

Three Realms 1141

Chapter 1141: Slipping Into the Resplendent Emerald Veranda

Jiang Chen didn't pay much attention when the four venerated wandering cultivators were welcomed into the Resplendent Emerald Veranda. He was deeply entrenched in his thoughts. Not seeing Wei Xing'er made him worry about her well-being.

He could choose to blindly barge into the Resplendent Emerald Veranda, but there was no doubt that that was a dumb move. The Resplendent Emerald Veranda was as dangerous as a dragon's lair or a tiger's den. Fighting its master and the four wandering cultivators alone would be a great challenge unless he used his hidden cards. However, Jiang Chen didn't want to resort to brute force unless it couldn't be helped.

His experience from all these years enabled him to know when to apply brute force and when to apply his wits. Right now, brute force clearly wasn't the suitable choice. It didn't take long before an idea occurred to him.

Moments after the group entered the Veranda, Jiang Chen squeezed his way through the crowd and walked towards the entrance. He was stopped by four Veranda guards before he could even get close.

"Friend, please hold your step. Only important guests are allowed to enter today." The guards were quite well mannered even though they were standing their ground.

Jiang Chen had anticipated this. He kept a straight face and smiled. "I hear that the Resplendent Emerald Veranda collects every single treasure under the sky. I've stumbled upon something precious and travelled across many regions, but no one seems to realize its true value. Today I've come all the way here, only to find myself barred at its entrance. Is this how the Resplendent Emerald Veranda conducts its business?"

The confidence and poise he exuded when expressing his displeasure was something the guards couldn't possibly ignore.

One of the guards explained patiently. "Friend, if you really possess a priceless treasure, perhaps you can wait a few more days? The Veranda will surely welcome you with open arms then. Unfortunately, we have important matters to attend to these days..."

"Hahaha! Important matters? How important can it be that you'd ignore your own business? Never mind. The Resplendent Emerald Veranda is clearly undeserving of its reputation. My treasure and the Veranda aren't fated for each other. Perhaps I must travel to the Upper Eight Regions to find someone who knows good from bad." Jiang Chen muttered to himself without being overly quiet or loud. However, his voice was properly penetrative.

An esteemed elder of the Veranda had heard the commotion outside. He walked out of the entrance and stared at Jiang Chen.

"Esteemed sir, how dare you blow your own horn and make such a big fuss in front of our premises? You are spewing out slander. Are you here to cause trouble?" This elder held a high position within the sect. His voice was filled with authority and dominance. He clearly felt that this newcomer was trying to cause trouble on purpose.

Jiang Chen flashed a smile and didn't back down. "If it weren't for the Veranda's reputation, I wouldn't have traveled thousands of miles to come here. I'd finally arrived after such a long and strenuous journey, yet you're telling me to wait for a few days more? Is it really wrong for me to complain about your attitude?"

The elder snorted. "What treasure could you possibly have to warrant such arrogance? I'll assist you in this matter if there's truly something great in your possession. If there isn't, don't blame me for being hostile!"

Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered to waste his breath. "I'll only see the Veranda master. Go back to where you came from, old man. What authority could you possibly have?"

"Insolence! He's an elder of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda! He definitely has the authority to represent the Veranda!"

"Sir, you're only here to stir up trouble aren't you?"

The elder smiled out of rage. "Fine. It's now clear that you're not here for business."

Jiang Chen frowned. "How can you be so sure?"

He immediately reached for a bottle that contained a drop of Kunpeng blood from Veluriyam Pagoda. He'd received three drops back then. One drop had been gifted to Emperor Peafowl, and he'd kept the other two drops. He was prepared to give one to Emperor Peerless, but the timing wasn't right yet. He would gift the Kunpeng blood to the emperor when he was completely certain of the latter's loyalty.

A single drop of this blood could transform anyone into an empyrean cultivator. The mysterious resculpting powers of this bloodline had been passed down from the ancient times. No matter how hard modern cultivators trained, they could rarely ever attain such heights. Therefore, every single drop of blood was of immeasurable value.

Its appearance could lead to a bloodbath if anyone had recognized its value. It was definitely something that could throw the entire human domain into an endless war. Countless bloodbaths and slaughters have occurred throughout history in the name of more resources and strength.

When Jiang Chen casually brought out the bottle, he figured that nobody in the Great Scarlet Mid Region would be able to recognize it. The aura radiating from it was vastly different from true dragon's blood. Anybody who knew a thing or two about bloodlines would immediately recognize a true dragon's blood. The same couldn't be said for the Kunpeng blood however. Of course, he didn't fully reveal the Kunpeng blood's aura. He casually waved it in front of the elder and let some of its aura leak out.

Due to his superior handling, he was able to waft just enough to pique the elder's interest. As expected, the elder's eyes brimmed with curiosity as soon as the aura disappeared.

"Friend, what is that?" He was visibly moved by the item.

Jiang Chen wasn't at all surprised by the elder's complete change in attitude. He smiled blandly. "I wouldn't be here if I knew what it was. Oh well. Since you don't seem to possess even the slightest sincerity, I bid you farewell." He raised his hands in a cupped fist salute and was prepared to leave.

The elder quickly ran up to Jiang Chen and apologized. "Friend, please hold. It was my fault for being rude to you."

Jiang Chen waved his hands dismissively. He ignored the elder completely and kept walking on.

"Friend, please wait! Nobody except us can recognize what you hold and sell it to the appropriate party! Even if someone was willing to buy it from you, your returns will definitely be dwarfed in comparison to what we can offer!"

