept the box even if I did mean to gift it to him.”

Manager Qiu looked stunned. That was a bold claim. The steward wouldn’t dare accept this gift? Was there a gift in this world that one wouldn’t dare accept? While Manager Qiu still wore a puzzled look on his face, a series of rapid footsteps suddenly rang from inside Niu Manor. Steward Niu’s voice could be heard while he was still far, far away. His voice sounded a little trembling and even fearful. “Where? Where is he? Where is my important guest? Captain Niu, how foolish can you be, how dare you slight my important guest? Foolish, how foolish!”

Manager Qiu was surprised at hearing Steward Niu's voice long before he showed up and was even more stunned by his words. What did he mean by that? His important guest? Steward Niu seldom criticized his subordinates, much less his most competent subordinate, Captain Niu.

In fact, he couldn't remember Captain Niu ever receiving a single word of criticism. Just how important was this guest to make Steward Niu lose so much of his composure?

Manager Qiu's curiosity was greatly piqued. As of late, the Prancing Pony's situation was quite precarious, and it filled Manager Qiu's heart with worry. Although his share in the Prancing Pony was small, this place held a lifetime of livelihood and hope to him. That was why he didn't wish to see Grand Steward Dong Sheng take the inn all for himself. Therefore, emotionally speaking, Manager Qiu was on Niu Wuhua side. Still, just who was this young man to make Steward Niu rush out so urgently in welcome and nerves?

While Manager Qiu was still caught up with surprise, Niu Wuhua's fat, round body finally 'rolled' to a stop. When he saw Jiang Chen and Manager Qiu, Niu Wuhua immediately went over to the former. "Important guest, what an important guest! I never would have imagined that I would have the honor of meeting the disciple of a great emperor faction in my lifetime. If I may ask, are you the legendary young master Ji San who nearly conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk?"

Jiang Chen nearly broke out in laughter when he heard this question. Young master Ji San? This Niu Wuhua had actually mistaken him for Ji San! But then he remembered that he had changed his appearance. Niu Wuhua has probably never seen Ji San in his life. Therefore, he could only go off of first impressions.

Jiang Chen was just about to deny it when he realized that pretending to be young master Ji San... wasn't exactly a bad idea. He smiled faintly and didn't deny the name. Knowing Ji San, he wouldn't feel unhappy even if he learned that Jiang Chen had pretended to be him. On the contrary, he would find the situation very interesting.

Young master Ji San was incredibly well known as of late. In Veluriyam Capital and all of the territories it ruled, he was the hottest topic, second only to young lord Zhen. It would in fact, be difficult for this genius who had nearly conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk not to become famous. After all, young master Ji San's achievement had surpassed all other young lord level geniuses' achievements except young lord Zhen's.

That was why Manager Qiu had trembled all over when he heard the name "young master Ji San". His bewildered look had immediately turned into one of great adoration. Captain Niu was obviously stunned by Niu Wuhua's words too. What? Young master Ji San? The chosen successor of the eighth great emperor, Emperor Coiling Dragon? The top-rate genius who had nearly conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk? Had he truly closed the door on such a person just now?

Captain Niu felt a chill grip his heart. He was filled with fear and worry. Had "young master Ji San" been someone else, he would have only been doing his job in keeping this person outside of the door. But this was a young lord genius from Veluriyam Capital! This was an important figure who would almost never make an appearance in Goldtower City, someone as unapproachable as a god.

Niu Wuhua thought that he had guessed correctly since Jiang Chen didn't object to the appellation. He immediately knelt. "Please forgive me for not coming out sooner to welcome you, young lord."

Captain Niu was dumbstruck by this scene himself. He subconsciously knelt and saluted. "I'm sorry to have disrespected you, young lord. I am blind to not have realized your arrival."

Manager Qiu's knees also turned weak. "Young lord... my eyes are just as blind. How blind I am!"

Jiang Chen smiled. "There is no need for such courtesy, everyone. I haven't come here to meet Steward Niu as a young lord today. If it suits you, shall we speak inside your manor?"

Niu Wuhua stood up and spoke respectfully, "Of course, of course, please come in, young lord. Niu Manor has seldom welcomed such an esteemed guest, so please allow me to show my respects, young lord."

Manager Qiu was indescribably stunned too. He finally understood why the young man was as confident as he was, and why he hadn't even batted an eyelid at Xiao Wang's taunts. He had beaten up the thugs and claimed that it was of no consequence. He didn't even feel a bit of guilt or fear after beating them up. So this was the reason. He was a young lord. Would a young lord of a great emperor faction be afraid of a mere shopkeeper? Even if they were a power that was three to five times bigger than the Prancing Pony, what difference would it make? They could still be crushed as easily as an ant.

A young lord... Manager Qiu was extremely moved by this turn of events. He was afraid, but he also felt vaguely excited. His fear came from the natural fear of those with great power and influence. His excitement came from the baseless assumption that the arrival of a great emperor disciple might change the fate of the Prancing Pony. If his eyes weren't deceiving him, could young master Ji San be the reinforcement Niu Wuhua had invited to save the Prancing Pony? Was he here to support Niu Wuhua and take that Grand Steward Dong Sheng down a peg?

If this really was the case, then it was nearly impossible for Dong Sheng to devour Niu Wuhua's shares for himself. He might even lose all the shares he currently possessed. Dong Sheng no doubt had a few backers of his own, but if Niu Wuhua's backer was a great emperor faction, then all the backers that Dong Sheng had found in Bluesky Kingdom and Goldtower City would amount to nothing. Even the monarch of Bluesky Kingdom had to take orders from the ruler of Veluriyam Capital, Emperor Peafowl himself.

Moreover, the Prancing Pony was hardly the best tavern that existed in Goldtower City, much less in the vast territory of Veluriyam Capital. Therefore, Dong Sheng's backer couldn't possibly be the monarch of Bluesky Kingdom. Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu carefully and apprehensively attended to Jiang Chen.

He inquired about their troubles after seeing the look of deep worry on their faces. And so the duo told Jiang Chen about the grand steward's ambition to buy out their shares in the Prancing Pony at a cheap price and take everything for himself.

Dong Sheng had not only utilized both legal and illegal channels in order to fulfill his ambitions, but he had also recruited his wife's younger brother. That Xiao Wang was definitely a qualified shit-stirrer. He had managed to create all kinds of trouble and mire the Prancing Pony in a foul atmosphere in just a few months' time. Worse, this tactic was incredibly effective. Niu Wuhua had grown so angry that he'd almost vomited blood. He had no choice but to rest for a few days to sort out his feelings.

Niu Wuhua thought that he might die from an excess of anger if he were to visit the Prancing Pony every day. Although he had employed some countermeasures of his own, he couldn't defeat Dong Sheng. Therefore, he had been pushed around a lot recently. The inn's business had also suffered a devastating decline.

Manager Qiu was one of the few people who shared Niu Wuhua's feelings. Although his business share was small, he sympathized greatly with Niu Wuhua's plight. The Prancing Pony was theirs, and yet they were being forced to sell it to others at a low price. After they had refused, the other party even used all kinds of shameless tactics to force their hand.

Dong Sheng had nearly succeeded. It was during this moment that Niu Wuhua had coincidentally learned that Emperor Coiling Dragon was investigating something. That was why Niu Wuhua had tentatively sent the news to Emperor Coiling Dragon's faction.

Young master Ji San had sent this request through his clan's channels and Niu Wuhua just so happened to see it one day. It reminded him of an old incident from a few years ago that matched many of the details described in the request. That was how Niu Wuhua had sent out the gesture of goodwill in hopes of finding a powerful backer. If he could secure a relationship with the Coiling Dragon faction, the Prancing Pony's business would be secure for at least ten thousand years. He might even be able to force the Grand Steward Dong Sheng to spit out his own business share.

Jiang Chen finally learned the ins and outs of everything after listening to Niu Wuhua's explanation and Manager Qiu's occasional input. He wasn't really willing to interfere because this was the Prancing Pony's internal matters, but if Niu Wuhua abandoned himself to despair because of this, it was likely that he wouldn't do his best with what Jiang Chen asked of him. Jiang Chen immediately flashed a faint smile. "There are rules to doing business. If you don't want to sell your shares to the grand steward, there's no way he can force you to do so. Veluriyam Capital's laws exist for a reason. All those who break the law shall be punished."

Although it wasn't a promise, it was close to one already. Niu Wuhua was overjoyed when he heard this. Manager Qiu's eyes were also alit. It was obvious that they had found a trace of hope.

"If you'll uphold justice, then Dong Sheng wouldn't dare act wantonly even if he is powerful beyond measure, young lord." Niu Wuhua's face lit up with delight.

Manager Qiu also said sincerely, "Please uphold justice, young lord."

Jiang Chen smiled. "I have need of you, so if you truly don't wish to sell your shares to the Dong Family, then no one can take them from you. I can guarantee you this at the very least."

Forget that he was actually the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, even if he was just the young lord of the Coiling Dragon Clan, it was still enough power to settle this business. Even if Dong Sheng had all the power in the world, there was no way he could challenge the disciple of a great emperor faction.

Chapter 1027: Searching For News of Parents

Why had Niu Wuhua come out so hastily to welcome Jiang Chen? He'd seen the Silver Dragon Medallion and knew that it was second to only Emperor Coiling Dragon's Golden Dragon Medallion. That was why

he didn't suspect Jiang Chen's identity at all. He knew that this was an important figure and backer who could change his fate.

Although Manager Qiu guessed from Jiang Chen's appearance that he was probably an extraordinary young man, he didn't believe him entirely. A bit of doubt and suspicion still lingered in his eyes. Naturally, his suspicion didn't escape Jiang Chen's attention. He smiled casually at Manager Qiu.

"Manager Qiu, you seem to be suffering from some hidden illness. Did you experience an inner energy reversal three to five years ago? And did you almost experience a cultivation deviation?"

Manager Qiu's entire body shook when he heard this. An astonished light filled his eyes. Only a few people close to him knew about this matter, much less an outsider. But this young master Ji San had figured out this many of his symptoms with just a few glances. Just... just how great were his observation skills?

"It wasn't really a big issue, but unfortunately you didn't resolve it in time. That's why it became a substantial problem after a few years. For the last few months, you've realized that your cultivation efforts have been useless, haven't you?"

Niu Wuhua couldn't help but cast Manager Qiu a slightly surprised glance. The manager's face was pale white, like he had just seen a ghost. Jiang Chen smiled, knowing that he had struck the most sensitive spot in the manager's heart. He immediately stopped talking.

Manager Qiu trembled all over. He knew very well that his actual condition was even worse than what young master Ji San had described. As of late, the troubles he had encountered during his cultivation and business made every day feel like a living hell.

Manager Qiu's face contorted and spasmed. He couldn't stop himself from asking in a shaky voice, "Young master, can my illness still be treated?"

It was obvious that he feared for his life. Jiang Chen stared at Manager Qiu with a half-smile. "Naturally, there is a way to treat your illness. However..."

Manager Qiu collapsed on his knees before Jiang Chen could say another word. "Please be merciful and show me the light, young master."

The Prancing Pony had no relations to the Coiling Dragon Clan. Therefore, Manager Qiu didn't count as a subordinate of the Coiling Dragon Clan. On the other hand, Niu Wuhua was slightly related to the clan. His status was just too low that he'd almost never had an opportunity to curry favor with the clan directly. Right now, Jiang Chen's appearance in the guise of young master Ji San invigorated him greatly. He thought that his savior had arrived. That was why Niu Wuhua had acted as humbly as possible. He knew exactly what kind of situation he was in.

He couldn't help but give Manager Qiu some guidance when he noticed that the manager was still somewhat confused. "Manager Qiu, you're a smart person. It wasn't easy for you to get to where you are now. However, if you have a better backer, I am sure that you can climb even higher, considering your abilities. The young master has pointed out your problems and shown you the light, so what else are you waiting for?"

Manager Qiu was a smart person to begin with, so he grasped the situation after Niu Wuhua's advice. He hastily knelt on the floor. "Young master, I am a foolish man. If you are willing to enlighten me, I will give my life to the Coiling Dragon Clan. You will be my savior, young master."

Niu Wuhua was also staring at Jiang Chen with hope and expectation. He held a genuine appreciation of Manager Qiu. Although they were friendly with each other, they weren't particularly close because they didn't belong to the same faction. However, if they could solidify their alliance through a connection with young master Ji San, then their chances against Grand Steward Dong Sheng would be much greater. Plus, young master Ji San would be around to help as well.