The elder was trying his hardest to make Jiang Chen stay. He was clearly mesmerized by the bloodline's majestic aura. Even the Veranda master wouldn't be able to contain himself if he were present, let alone a mere elder. The Kunpeng bloodline's power was extremely captivating after all. Even an idiot would realize its value.

Jiang Chen stopped abruptly and smiled at the elder. "I stand my ground. I will only see the Veranda master himself."

The elder didn't dare to promise anything on his own accord. Instead, he patiently explained everything. "The master is receiving very important guests and isn't available right now. Friend... why don't you stay for a few days? We will treat you with the highest honors possible. Once the master is free, I assure you that he'll immediately see you and give you a reply which you'll be most satisfied with!"

Jiang Chen frowned. "A few days? How can you expect me to wait for a few days?"

The elder rubbed his hands together anxiously. "It's only a few days. It'll pass in a blink of an eye. Friend, surely you can spare us a few days?"

Jiang Chen grumbled deeply before he replied. "Fine. I'm willing to come to a compromise. I've once passed through the Great Scarlet Capital and heard that the young madame of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda is an extremely fair businesswoman. If your master is occupied, surely your mistress could spare some time?"

The young madame? The elder gave Jiang Chen a complicated look.

"What is it now?" Jiang Chen brimmed with annoyance.

The elder mumbled. "Esteemed sir, in recent days, it's even harder to see our mistress..."

"You might as well save your breath then. The Resplendent Emerald Veranda does lack sincerity after all. Farewell!" Jiang Chen had come all this way just to see Wei Xing'er. Since the elder was giving him all kinds of excuses, he decided that leaving was the best way to advance.

The elder hesitated greatly when he saw Jiang Chen leave.

"Friend, please wait a moment. I'll consult the Veranda master and the young madame to see if either of them are willing to receive you. It'll only take fifteen minutes. Surely you have fifteen minutes to spare?"

Jiang Chen snorted. "Fifteen minutes it is then. If I hear nothing from you after fifteen minutes, you may simply assume that the deal is off."

The more arrogant Jiang Chen acted, the less suspicious he seemed. The elder was throwing all kinds of excuses at Jiang Chen to test if he was actually the master's enemy. After close scrutiny, the elder concluded that this wasn't the case.

A few moments later, the elder came running back to Jiang Chen. "Friend, our master has agreed to let you meet our madame. Esteemed sir, please understand that our mistress is a member of the rear court, so it's advised that you show some respect and decorum during your interaction with her."

Jiang Chen flashed a mocking smile. "Do you really think that everyone behaves like you?"

The elder smiled awkwardly. He felt a little insulted but he was able to cover up his anger well. The huge crowd watched on as Jiang Chen followed the elder's lead and walked into the Resplendent Emerald Veranda.

In a remote hall, Jiang Chen finally saw Wei Xing'er again after so many years. She was still dressed in the same way as before, except she'd now lost some weight. However, she'd also become more mature and bewitching.

"Young madame, this is the guest. He has a treasure that he wants us to identify. He.."

"I know. Servitor Li, you may leave." Wei Xing'er said coldly after making a dismissive gesture.

The elder hesitated a little. He was deciding if it was appropriate to leave. After all, the Veranda master had ordered him not to let anyone meet the young madame alone.

Wei Xing'er raised an eyebrow. "Servitor Li, do I not have the authority to dismiss you? If that's the case, I'm no longer interested. You can ask the master to deal with this himself."

She turned around and made to leave. The elder quickly stopped her. "This subordinate doesn't dare. I'll leave! Immediately!"

Chapter 1142: Wei Xingers Thoughts

It was only after the elder had left did Wei Xing'er's cold eyes mellow. There was a bit of anger and resentment in her eyes, but she was for the most part pleasantly surprised to see Jiang Chen. It was obvious that his unexpected visit had caught her off guard.

Wei Xing'er smiled slightly when she noticed the lingering caution on his face. "Rest easy, there are no eyes or ears around. This is the Resplendent Emerald Veranda's forbidden grounds and no one would dare scrutinize this place. To think that you would come to Great Scarlet Capital! I had thought our goodbye back then to be our last."

Wei Xing'er's smile looked a little bitter and resentful. It was obvious that her current lifestyle had ground away much of her willpower after so long.

Jiang Chen sighed quietly. "You did me a favor back then, Miss Wei. I'm here to save you."

"Save me?" Wei Xing'er smiled in self-derision. "I have no roots to return to. Where can I go even if I'm free? I am but a walking corpse here, but at least it's a peaceful and steady life. Too many years have passed. I hear that Myriad Domain has completely fallen under the Eternal Celestial Capital's control.

Little guy, I know that you still haven't given up on revenge, but listen to me when I tell you to let go of that thought.

"We so-called geniuses of Myriad Domain are nothing compared to the members of a true first rank sect. It's true that your talents may be ten times of what I have, but no genius from Myriad Domain can ever compare to the geniuses of first rank sects and the Upper Eight Regions. Most importantly, the first rank sects have more than just geniuses. Those terrifying masters... ai!"

Wei Xing'er sounded a little depressed. She was different from when Jiang Chen saw her last time. Back then, she hadn't lost all hope and optimism despite adopting a slightly pessimistic outlook of the world. At the time, she had even asked him about Walkabout Sect and hoped that Myriad Domain could rise once again. But after a few years had passed, it looked like she'd completely given up.

Jiang Chen stared blankly at her for a moment. A bit of disappointment entered his eyes.

"Miss Wei, I didn't think you'd actually want to be a walking corpse. Maybe I made the wrong choice when I travelled all the way here to save you." Jiang Chen's voice turned cold.