"Please, get up so we may speak properly. Your illness isn't too serious nor too minor. It depends on who your doctor is. I will write out a prescription. Take your medicine as suggested, and if you experience any lingering effects, you may visit me in Veluriyam Capital. That being said, I believe your illness can be cured completely."

Be it the nations or the cities under Veluriyam Capital's rule, they all greatly admired the rich and powerful of Veluriyam Capital. The Coiling Dragon Clan had been unapproachable even when it was just the number one clan of Veluriyam Capital, much less the great emperor faction it is now. Therefore, Manager Qiu didn't suspect Jiang Chen's words at all. Rather, he was quite filled with joy.

"Thank you, young master. I must have done much good in the past to be saved by the young master himself. From today onwards, I shall obey all of young master's commands."

Niu Wuhua smiled. "Manager Qiu, this is a favor that others cannot earn even if they wanted to. You are right to say that this is a fortunate occurrence."

Manager Qiu nodded repeatedly. Jiang Chen grabbed a brush and paper before writing out a prescription. "Take this two times a day. I guarantee that you'll be cured three months later."

Manager Qiu's illness wasn't really all that serious; it was just that he had no idea how to cure it. As the saying went, education separates the fool and the wise. Jiang Chen looked at Niu Wuhua again and said, "Shopkeeper Niu, do you still remember the details of that information?"

Niu Wuhua snapped to attention since Jiang Chen had moved onto the main topic. He thought carefully before responding, "I believe this incident should have happened six, seven, or even eight years ago. I don't quite remember the details because it has been a very long time. However, I recalled that a man had posted a bounty here because I was reviewing some old missions a few days ago. I thought that it was somewhat related to the clues the clan had asked us to investigate."

"Do you still remember what the man who posted the bounty looked like? What exactly did the bounty say?" Jiang Chen worked hard to suppress the excitement in his heart.

"He was a vigorous, middle-aged man. His cultivation wasn't very impressive, and the reward for the bounty wasn't very high either. I vaguely remember that he had a black mole at the bottom right corner of his mouth."

A black mole? Jiang Chen was moved. He remembered clearly that his father had a black mole at the bottom right corner of his mouth. This revelation made his blood boil with excitement. He was almost certain now that this person was his father, Jiang Feng.

“Do you still have the bounty he posted back then? Show me.”

“Yes, I do. I’ve already made a copy of it. Please, have a read.” Although Niu Wuhua didn’t know why young master Ji San was so concerned about this bounty, he could clearly feel the deep emotions behind his inquiry. Since the reward wasn’t high, the contents of the mission were very simple. The issuer wanted to know if a baby girl had been abandoned in the Myriad Domain by any Upper Eight Regions power within the past fifty years and had been brought back twenty to thirty years later.

The content of the mission was somewhat vague. Jiang Chen read through it a couple of times, and the more he looked at it, the likelier he thought that it was his father’s. In this lifetime, he was twenty plus years old. If his parents had been very young when they’d given birth to him, they should be around their forties at most. Therefore, the request for information about a baby girl abandoned in the Myriad Domain fifty years ago did fit his mother’s supposed age. The specification that she had been taken back to the Upper Eight Regions later also fit.

All these details proved that the mission had most likely been posted by his father, and the small bounty indicated that his father had been rather poor at the time. As a result, no one had accepted the mission. It was very likely that the reason the mission remained untouched even though seven or eight years had passed was because the reward had been too small.

Seeing that Jiang Chen was quietly pondering, Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu dared not let out a sound.

I was in Veluriyam Capital for about three years and for another five in the Veluriyam Pagoda. The Eternal Celestial Capital and Great Scarlet Mid Region likely hadn’t started hunting for me when the mission was posted, had they? If the hunt had started around that time, Jiang Chen was sure that his father wouldn’t have been able to hold himself back. He wouldn’t have the mind to post that bounty either. In that case, seven to eight years was actually a conservative estimate. The bounty had likely been posted almost ten years ago.

Ten years had passed since the bounty had been posted, and Jiang Chen dared not make any further inferences. Although his father had some money with him, he’d probably ran out on the way from Skylareland Kingdom to the Upper Eight Regions. Without money, his father’s situation could only be worse in a place like the Upper Eight Regions. Jiang Chen’s heart burned with anxiety at the thought of this.

“Shopkeeper Niu, were there any new clues regarding this mission?” Jiang Chen suddenly looked at Niu Wuhua and asked in a complicated tone.

Niu Wuhua shook his head. “The person who posted it never showed up afterwards. That being said, I believe that I’ve heard a similar story somewhere.”

“Hmm?” Jiang Chen raised his eyebrow. “You mean the story of an Upper Eight Regions baby being abandoned in the Myriad Domain?”

Niu Wuhua seemed worried that he might say the wrong thing. He only nodded after thinking for a moment. “It’s just gossip that I picked up somewhere. I can’t say for sure whether it’s actually true.”

“Tell me.” Jiang Chen shot him an encouraging look.

“Um. I accidentally came upon this during an outing. I was executing a mission and had to pass through the Tilted Moon Region. It was there that I heard that a holy maiden of the Moon God Sect, a first-rank sect in the Tilted Moon Region, had once gone missing.”

“Moon God Sect? Tilted Moon Region?” Jiang Chen’s eyebrows moved. “Is this reliable?”

“I don’t know if it’s reliable. I heard the rumor in a pub. The Moon God Sect seemed to have rediscovered their holy maiden, but the holy maiden felt no sense of belonging in the Moon God Sect. Sadly, this holy maiden was tied to the Moon God Sect’s fortunes, so opinions regarding the holy maiden were incredibly divided. Some people hated her deeply because they thought that a holy maiden who had lost her purity while astray in a lower region should be punished by death from a thousand cuts. On the other hand, some people thought she was the key to maintaining the Moon God Sect’s fortunes, and that killing her would be the equivalent of slaughtering their sect’s fortunes...” Niu Wuhua’s words caused Jiang Chen’s insides to churn with emotion.

Chapter 1028: A Way to Repay a Favor Once and For All

Regardless of the reliability of this news or whether it was even relevant, it was still very important. Jiang Chen couldn’t ignore it no matter what.

“Shopkeeper Niu, was this mission widespread?” Jiang Chen couldn’t help but ask.

“the Tilted Moon Region is situated near the northwest side of Upper Eight Regions, so few people in Veluriyam Capital knew about this. However, this mission is somewhat known to the regions northward of Upper Eight Regions. Of course, this was rather small news, so no one thought much of it even if it was brought up during a conversation. The only reason it was even mentioned was because a first rank sect was involved. Had the sect been a second or third rank sect, then no one would mention it at all.”