Wei Xing'er gave him a miserable smile. "The only reason you're here to save me is because you owe me a bit of favor from those years ago. You're simply trying to deal with this responsibility so you'll feel better about yourself. Tell me, do you really truly care if I live or die? If you do, then why didn't you rescue me before and waited for years before you finally came to me during your leisure? Save me? Save me how? There are prisons everywhere in this world that eats up losers like me. People who lost the protection of their sects like me are ultimately nothing more than ants..."

Jiang Chen frowned. "I see. You aren't aware of the truth even now, are you? Do you think you can live comfortably like this forever on after losing hope? Do you think that the master can't find another pretty face to hold up the Resplendent Emerald Veranda? Are you really so confident, or are you just lying to yourself?"

Wei Xing'er paled drastically. "What... what have you heard?"

"Do you really not know?" Jiang Chen sneered and threw the question back at her.

Infinite pain welled inside Wei Xing'er's eyes. She said sorrowfully, "And what if I know? What if I don't know? Ever since I joined the Resplendent Emerald Veranda, my fate is not mine to decide. How could I not know that the Veranda master has something sinister in store for me? I may not be aware why he keeps me here, but if there's one thing I'm certain of, it's that he doesn't desire me for my beauty... he hasn't touched me, not even once!"

This wasn't out of Jiang Chen's expectations at least. After all, the Veranda master wanted to use Wei Xing'er as a cultivation cauldron. He would never take away her virginity so soon.

"So, you've truly given up?" Jiang Chen asked seriously.

"What else do you think I can do in this situation?" Wei Xing'er smiled bitterly.

"Do you know why the Resplendent Emerald Veranda is so lively as of late?" Jiang Chen asked another question.

“Hmph, the Veranda master is planning to achieve a breakthrough and become a high level emperor realm cultivator. He has enemies everywhere, so it’s only natural that he’ll seek out a couple protectors to defend him.”

Jiang Chen nodded. He asked again, “I’m sure you don’t know that he plans to use you as his cultivation cauldron, do you?”

Wei Xing’er swayed as her face turned deathly pale. Her delicate, ruby-lipped mouth was slightly agape with surprise. The surprise quickly turned into thick fear.

“How do you know about this?!” Wei Xing’er asked in a panicked state.

“That’s not important. What’s important is the two choices presented before you. One, leave this place. Two, give up and become his cultivation cauldron.”

There was no sugarcoating it. She would die if she became a cultivation cauldron. Almost no one survived the experience. Wei Xing’er didn’t recover from her fear and shock for a very long time. She might have submitted to her current circumstances, but that didn’t mean she was so far gone that she could give up her life on a whim.

She wasn’t actually afraid of death, but dying as a cultivation cauldron was a different matter altogether. It was too sudden and terrible for her to accept. Real fear gripped Wei Xing’er tightly for a time. At first, the young woman thought that she had given up on life completely, but now Wei Xing’er finally realized that she couldn’t accept her fate at all.

She was young and barely at her thirties. In the martial dao world, she was like a child who had just started to walk. She should be shining like a new sun and full of youthful energy, but she had been reduced into another person’s puppet instead. Time had ground away her delusions of resistance and adapted her into this puppet’s life, but when Jiang Chen told her the truth, her will to live finally burst out of her shell.

“I... I want to live.” Wei Xing’er stared frightfully at Jiang Chen. “You have a plan. I know you have a plan, right?!”

“What do you think our chances are if I were to take you with me and escape from this place by force right now?” Jiang Chen suddenly asked.

Wei Xing’er was taken by surprise greatly. “Are you joking? Escape this place by force? Both of us would be turned into dust!”

Jiang Chen smiled and said nothing. He was that confident in his current abilities. Still, it was unwise to try and escape this place via force. Alone, he ultimately wasn’t strong enough to take on the entire Great Scarlet Mid Region by force. He would be trapped inside Great Scarlet Capital and attacked by countless experts if he chose to forcefully break out. They wouldn’t stop until he was completely destroyed.

“You must have another way, right?” Wei Xing’er couldn’t help but ask.

Jiang Chen didn’t answer her question. Instead, he asked, “Do you know why the Veranda master chose this place to achieve his breakthrough?”

Wei Xing'er thought for a moment but shook her head in the end. "He never told me anything about martial dao, and I was never bold enough to ask him about it."

The young madame might look well off on the surface, but in reality she possessed little to no power. She barely saw the Veranda master in person, and their conversations consisted of polite greetings and nothing more. They'd never had a true conversation with each other. There was simply no way that the master would tell Wei Xing'er something as important as his cultivation.

Wei Xing'er's lack of answers wasn't a problem for Jiang Chen though. He wasn't someone who made reckless decisions without a plan. The young man passed over a bottle of powder to Wei Xing'er after pondering for a moment.

"Miss Wei, this is something I made by myself. I'm sure you've used a similar drug in the past, although it absolutely is incomparable to this one. For the next few days, you will consume some of it on a daily basis. Remember, it's only for consumption, not outward application. This is so that I'll be able to track you down accurately within a radius of a couple thousand kilometers for the next three months. I'll be able to track you down the moment the Veranda master makes his move."

Wei Xing'er didn't accept the bottle right away. Instead, she asked in astonishment, "Track me? Are you planning to rescue me on the road? Little guy, I admit that I very much want to escape from this place, but if you're going to use a suicidal method like this, we may as well call off this rescue mission."

It wasn't that Wei Xing'er looked down on Jiang Chen's abilities. She just didn't like this plan at all. Jiang Chen was undoubtedly a genius. Literally no youths in the entire Myriad Domain was comparable to him. However, no matter how talented Jiang Chen was, he was ultimately a genius in the scope of only Myriad Domain. Even if he could still be considered a genius in the Upper Eight Regions, his cultivation was completely incomparable to the Veranda master's, not to mention the large group of protectors the Veranda master just hired for himself.

Wei Xing'er had definitely been a femme fatale in the past. She cared little for a man's life, and only the heavens knew how many many men she'd killed. Jiang Chen was the only exception to the rule though, and he'd come from a distant place today to save her. Even if he did it only because he owed her, his action still touched her. She might not want to die, but she didn't want to drag Jiang Chen with her when she did.

Jiang Chen didn't explain anything. He said coolly, "You don't need to know my plan. Consume this powder if you trust me. If you don't, then whatever."

Wei Xing'er stared blankly at him before she slowly accepted the bottle. She fell into silence for a moment as she held it.

"Are you leaving?" Wei Xing'er finally broke out of her reverie when she noticed that Jiang Chen was striding outside. She chased after him.

"Stay here." Jiang Chen stared at her meaningfully and moved his arms a little. A strange smile tugged at the corners of his lips slightly, but he didn't say anything more. Suddenly, he dashed out of the side hall as quick as lightning.

Jiang Chen swore the moment he exited. "I knew it, a woman has no eye for true value at all. This Resplendent Emerald Veranda is truly a disappointment! I'd be a fool to step into this place once more!"

When Jiang Chen saw the elder walking towards him, his anger turned even more overt. "Elder Li, you have nothing to say to me. Even if the Veranda master were to show up himself, I have no interest in discussing anything with you lot any longer!"

Elder Li was completely stunned. He had no idea what the young madame had done to earn such fury from this man.

Chapter 1143: A Formation Obstacle

Elder Li kept urging Jiang Chen to stay, but the latter stomped out of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda in a thundering rage. He didn't give Elder Li the opportunity to stop him. Jiang Chen hadn't really planned on selling anything to the Veranda anyways. His ultimate goal was to see Wei Xing'er. Since he'd achieved his goal, he no longer had a reason to stay.

He had given Wei Xing'er the powder, but there was a possibility that the stubborn girl might not consume it for fear of putting Jiang Chen in harm's way. Because of that, Jiang Chen had resorted to a few other tricks to track Wei Xing'er.

The Veranda master was a respected figure in the Great Scarlet Mid Regions, but not even Emperor Peerless could see through Jiang Chen's methods, let alone a sixth level emperor. The Veranda master likely didn't expect that anyone would leave an imprint on Wei Xing'er's body. Thus, he'd never considered this possibility and taken any precautions.

Jiang Chen had made sure that he'd have a backup plan in case anything went wrong with the first. This made him a lot calmer than before. He headed to a nearby inn and booked a room. His tracking techniques were effective even if he was a few hundred miles away from Wei Xing'er. He didn't keep a close distance with the Veranda in order to avoid alerting them.

Jiang Chen initially thought that he'd have to wait for a few more days, but he sensed something odd happen that very night. When this spiked in his awareness, he activated his abilities and noticed that Wei Xing'er had already left the Great Scarlet capital.

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Wei Xing'er was taken away by the Veranda master under the cover of the night sky. She acted like a puppet and didn't put up even the slightest resistance, but she seemed resolved.

It was evident that she'd resigned herself to fate after Jiang Chen had given her the warning. And just as he'd thought, she didn't consume the powder. Instead, she tossed it into a trash heap.

"Jiang Chen... your attempt to save my life makes me feel that everything I've done wasn't for nothing. Everyone calls me a femme fatale, but nobody realizes that the men I've killed were all worthy of a thousand deaths. It's true, I'm a selfish and vile person. But... I don't want to drag you down into the pits of hell with me. I want you to owe me a favor that you'll never get to repay. That way... you'll never forget about me even when you're with another woman..."

Wei Xing'er became as calm as still water after such thoughts passed through her mind. The fear and terror that she'd previously felt was gradually taken over by a peaceful acceptance of her inevitable death. If the hands of fate really did rule one's life, then she'd given herself over to them.

She was very touched that Jiang Chen had personally come to save her, but she was convinced that the young man wouldn't succeed. Instead of letting Jiang Chen walk down a path of certain destruction, she'd much prefer to have a quick and silent death. This was her resolve. There was no way she could've known that Jiang Chen had already noticed the anomaly within two hours of her departure from the capital city and was giving chase via the imprint on her body.

Night was no different from day for Jiang Chen. He'd cultivated the God's Eye almost to its peak. His vision wasn't affected at all by night or day, and the darkness of the night was no match for the God's Eye.

He didn't follow too closely because the cunning Veranda master had set up multiple sentries along his path beforehand. If Jiang Chen hadn't anticipated it and rushed in bull-headedly, he likely would've been detected. However, he was taken aback by the fact that only four of the twelve protectors were with the Veranda master. The other eight were nowhere to be found. He was slightly bewildered, but quickly noticed the crux of the problem.

Four of the strongest protectors were escorting the Veranda master, while the other eight were escorting a man who looked very similar to the Veranda master. The two groups were headed in completely different directions.

Misdirection. The oldest strategy in the book. Jiang Chen was impressed by the Veranda master's wits.

This move would indeed lure away a big portion of his enemies. His way would be much safer after that. Moreover, he'd also planted numerous eyes and ears around his original path. If someone was tailing him, these hidden senties would issue an early warning so that he could be prepared for the fight ahead. With such powerful escorts, not many could even attempt to do the Veranda master harm unless they were high level emperors.