A first rank sect normally earned more attention because there weren’t many real first rank powers in the Upper Eight Regions. Veluriyam Capital was located to the south in the Upper Eight Regions, whereas the Tilted Moon Region was situated at the northwest of the Upper Eight Regions. There was around 300,000 miles distance in terms of a straight line between the two regions. If someone were to travel on foot from Veluriyam Capital to the Tilted Moon Region, they would have to walk for at least a million miles. If one were to factor in potential mishaps one during the journey as well, then it was literally impossible for a normal person to travel from Veluriyam Capital to the Tilted Moon Region without travelling for at least three to five years.

Jiang Chen thought about this carefully. “Are you sure that you’ve heard nothing about the person who posted the bounty since?”

“Mm, I have heard nothing about him since. He’s probably a long way away from Veluriyam Capital already. His cultivation isn’t very strong, and considering his strength he would probably have to travel at least seven to eight years before he could reach the Tilted Moon Region. If he was looking out for the holy maiden of Moon God Sect, then his final destination must be the Tilted Moon Region, right?”

Because he had no idea who this person was to young master Ji San, Niu Wuhua didn’t dare make a careless comment. Frankly speaking, he quite doubted that the poster of this bounty could make it to the Tilted Moon Region alive. To travel from Bluesky Nation to the Tilted Moon Region was to traverse more than half of the Upper Eight Regions. It was just too unlikely for a weak cultivator to reach the

Tilted Moon Region without running into any troubles at all. The chances of success were almost nonexistent.

Moreover, the poster had obviously never heard of this bit regarding Moon God Sect. Therefore, he might not even be aware that he should search travel to the Tilted Moon Region. Jiang Chen was content with what he'd learned from Niu Wuhua even though the intelligence was somewhat indefinite. It had all happened far too long ago. That Niu Wuhua even remembered some of it was quite impressive already. It would be entirely normal if he'd forgotten about the details of a small bounty from almost ten years ago.

The Tilted Moon Region, Moon God Sect. Jiang Chen quietly repeated the words to himself. He had already made up his mind to check out the place. He had to pass through Pillfire City if he wished to make it to the Tilted Moon Region anyway. Pillfire City was situated at the north side of Upper Eight Regions, whereas the Tilted Moon Region was situated to the northwest of Pillfire City.

Of course, he could also choose not to pass through Pillfire City. There was a desolate, ten-thousand mile stretch of mountain ranges to the south of the Tilted Moon Region. If he chose to go down that path, he would have to pass through the desolate and uninhabited mountain ranges. Mountain ranges like these were normally ripe with all sorts of monsters and extremely dangerous to say the least. Therefore, most cultivators who wished to go to the Tilted Moon Region chose to pass through Pillfire City.

Jiang Chen had already planned out the route in his head. He would head to Pillfire City first and save Mu Gaoqi. Then, he would go northwest to the Tilted Moon Region and inquire about the Moon God Sect.

"Steward Niu, your intel is very useful to me. Where does Grand Steward Dong Sheng live right now?" Jiang Chen asked.

Niu Wuhua felt a spike of joy when he heard Jiang Chen asking about Dong Sheng's dwelling. He knew that the young master was going to defend him. For a moment, he was so excited that he wasn't sure what to do. The only thing he thought as of late were ways to reject Dong Sheng's demands. He hadn't actually thought of plotting against the grand steward at all. Therefore, he was actually at a loss when Jiang Chen asked him about it.

"Tell me, what is your bottom line?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

"My bottom line is to protect my share and not let Dong Sheng take everything. Plus, he's absolutely unqualified to run Prancing Horse Inn's business."

Manager Qiu also echoed these sentiments. "The grand steward's actions showed that he's too selfish. He allows his idiotic brother-in-law to cause chaos in Prancing Horse Inn just for the sake of his own goals. The current inn is a foul place to be in."

"If that's so, then let us have Dong Sheng surrender his own share," Jiang Chen said indifferently.

"Ah?" Niu Wuhua was stunned by these words.

Manager Qiu's brain also blanked out for a moment as his mouth fell open. Have Dong Sheng give up his own share? Wasn't this turnaround a little too abrupt? He was demanding they hand over their share. But the young master was going to pull off this instead? Was it even possible?

Niu Wuhua smiled wryly. “Young master, that Dong Sheng... seems to have some powerful backers. I hear that the vice city lord of Goldtower City has a son who’s close to Dong Sheng. It appears that they’re sworn brothers.”

“Vice city lord?” Jiang Chen looked startled. “Does the vice city lord have the final say in Goldtower City?”

Niu Wuhua started, then shook his head subconsciously. “Not really, the city lord is normally the one who has the final say, although that is not the case sometimes. After all, this is Bluesky Nation. The monarch of Bluesky Nation is the one who has the final say when major events are involved.”

“Then there’s no problem, is there? If the vice city lord himself can’t decide what goes in Goldtower City, then what can the son of this vice city lord possibly do?” Jiang Chen smiled. “How about this. I’ll visit Bluesky Nation’s palace myself while the rest of you wait here for my good news.” A moment of thought later, he ultimately decided to settle this matter once and for all. He did owe Niu Wuhua a favor, so it was his responsibility to settle this properly and take care of it once and for all. Judging from Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu’s tone, Dong Sheng was probably younger and wilder than they were. He was no slouch when it came to socialization given his sworn brotherhood with the son of the vice city lord. He must be a silver tongued and cunning person.

If a person like this saw hope, he would work towards his goal by crook or by hook. Even if Jiang Chen forced him to cough out his business shares, he would absolutely cause trouble for Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu in the future. Therefore, simple oppression wouldn’t work in this case. Jiang Chen had to find a way to scare Dong Sheng so much that he couldn’t even muster the thought of resistance. That was the only way he could settle this matter once and for all.

The royal palace of Bluesky Nation was heavily guarded. At the Eastern Palace where the crown prince lived, a few sorry-looking pill masters were walking out the place dejected and depressed. They looked like they couldn’t wait to sprout wings and fly away from this place.

“Trash, all of you are trash! How can the nation achieve great things if you are the kind of people we keep?” A young man with flawless wearing official, ceremonious robes and a golden crown yelled angrily at the group of pill masters. The young man rained a torrent of abuses on the elderly pill masters, but not one of them dared to rebuke him. Instead, they kept their heads bowed and walked outside.

“Your Highness, they’ve already done all they can. It is not their fault that the pill is too difficult to concoct,” an elderly voice advised.

It was only then the young man stopped swearing and waved his hands impatiently. “Get out, get as far away from me as you can!” The pill masters immediately poured out of the palace as if pardoned from a terrible crime.

The young man’s kindly face turned beet red with anger when he saw their reactions. He sighed towards an elder. “Grand Tutor, it seems that I have to make a trip to Veluriyam Capital. There is only so much the pill kings of Bluesky Nation can do. I hear Veluriyam Capital has produced many amazing pill kings as of late, and the new young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain is even heralded as a future pill emperor of the pill industry. Even the invincible legend of Pillfire City was defeated by this young lord.”

The elder smiled wryly. "Your Highness, Bluesky Nation is but one of the many nations ruled by Veluriyam Capital. I doubt we can even be compared to those first rate great clans. No problems will arise if you simply wish to visit the pill kings of Veluriyam Capital, but if you wish to visit young lord Zhen, I fear that..."

The elder didn't continue, but his unsaid words were clear. You may be the prince of Bluesky Nation, but you're still not important enough. Even the monarch of Bluesky Nation couldn't meet young lord Zhen any time he wanted to.

The prince seemed to be aware that he wasn't important enough. "It's not like I'm visiting him out of selfish interest." He sighed. "Everybody says that that young lord Zhen is a kind, friendly person who respects the wise. These days you can hear everyone under Veluriyam Capital's rule praising him everywhere you go. I hear it so often that you can see calluses growing on my ears. So there must be some truth behind those praises, right? There's no reason for him to close the door on my face, is there?"

While they were speaking, a palace attendant suddenly rushed in to report. "Your Highness, a strange person requests to see you outside the entrance of the Eastern Palace."

"A strange person?" The prince looked confused. "Who is it?"

"This servant doesn't know." The palace attendant looked just as confused.

"What? You came in to report to me without even checking who he is? And, how did he make it to the Eastern Palace?" The inner section of the palace was heavily guarded. It was impossible for a stranger of unknown origins to make it all the way to the Eastern Palace.

So where had this strange person come from?

The palace attendant turned deathly pale after hearing this. He stuttered. "... I'll tell the guards to chase him out right away."

"A moment, Your Highness." The elder suddenly spoke. "The fact that this person can come all the way without being detected proves that he also has the ability to come and go as he wishes. He sent someone in to report his arrival means that he isn't entirely inconsiderate. Since we may not necessarily be able to chase away someone like him, we may as well meet with him instead."

This old man was the prince's teacher. Therefore, the crown prince was more receptive towards his advice.

"Send him in." A moment of thought later, the prince decided that his teacher's words made a lot of sense.

A while later, an average-looking fighter strode into the hall. When he saw the prince, he smiled and clasped his hands together carelessly. "Well met, crown prince of Bluesky Nation."

The palace attendants next to the prince immediately scolded the newcomer when they saw how rude he was.

"Insolence! Why do you not bow immediately when you see the prince?"

“Where do you come from, barbarian?! How dare you act like this before the prince?”

Chapter 1029: Turning Stone to Gold, Trash to Treasure

Jiang Chen paid the guards no mind. His only response was a faint smile as he looked piercingly at the crown prince. His expression was relaxed as he spoke. “Are you interested in a private chat, Your Highness?”

Though the stranger had acted brusquely, the crown prince noticed his composure under the royal guards’ pressure. That alone was enough to mark this man as extraordinary. Captains of the crown prince’s personal guard were usually mid rank emperor realm cultivators. Furthermore, the guardsmen were all at least sky sage realm, with the slightly better ones half-step emperor realm and a few even mid rank emperor realm. A retinue like this was more than enough to render the common man incapable of controlling his bladder in fear.

The crown prince’s hesitation made Jiang Chen smile. “As Veluriyam Capital’s line of defense on the northern border, Bluesky Nation is a principality of considerable importance. You are its crown prince, are you not? Surely you have more courage than this.” A provocation would usually do the trick.

“Who are you, sir?” The prince’s face chilled. “For someone who now stands in my palace, you are being exceptionally discourteous. There is no need for me to prove to you how much courage I have. I don’t even know where you hail from. Am I supposed to be polite to someone who shows a lack thereof?”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “Ah, absolutely. You are the crown prince of a great nation, to be accorded a certain degree of respect. However, that doesn’t mean it is deserved from everyone you meet.”

His words were so authoritative that everyone on the prince’s side did a double take.

There were no fools here. Everyone sensed that the strange youth likely had extraordinary origins.

“Do you come from Veluriyam Capital, friend?” The old man suddenly spoke.

“You have a good eye, Grand Tutor. Alas, you haven’t taught your student to a similar degree of excellence. A crown prince should have a broader view of things.” A man of Jiang Chen’s current stature had more than sufficient authority to comment on the mere crown prince of a nation. In fact, he had enough to criticize a king. He was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, the future master of the entire Veluriyam Capital! A great number of great nations and cities sat within his territory.

As it is written in the Book of Poetry, ‘Under the wide heaven / all is the king’s land, / within the sea-boundaries of the land / all are the king’s servants.’ As the future ruler of Veluriyam capital, it didn’t matter if they were kings of the great nations or lords of the great cities, everyone had to bow before him.

But the crown prince was still somewhat of a youth. A hint of dissatisfaction appeared on his face when he heard Jiang Chen’s words. Thankfully, the old man’s sharp glances hsi way stifled his temper for the moment. There was no immediate outburst, no order for the guards to attack. But the effort of keeping his temper in rein had manifested itself in an angrily red face. It made Jiang Chen crack a smile inside. The crown prince is a young man after all. It’s unsurprising that he can’t keep his cool.

From the looks of it, the prince was probably a few years younger than him. Suddenly, a scent wafted past his nose. Distracted, Jiang Chen sniffed at the air. He detected a whiff of something unusual.

“Hmm? Is someone trying to refine the Fierce Tiger Pill?” He was very sensitive to pills. The barest hint of a scent floating in the air was enough for his nose to pick up on. “The refining techniques don’t seem very good, though. The Fierce Tiger Pill has been utterly ruined. Refining the pill like this is just a waste of materials.”

Jiang Chen chuckled, looking back to the young crown prince once more. “Is Bluesky Nation’s crown prince actually a pill aficionado?”