Jiang Chen's speed was comparable to Emperor Peerless. Keeping up with the Veranda master wasn't difficult at all, and the hidden sentries were the only thing giving him trouble. He went through great lengths to evade each and every one of them.

In order to protect himself from hidden dangers, Jiang Chen also planted a bunch of sentries along the path. However, his personnel was made up from a group of Goldbiter Rats. The Goldbiter Rats was much stronger in general after the awakening of their bloodline, and the Rat King in particular was already inching towards emperor realm.

The handpicked geniuses of the clan had seen much improvements as well. The Goldbiter Rat clan's strength lay not on their individual prowess, but in their unity and numbers. Of course, their biggest advantage was still their incredibly destructive jaws and devouring ability.

A single Goldbiter Rat wasn't that scary, but once their numbers crept up into the hundreds, they became a force to be reckoned with. Even an elephant could be bitten to death by a large colony of ants. The Goldbiter Rats were the embodiment of that proverb. Their clan had once taken the heavenly

planes by storm with their incredible numbers and powerful jaws. But that was Goldbiter Rats of old, the Goldbiter Kingrats.

Additionally, their powerful jaws wasn't their only strength. They also had the innate ability to tunnel into the ground and collect intelligence. Eavesdropping was what they did best because of their underground nature. They always lived in the shadows, far away from the light. If they ever appeared, it meant that a rat tsunami was about to befall the surface. They wouldn't appear otherwise. It was simply against their nature.

After placing vast numbers of Goldbiter Rats along the way, Jiang Chen had also created a surveillance network.

As the sky gradually brightened, he could sense that the Veranda master's group was slowing down their pace. He soon found out that the group he was tailing was now located in an enormous mountain range, tens of thousands of miles away from the Great Scarlet capital.

The mountain range spanned as far as the eye could see and was extremely majestic. At first glance, it almost seemed like an ocean comprised of numerous green mountains. The sense of scale gave its viewers an inexplicable sense of awe.

Jiang Chen entered the range and immediately sensed that the Veranda master was looking for a suitable place to breakthrough. He slowed down his pace after entering the depths of the mountains. He could easily track down Wei Xing'er due to the imprint on her body. There was no need for him to worry that he might lose track of her.

"Young master Chen, there's a cave one hundred and fifty miles from here. However, it's enclosed by a formation and four emperor realm experts. Every single direction is being watched by an emperor cultivator. I dare not go near for fear of alerting them of our presence." The Goldbiter Rat King had personally collected this information for Jiang Chen.

"There's a formation as well?" Jiang Chen was mildly taken aback. The Veranda master had done a lot of preparation for his breakthrough. A formation wouldn't appear out of nowhere in a place like this; it must've been set up beforehand.

"Indeed. Every single formation is guarded by an emperor. The formation will activate if someone tries to force their way through, alerting all four emperors. If you get too close, you might trigger a combined attack from all four emperors." The Goldbiter Rat King had investigated very thoroughly. "We can't avoid triggering the formation even if we try to tunnel through it underground. It's very peculiar. It's almost as if it was made specifically for this terrain. Oddly enough as well, the earth also seems to be pulsating."

"The earth is pulsating?" Jiang Chen was taken aback.

Pulsating earth was one of the unique properties of the earth attribute. If integrated into the formation, trespassing would trigger an enormous tremor that spanned the surface to the very depths of the earth. The tremors would summon a strong pulsating attack that would lay siege to the trespassers and churn everything underground into pieces. Once the earth began to pulsate, one had to escape immediately or there was very little chance of survival.

Of course, there were always exceptions, but Jiang Chen found it very strange. This wasn't an everyday occurrence. Making the earth pulsate through the operation of formations was extremely difficult and required a large sum of earth attribute spirit stones. In fact, ancient sects that could create such a powerful formation was few and far between. They were as rare as a hen's teeth.

There was only two possible ways to explain the formation's existence. Either an empyrean formation master was present, or there was an earth attribute treasure underground creating this movement.

Chapter 1144: Putting On a Show

These were the only two possibilities.

With respect to the first, Jiang Chen surmised that Great Scarlet Mid Region had no formation master of that caliber, period. A formation master at the level of the heavenly planes was probably alive somewhere on the Divine Abyss Continent, but there was no chance he was in Great Scarlet Mid Region. It was possible that he wasn't even located in the human domain. Therefore, that possibility could be eliminated. All that remained was the second.

His heart was conflicted. He had spent his utmost efforts on finding a powerful earth attribute treasure. Among the five elemental attributes, he'd always lacked completion of earth. That was one of the fundamental reasons he hadn't yet broken through to emperor realm. He had been waiting—no, was still waiting—for an earth attribute treasure to appear.

If this place really did have an earth attribute treasure that could make the earth pulsate, then it was definitely an extraordinary one! Despite his experienced eye from a previous life, he felt a fire beginning to burn in his heart.

He had seen treasures ten or a hundred times more potent than this in his previous life for sure, but they weren't exactly available to the present him. They might as well not have existed either in his past life, since he had literally zero cultivation talent, and therefore couldn't use any of them. This time, things were different. It was the exact kind of treasure he was missing. Fancy the sheer luck involved in such a coincidence!

He had originally come to seek out the Resplendent Emerald Veranda's master in an attempt to save Wei Xing'er. This discovery was the definition of serendipity! It was an astoundingly valuable reward for his troubles.

Jiang Chen's brain fired up for only a moment before cooling down again. He sat down cross-legged, and began to meditate on his assumptions. To ensure accuracy, he sent out the Goldbiter Rat King to scout the premises once again. He needed to double-check the earth pulse's veracity. As a fine specimen of the Goldbiter Rat species, the king wouldn't attract any attention from the emperor realm cultivators guarding the formation upon approach. In the heart of the mountains, it was normal to find powerful spirit beasts gluttoned with cultivation.

Though the king was a cowardly critter, he still carried out Jiang Chen's commands to the letter. After about an hour, he returned to confirm that the pulse of the earth did indeed exist here. There was no problem, no sir!

Having received supporting evidence for his hypothesis, Jiang Chen was increasingly reassured that there was an earth attribute treasure in the area. What was it exactly, though? He had no idea.

He knew only that it had been here a long time. Its tendrils of influence wouldn't have extended this far, otherwise. The formation of a pulse in the earth required a great deal of energy. A piece of pulsating land like this could be adapted into any number of terrifying formations by even the most rudimentary of formation masters.

Simply triggering the pulse of the earth was enough to eliminate emperor realm cultivators on the spot. There was no need to encode any offense into any superimposed formations. The original discoverer of this place had been a lucky man indeed!

Was it the master of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda? It was yet another guess, but Jiang Chen believed there was a very good reason that the Veranda master was breaking through here. The pulse of the earth was a prime candidate for that.

It had probably been a long time since the Veranda master first noticed the phenomenon. He wouldn't have set up the formation and the other periphery here otherwise. The stage wasn't entirely flawless, but fleeting workmanship could not have accomplished it. A decade or so at minimum had gone into the execution.

Having mused out his thoughts, Jiang Chen decided that it was better to take a look himself. Calling upon the Bewitching Lotus of Ice and Fire, he approached the edge of the formation from deep underground.

Coming to the formation's edges, Jiang Chen began to study it with all he knew. The formation itself was rather elementary. What made it special was a vortex of energy in the middle of its eye. The pulse of the earth originated from there, radiating into the surroundings as an enormous field of energy.

The only function of the formation was to guide the energy from the pulse of the earth outwards. It shaped that energy into an impenetrable bulwark, restraining all trespassers.

Jiang Chen scrutinized the formation from every angle a long while. He wanted to find a loophole, a path of escape through which he could proceed. Disappointingly, the formation had no vulnerabilities whatsoever despite its simplicity. More accurately, the pulse had no gaps whatsoever in its energy field.

Unless the formation was brought to a halt entirely so that it no longer drew on its source of power, not even a great emperor cultivator could pass by unscathed. One thing relieved Jiang Chen, however. The formation was also far too basic to make full use of all of the energies available from the earth's pulsation.

Otherwise, things very well could have been different. This place would've become a dead zone thanks to the all-encompassing power of the pulse. The area of the pulse's reach was like that of a great grindstone. It generated enough force to pulverize everything that dared to come into its vicinity. Any living beings especially who entered the area's core would be reduced to grit.

"Ole Gold, what do you think?" Jiang Chen looked down the formation's four corners with a long stare. Four of the Veranda master's invited protectors stood at them, one to each cardinal direction. It seemed

that there was no opportunity to take advantage of a breach in the line. Unless the protectors came out themselves, an outsider had no room to sneak in undetected.

“Young master Chen,” the Goldbiter Rat King sighed, “I’m not being pessimistic, but... we’ve seen what the pulse is doing on the outside. I reckon it gets much worse further in. Even if all of my children went in at once, the pulse would still stop us. Unless... that formation stops.”

The rat king understood the pulse of the earth to a certain extent thanks to knowledge inherited from his bloodline.

“There’s four emperor realm experts holding down the fort here,” Jiang Chen sighed softly. “There’s no reason for the formation to stop by itself. We’d have to get them to leave the formation voluntarily, or we can’t even attack them through it.”

He had been looking for a loophole all the while, but nothing of the sort sadly existed.

The Rat King nodded incessantly in agreement. “Young master Chen, you know... only an idiot would leave the formation normally, but an irresistible lure can turn anyone’s brain to mush. You have so many treasures on you. Why not try baiting one or two of them out?”

The spirit creature’s words were a spark of inspiration to Jiang Chen. None of the four protectors were ordinary people. One was sixth level emperor realm, one was fifth, and the other two were at the peak of fourth level. The Upper Eight Regions notwithstanding, here in the Great Scarlet Mid Region, they were nothing short of elite. Ordinary bait would be insufficient to attract their attention. But Jiang Chen had no shortage of bait-worthy treasures.

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The Goldbiter Rat King fled with maddening haste, the outline of sky rank spirit herb leaves visible between its teeth. Feigning disorientation, it pounced at the formation’s boundary with every ounce of its strength. Behind it, someone cried out. “Where are you going, filthy animal? No matter where you go, I won’t let you escape!”

The owner of that voice was none other than Jiang Chen himself. They were putting on an act of hardship to win their enemies’ confidence. However, the fear on the rat king’s face was no act. Goldbiter Rats were craven by nature, and proximity to the formation exponentially increased the amount of psychological pressure on the rat.

The formation had four manned positions. The protectors stood independently, but each man was ready to support the others at a moment’s notice. The position closest to him was occupied by one of the most senior elders of a third rank Scarlet Parting Sect. He had been specially invited by the Veranda master.

Surnamed Gao, the old man was a fifth level emperor realm cultivator, edging on sixth. He was an exceptionally important member of his sect, but minded few worldly affairs because of his age. The Veranda’s successful invitation of him had been a big surprise to many.