This simplified things a great deal. The crown prince’s face went from red to an alarming shade of purple. The Fierce Tiger Pill’s associated problems had occupied his mind for a long time now. He’d spent quite some time on it, and yet his attempts so far had all failed. The grand tutor’s eyes lit up. “Do you know about the Fierce Tiger Pill, friend?”

The crown prince’s eyes began to shine with interest as well when he heard the question. His unconvinced eyes roamed over Jiang Chen’s body, considering the other youth more seriously this time.

“The Fierce Tiger Pill is hardly complicated or remarkable. What is there to know about? Something fit for me to practice with when I was ten, that’s all. A second-rate pill at best.” Jiang Chen casually shrugged.

The crown prince’s entire body shook. “Bragging doesn’t cost you anything,” he curled his lip.

Jiang Chen didn’t bother to explain. He continued to speak with the same tone of indifference. “The Fierce Tiger Pill can strengthen the body and tap into one’s latent potential. It is able to multiply a cultivator’s power several times over for a short time. Commonly used in the military because of its cheapness, it has devastating side effects as well. The best pill kings do not typically find it worthwhile to refine something so flawed.” His description finally evoked a change in the crown prince’s skepticism. Evidently, Jiang Chen had mentioned everything there was to say about the pill.

“You are not the average scholar, friend, but a veritable expert!” The grand tutor was extremely pleased. “Your Highness, our guest here is a master of pill dao.”

“Who doesn’t know how to give a nice speech, huh? That’s no proof of his competence.” The crown prince still looked somewhat distrustful.

Jiang Chen openly grinned at that. The young crown prince was flipping the provocation card back at him. Considering its intended target though, it went wide of the mark.

“The Fierce Tiger Pill is too low-ranked, crown prince. I would not care to refine it even if you provoked me ten times more. Veluriyam Capital has another pill called the Tiger Eruption Pill. It, too, is a berserk pill, and you can consider it a ranked-up version of the Fierce Tiger Pill. It is superior to its lesser version in both medicinal effect and the severity of its side effects. Moreover, because it is a recipe from the Deviant Pill Faction, its cost is incredibly low.”

“Tiger Eruption Pill?” The grand tutor’s eyes glittered. “I believe I’ve heard of that pill before. Hmm, if I recall correctly, there’s a store called Taiyuan Tower in Veluriyam Capital that sells it. The young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain owns it.”

“Exactly so,” Jiang Chen nodded.

The grand tutor turned back to the crown prince. “Is this not confirmation enough that our guest is a master of pill dao after all, Your Highness? Since you thirst after the wise, should you not honor one when such appears in front of you?” He waved to the guardsmen. “You, you, and you. All of you, come outside with me. Let the crown prince and our honored guest have some privacy.”

The prince’s guards were a bit hesitant. Their charge was the crown prince after all, his were the only orders that mattered. The grand tutor was the prince’s teacher, but this concerned the prince’s safety... they couldn’t afford to take risks.

The crown prince knew that his teacher always had a good reason behind his actions. The old man was cunning and unfailingly cautious. Despite his own misgivings, he waved them off as well. “You may go. I’d be glad to have a more intimate chat with our visitor.”

Seeing his guards’ remaining uncertainty, he called out, “What are you waiting for? We’re in the palace. Are you afraid of him eating me or something?” His small show of annoyance finally compelled the guards to leave.

“Not bad, not bad.” Jiang Chen applauded him, laughing. “Being able to rectify your mistakes is a great virtue.”

“Yes, yes, keep sharpening your tongue,” the crown prince harrumphed. “I’d like to see how much skill you have with literally anything else.”

Suspicion still ran subtly beneath the crown prince’s words. There really was no way around the prince’s youth.

“I have skills aplenty, I assure you. However, refining the Fierce Tiger Pill can hardly be counted as one. Your own cauldron of pills is already ruined, no? Then I’ll go to the trouble of turning that waste into wealth.” Jiang Chen didn’t allow the prince a moment to fire off a retort, walking directly towards the pill room off to the side. He found the prince’s behavior amusing. The other youth was standing in the doorway, stuck between wanting to excuse himself and wanting to watch. An interesting young man, to be sure.

Personally, Jiang Chen didn’t care either way. “Feel free to watch if you want. It’s not like the Fierce Tiger Pill is some kind of secret recipe, no do I have anything to hide.”

His tools: the crown prince’s cauldron, and his materials: the materials within. There was no flourish in his actions. He conjured the most basic of pill-flames, casually summoning a decidedly average heat source to heat up the cauldron. Following this, he casually matured the flame, beginning to refine the once-wasted materials once more.

The Fierce Tiger Pill wasn’t even a top-ranked pill. It was sage rank at most, not worthy enough to be considered even true sage rank. It affected only origin realm cultivators. Sage realm cultivators could find some benefit out of it in a pinch, but the effects were greatly discounted. On the other hand, the Tiger Eruption Pill could be used by both origin and sage realm cultivators without much of a difference in its effects. More importantly, the majority of the side effects present in the Fierce Tiger Pill were alleviated.

Jiang Chen's technique was practiced enough, but the crown prince saw nothing amazing or unique in it. None of the steps were particularly mysterious or hard to understand. He frowned, his heart marred with uncertainty. This guy looks confident, alright, but there's nothing special in what he's doing. There's no way he can turn stone into gold. No, I don't believe it. How can he possibly refine the Fierce Tiger Pill with ruined materials? He must have boasted without the ability to back it up.

Nonetheless, Jiang Chen's equanimity and self-control were formidable. Despite himself, the crown prince appreciated that kind of discipline. One would be hard-pressed to find the like in a common charlatan. Still, composure wasn't everything. At the end of the day, the results had to speak for themselves.

Thirty to forty-five minutes passed before Jiang Chen concluded forming hand seals. "All done," he smiled serenely. He quenched the flames with a flick, and the cauldron sounded several times with a ringing roar. With a flourish of his sleeves, Jiang Chen brushed the lid atop aside.

"Take a look: some Fierce Tiger Pills, as promised." His sleeves swished in the air as the young lord pushed the cauldron towards the crown prince's direction.

The crown prince blinked incredulously, striding forward rapidly to stare into the vessel. His expression froze as his eyes made contact with its contents. It was as if he'd seen the most unbelievable thing in the world. Paralyzed by shock, he couldn't tear his eyes away. After a long while, the prince convulsed and looked at Jiang Chen with mixed feelings. "You... you really didn't cheat?"