A man as paranoid as they came, the elderly Gao deployed an art of the eye as soon as he heard Jiang Chen’s cry. His scan revealed a large, golden-furred mouse rushing towards his direction. Not three or five miles behind it was a cultivator in hot pursuit, his dash as frenzied as his prey’s.

Elder Gao furrowed his brow. He hadn't expected a human cultivator to show up here at all, much less for them to be charging straight at him. The two sky rank spirit herbs in the mouse' maw impelled him to cut down the oversized rodent immediately, so that he could take the spirit herbs for himself.

Coming through at the last second, his reason told him that such recklessness was folly. His most important mission right now was to protect the formation. He was absolutely safe within its range, but had zero guarantee as to his security outside. Though Elder Gao did not think that either the rat or the cultivator could threaten him at all, an elderly old man always maintained the most basic of cautions. Despite the fact that his heart was beckoning for him to make a move, he maintained a cool head. He chose to stand at the border of the formation in silent observation.

The Goldbiter Rat King quickly collided with the formation's boundary, stumbling at the impact. It was summarily sent flying by an invisible repelling force. The formation intrinsically rejected outside energies as a kind of warning. Any forced intrusion would trigger the pulse of the earth completely, consuming the invader with its power. A hapless trespasser who got caught up in the pulse would certainly be ground into dust. The Goldbiter Rat King reeled from the formation, but Jiang Chen was behind it in the next moment.

"Keep running, why don't you," he snickered.

The Rat King ran about all helter-skelter, screeching all the while. "Don't kill me, don't kill me. I'll give you your spirit herbs back!"

"It's too late to do that now," Jiang Chen sneered. "I don't just want my spirit herbs back, I want you to serve me for the next three thousand years!"

Chapter 1145: A Treasure In a Secret Realm?

The Goldbiter Rat King paled greatly and howled in anguish. As he spoke, Jiang Chen trapped it with the Featherflight Mirror and urged the Mint Ginseng into action once more. Countless green tentacles instantly wrapped around the rat king and held it tight. Despite its desperate howls and struggles, the Goldbiter Rat King was unable to break free from the green tentacles. The more it struggled, the tighter its bonds became.

Jiang Chen pulled out the two sky rank spirit herbs from the rat's mouth and put them away. Then, he slapped a seal onto the rat's body. The Goldbiter Rat King writhed as if he was electrocuted by electricity. Finally, it was unable to struggle any longer and lay limply beside Jiang Chen's feet.

After Jiang Chen was finished with everything, he looked thoughtfully towards the direction of the formation. With his God's Eyes, the person hiding at the edge of the formation naturally didn't escape his attention. Everything done up to this point was a show to lure this person out of the formation.

Unfortunately, he didn't expect his prey to be so steadfast. Despite being tempted with the sky rank spirit herbs and Mint Ginseng, the cultivator had suppressed his greed and moved not a millimeter from the edge of the formation. Jiang Chen had a bag of tricks, but they were completely useless as long as the cultivator refused to step out of the formation.

In fact, his entire show with the Goldbiter Rat King was built on the assumption that their enemy would be greedy. If the cultivator was able to control their greed, then his plan to lure the snake out of its hole

was a complete failure. Jiang Chen felt a little depressed when he saw that the person inside the formation hadn't made a move at all. Still, he remained calm and looked into the formation for a bit. In the end, he decided not to attack the formation by force.

Elder Gao was a member of the Scarlet Parting Sect. Countless thoughts passed through his mind as he watched Jiang Chen conducting his show, but he'd forcibly pushed them down in the end. Obviously, the elder thought the chase scene to be incredibly bizarre.

The two men standing inside and outside the formation didn't say anything, but they were well aware of the situation.

Jiang Chen felt anxious because his ploy had ended in failure, but he didn't let it show on the surface. After retreating fifty or so kilometers away from the formation, he let out the Goldbiter Rat King once more and smiled dejectedly. "Was our show really that bad, Ole Gold?"

The rat king hurriedly answered, "We did all we could. I feel like he was tempted by what we showed, but the fact that he restrained himself means that there must be something that he thought was even more important than the sky rank spirit herbs."

Jiang Chen felt that the Goldbiter Rat King's reasoning was sound. Even he had noticed that the cultivator inside the formation was tempted by their bait. This meant that something incredibly important was keeping him in check.

While Jiang Chen was at his wits' end, the other Goldbiter Rats suddenly sent over a message.

"Young master Chen, my children have noticed something amiss along the road."

"What is it?" Jiang Chen's eyes turned a little.

"A large number of experts are approaching this place through many different routes."

"Why?" Jiang Chen was largely surprised by this. The Veranda master had taken extreme precautions precisely because he wanted to avoid notice, hadn't he? So why was there suddenly a large number of experts approaching?

It couldn't be that the painstaking efforts in maintaining secrecy were so terrible that his enemies had found him out in a single night, could it? It would be pathetic if this was all the Veranda master amounted to.

Did someone inside the Resplendent Emerald Veranda turn traitor or something? Jiang Chen entertained the thought for a moment, but it just didn't seem all that likely. Anything relating to the Veranda master's breakthrough is such a tight-lipped secret that even the young madame in name, Wei Xing'er, knows nothing about it, so there's no reason to think that the common workers inside the Resplendent Emerald Veranda will know about this. Those who are trusted enough to let know, well, why on earth would they ever spill this secret?

Did the protectors betray the master then? But the man clearly trusts his protectors, so there's no reason to think that they'll betray him either. He isn't nearly foolish enough to not consider this possibility. Jiang Chen mulled over the questions, but he wasn't able to arrive at an answer.