He was hit by a wave of insecurity. He had witnessed every step of the process, but he was still dubious about what he'd seen.

"Cheat?" Jiang Chen's expression was perfectly cool. "The Fierce Tiger Pill does not merit the act of cheating, period. Can't you sense your own materials within the pills? Your pill dao ability is worse than I thought, then."

The crown prince was perfectly capable of that, but had completely forgotten to. Hastily moving to do so, he found that the finished product really did consist only of his own materials. More accurately, they had been the exact materials that he'd ruined earlier. This revelation sent him into a frenzy. Was pill dao truly able to perform the miracle of turning trash into treasure? That seemed far too good to believe.

All of his pill dao teachers had been picked from Bluesky Nation's best pill kings. They represented the nation's cream of the crop. Unfortunately, without a concrete recipe, their collective attempts to refine the Fierce Tiger Pill had ended in failure. The fact that someone as ordinary-looking as the man before him had been able to refine the pill was wholly unexpected. After all, his teachers had spent several years without anything close to resembling a success.

Chapter 1030: Dusting Off and Leaving

If the prince was somewhat unconvinced earlier, then the reality that greeted his eyes rendered him completely speechless. His earlier distrust completely disappeared, leaving behind admiration that rose from the bottom from his heart. Despite being depressed, he couldn't help but ask, "Are all pill dao experts in Veluriyam Capital as skilled as you? I suppose Bluesky Nation is a little outdated compared to the world."

Jiang Chen found the dejected-looking prince to be rather more interesting than before. He understood that the young prince was simply trying to strengthen his country by refining the Fierce Tiger Pill, so he refrained from attacking the example of royal proactiveness.

“It’s only natural that Veluriyam Capital’s pill dao is many times stronger than Bluesky Nation’s. You don’t need to be depressed. When it comes to pill dao, there are only a handful of people who are better than me in Veluriyam Capital.” This was Jiang Chen being humble. In reality, no one in Veluriyam Capital could compare to him when it came to pill dao. In fact, no one was even close to his level. In all likelihood, there was no one in the entire Divine Abyss Continent who came close when it came to pill dao.

If Jiang Chen had made that claim before his demonstration, the prince would’ve thought it a load of hot air. But now, it almost seemed irrefutable; this strange man might actually be a pill dao genius of Veluriyam Capital.

“I must say that you truly are skilled, sire. So, about the refining method of this Fierce Tiger Pill...” The prince rubbed his palms together, but seemed to feel as though he was being a bit forward for speaking so suddenly. He waited for a moment before continuing, “Please name a price. We are willing to buy the recipe and the refining method of this pill as long as it’s reasonable.”

“You’re truly bold to attempt refining the pill without its recipe. That being said, it is a little unwise of you to waste time like this.”

The prince turned red in embarrassment. He was simply trying to do something for his nation by refining the Fierce Tiger Pill. Now that Jiang Chen mentioned it, even he thought that he’s been a little too brash in his actions. There was nothing more difficult than refining a specific pill without its recipe. If they were lucky, they’d be able to reverse engineer the recipe. But if they were unlucky, then the fruits of their labor might only come after several years of research.

“I don’t have a choice. Bluesky Nation is responsible for guarding the northern side of Veluriyam Capital, but we are surrounded by many powerful enemies. War can break out at any moment. However, the Fierce Tiger Pill can increase our troops’ courage and multiply their combat strength, so it’s research that benefits both our nation and our people. It is not out of selfishness that I started on this path...”

“I’ve already said this, but the side effects of the Fierce Tiger Pill are too strong. An army would probably only be able to use it once or twice without much repercussions, but long term use of Fierce Tiger Pill will only bring more harm than benefits.” Jiang Chen ruthlessly pointed out the flaw in his strategy.

“Haha. In the end, you just aren’t willing to give us the techniques behind the Fierce Tiger Pill, aren’t you?” The prince sounded a little disappointed.

“The Fierce Tiger Pill does more harm than good if it is used over a long period of time. However, you may equip your army with Tiger Eruption Pills without any of those problems.” Jiang Chen smiled.

“Tiger Eruption Pill?” The prince’s eyes lit up. “Do you know how to refine the Tiger Eruption Pill?” Jiang Chen smiled. He was the inventor of the pill, how could he not know how to refine it?

“You don’t know how to refine the Tiger Eruption Pill?” The prince’s voice once again betrayed his disappointment when Jiang Chen didn’t answer his question.

“Of course I know how to make that pill. However, this pill is proprietary knowledge of Taiyuan Tower. Therefore, I cannot just give you its refining method or recipe. That being said, I can help you buy a batch of Tiger Eruption Pills from Taiyuan Tower at the cost of production.”

“Cost of production? Are you sure you have the power to do so? Also... how much would that come to?” The prince looked worried.

“Haha, are you worried that I lack the ability to authorize such a trade? As for the cost of production, it’s not much pricier than what you were spending on the Fierce Tiger Pill. In fact, it’s pretty much the same as the Fierce Tiger Pill because you won’t need to pay for the manpower necessary to refine the pill on your side. But of course, you will be required to pay a token transportation fee.”

“It’s that cheap?” The prince was completely stunned.

“One of the greatest traits of the Deviant Pill Faction lies in its low cost. If one of their pills has a high production cost, then it’s not considered a successful product.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

The prince nodded, half understanding. “I have heard that Deviant Pill Faction is pretty good. It was apparently brought into the limelight by young lord Zhen of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. My friend, considering how close you are to Taiyuan Tower, is it possible that you know young lord Zhen himself?”

Jiang Chen smiled but didn’t answer.

“You really know young lord Zhen?” A look of admiration suddenly filled the prince’s expression. “I heard that young lord Zhen excels in both pill dao and martial dao. Especially his pill dao, it’s said to be unrivalled among the younger generation. In fact, not even the invincible legend of Pillfire City, Pill King Ji Lang is a match for him. Have you seen him before? Is he a friendly person? Is he easy to talk to?”

The prince’s words were almost tripping over each other as he spoke quicker and quicker. The mention of young lord Zhen had turned into an awestruck fan.

“Not only do I know him, I have a great relationship with him too.”

The prince looked envious of his new guest. “You live in Veluriyam Capital, so of course it’s easier for you to meet young lord Zhen. Sometimes I really envy you people. Personally, I wish to study in Veluriyam Capital for a couple dozen years or so. Goldtower City is just too dull compared to Veluriyam Capital.”

Goldtower City was the capital of Bluesky Nation. Compared to the nations and cities around it, it could be considered a major city, but it was still much, much inferior to Veluriyam Capital. The people of Goldtower City obviously adored Veluriyam Capital, especially considering the three pagodas they built in imitation of Veluriyam Pagoda.

“Oh right, do you think I can meet young lord Zhen if I visit Veluriyam Capital one day?” The prince asked with a hopeful look on his face.

“Of course you can.” Jiang Chen smiled. “Who knows, maybe you’ll meet him one day, before you even realize it.”

The prince sighed. It was obvious that he thought that Jiang Chen was merely fobbing him off. A moment later, the prince suddenly recalled something. "Oh right, you came to the Eastern Palace and sought me out for no apparent reason. But you wouldn't have shown up here without a purpose, right?"

Jiang Che smiled. "You've finally picked up on that. The reason I sought you out today is to ask for a favor."

"What?" The prince looked startled. You're a pill dao genius of Veluriyam Capital and you want a favor from me? Since when did I become this powerful? But when he thought that the pill dao genius of Veluriyam Capital had purposely come to ask a favor from him, the prince couldn't help but feel a bit proud of himself. He had already made up his mind to grant the favor as long as it wasn't too excessive.

"Steward Niu of Goldtower City's Prancing Pony is an acquaintance of mine. Right now, the grand steward of the Prancing Pony, Dong Sheng, is attempting to claim everyone's share of the business for himself..." Jiang Chen summarized the situation and roughly sketched out the players involved.

"Is that all?" The prince actually felt a bit disappointed after getting over his surprise. Not only was it not a difficult matter to deal with, it was almost too trivial in the prince's opinion. It was so minor that he didn't think it even counted as a great favor. At the very least, it wasn't worth the favor of the Tiger Eruption Pill.

"That is all." Jiang Chen nodded affirmatively. "That being said, Dong Sheng is quite wild and I suspect that he's a pretty ruthless person. If we are to deal with him, then we must make sure that he never makes a return. He must not be allowed to cause trouble after we suppress him."

"That won't be a problem." The prince said disdainfully, "He's only the sworn brother of a mere vice city lord. He's not even worth a mention in Bluesky Nation. You could've just sought out the vice city lord himself and told him to deal with this. You are a genius from Veluriyam Capital; I doubt he would've dared reject your demands."

"I'm not confident in anyone else's ability but yours. You are the crown prince and future monarch of Bluesky Nation. Therefore, your words and actions are worth more than his." Jiang Chen spoke frankly. He had countless ways to deal with this problem, but he wouldn't be able to avoid being criticized by others if he dealt with this personally. On the other hand, the crown prince of Bluesky Nation was the perfect candidate for this task. Moreover, the prince's status should be more than enough to scare Dong Sheng out of any and all thoughts of fighting back. Dong Sheng could live for another ten lifetimes and still not muster up the courage to fight the prince.

"Fine. Seriously, I haven't dealt with such a trivial matter since the day I became crown prince. But since you've proven your skills and ability to turn even trash into treasure, I will personally deal with this matter. As for the Tiger Eruption Pill..."

"You have nothing to worry about in regard to the Tiger Eruption Pill. Taiyuan Tower will sell them to you at the cost of production even if you ordered a million pills. That being said, you'll have to pay for labor. You can't have make the pill masters refine the pills for free, can you?"

"Yes, yes, that is only proper." The prince didn't try to take advantage of the offer. "Plus, we get to save on manpower and costs on our side, so there is value in this trade. We can pay twice the amount of

labor if you wish. As long as the cost of the Tiger Eruption Pill doesn't exceed three times the cost of the Fierce Tiger Pill, we can accept this trade."

"Three times? It won't even cost twice the price of the Fierce Tiger Pill." Jiang Chen didn't try to beat around the bush. "Bring me brush and paper so I may write a letter. All you need to do is to send it to Taiyuan Tower. However, it'll take at least three to five years to refine a million Tiger Eruption Pills, so you'll have to be patient."

"It's no hurry. You can take ten or even twenty years to refine them if you wish. The important thing here is availability."

The prince personally brought over brush and paper for Jiang Chen to write his letter. The content of the letter was very simple. After he was done writing, Jiang Chen thought for a moment before he chose to take out the Progeny Feather Medallion, stamping the letter at the bottom with the medallion. The prince only saw the contents of the letter. Since his attention was entirely absorbed by the letter, he thought that the medallion Jiang Chen produced and stamped on the letter so casually was nothing more but a pill king medallion. He didn't pay much attention to it.

"Take this letter and bring it to Taiyuan Tower. You will then be able to buy as many Tiger Eruption Pills as you wish."

Without further ado, Jiang Chen vanished in a flash of light. The prince was dumbstruck as he held the letter and stared at the quickly vanishing light Jiang Chen had left behind. When the grand tutor and the prince's personal guards saw Jiang Chen's light fly out, they immediately rushed to his side. They relaxed only when they saw their prince safe and sound. It was then that the grand tutor noticed the completed Fierce Tiger Pill beside him. His eyes lit up. "Fierce Tiger Pill? It actually is the Fierce Tiger Pill!"

"Did he refine it himself?"

The prince sighed softly. "Not only did he refine it himself, he even used the wasted materials from the failed refining earlier to refine it. This man is no ordinary person."

"He turned trash into treasure?" The grand tutor was only more astonished when he heard this. He carefully examined the Fierce Tiger Pill in his hand, turning it over every so often.

"He said that long term use of the Fierce Tiger Pill would be more detrimental than beneficial, so he refuses to let us refine the Fierce Tiger Pill. Instead, he told me to head to Veluriyam Capital and buy the Tiger Eruption Pill. He said that I'd be able to buy them at less than twice the cost of production of the Fierce Tiger Pill."

"Cost of production?" The grand tutor looked startled. "Tiger Eruption Pill? Is that the upgraded version of the Fierce Tiger Pill?"

"Mm. He said that the effects are better, and the side effects are much less intense."

"I am aware that the Tiger Eruption Pill's side effects are a lot smaller. This man... is he very close to Taiyuan Tower? Why is he so passionate about this? Why did he show up at the Eastern Palace and make a deal that's completely unfavorable for him for no particular reason?" The grand tutor looked puzzled.