This entire incident was incredibly bizarre. It was unfathomable in some ways no matter how many times he played it out in his head. The young man didn't hesitate though. He immediately asked the Goldbiter Rat King to contact his descendants and analyze the attackers' paths. It was impossible to break through the formation by force, so he could only hope that these attackers could create him an opportunity for him.

He decided to first capture one of the attackers and question them for answers. He quickly located a suitable ambush spot with the intelligence provided by the Goldbiter Rats. Not long after, a lone expert rapidly approached towards his location. Jiang Chen had arranged his formation and was lying in wait. The expert immediately noticed that something was amiss when he stepped into the formation, but it didn't matter. The chances that a second level emperor realm cultivator could escape Jiang Chen's formation was almost zero, not to mention that the young man was already half-step emperor realm. He could fight a mid emperor realm expert head on and have more than a fifty percent chance of beating his opponent. As for an initial emperor realm in this case, Jiang Chen could easily kill his enemy even if he hadn't arranged a formation. It was the benefit of having countless trump cards.

Right now however, he needed to capture his opponent alive. That was why he had arranged a formation and moved in tandem with the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice to do just that.

The second level emperor realm target in question hadn't never thought that he'd be captured alive here in Great Scarlet Mid Region. He was both frightened and worried. Jiang Chen commanded the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice to bring the target underground.

When the second level emperor realm cultivator opened his eyes and saw an unfamiliar face, he asked in a complicated tone, "Who are you, friend? Is there some sort of misunderstanding between us? Why have you captured me?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "I don't have time to bullshit with you. I have in my hand a bottle of poison that can kill you the instant it touches your blood. You can choose to either answer my question or take it."

A bit of panic leaked out of the cultivator's eyes. "What do you wish to know?"

"Are you really just passing by?" Jiang Chen snorted coldly.

The cultivator tried to stall, but Jiang Chen froze him with the God's Eyes and fished out something from the cultivator's waist. It was a token; a secret order from the royal family itself.

"Oh? My apologies, I didn't realize you're a member of Great Scarlet Mid Region's royal family." Jiang Chen's tone contained a bit of ridicule and mockery.

The second level emperor realm expert's face changed drastically. "You... who on earth are you?"

Jiang Chen's voice turned cold. "It seems that you haven't figured out the situation you're in. I guess I have no choice but to give you a taste."

He acted to pour the poison into the cultivator's mouth as he spoke. The man turned deathly pale as he spoke hastily. "Wait. Wait! Ask me anything you want to know. Please don't kill me!"

Survival instinct flared indiscriminately in both strong and weak beings. The second level emperor realm cultivator wasn't an exception to the rule.

“Are you really just passing by?” Jiang Chen repeated the question, but with a tone that was much stronger from the one he used earlier. He also held the poison right next to his victim’s mouth.

“No... no.” The man dared not lie at all. He knew that he might not get a second chance to speak if he squandered this chance to answer Jiang Chen’s questions properly.

“The Veranda master is just achieving a breakthrough to seventh level emperor realm. Don’t tell me he’s so charismatic that even the royal family has decided to send him a protector?” Jiang Chen asked coldly.

The cultivator stared at him with a bit of surprise. “Friend... you don’t sound like a protector of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda at all.”

“And what if I’m not?” Jiang Chen asked coldly.

“Then that’s perfect! That means we’re probably on the same side. Man, I can’t believe we mistook each other for enemies. I may be a servant of the royal family, but I am here with orders to investigate the Veranda master. If he’s an enemy of yours, then we can become allies and help each other out!” When the man noticed Jiang Chen didn’t sound like one of the Veranda master’s protectors, his tone actually relaxed quite a lot.

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. “Become allies? How will that benefit me?”

“Friend, this is the perfect opportunity if you’re here to take revenge against the Veranda master because the royal family of the Great Scarlet Empire suspects that the Veranda master has colluded with foreigners. They’re currently searching for proof of his crimes.”

“Hmph, if the royal family really is investigating the Veranda master, they wouldn’t have allowed him to hire as many protectors as he has, would they?” Jiang Chen didn’t believe his captive’s words easily.

“Haah, I guess you really don’t know anything, sir. I dare say that at least half of the Veranda master’s protectors are planning to betray him.”

“What do you mean?”

Suddenly, the man’s eyes turned a little shifty. “Take Elder Gao of the Scarlet Parting Sect, for example. I believe that his hiring was approved by the senior executives of the Scarlet Parting Sect themselves. In fact, the senior executives are probably investigating this matter personally.”

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. “Even if the Veranda master did betray the royal family, the Scarlet Parting Region is just a third rank sect of the Great Scarlet Mid Region. There is no reason for them to be this enthusiastic, is there?”

Judging from Elder Gao’s previous reaction, Jiang Chen was absolutely certain that they weren’t just here to investigate the Veranda master. There must be something more important here that he wasn’t aware of. He cut off the man before he could say anything more with a sneer.

“Your eyes are shifty, and your words are made up of half truths. I guess you don’t value your life as much as I thought, do you? You have my final warning: what did the royal family send you here to investigate? Also, do you have an accomplice among the Veranda master’s protectors? Remember, this is your last chance. If you still refuse to tell the truth, well then, don’t say I didn’t give you any chances.”

Jiang Chen had completely lost his patience. He had no time to play around with this guy because Wei Xing'er's life was constantly counting down.

Upon seeing the young man's eyes as unfriendly as they were piercing, the captive quivered and hesitated for a long time before finally asking, "Will you let me go if I tell you the truth?"

"You and I share no enmity between each other. Why not let you go if you're willing to tell me the truth?" Jiang Chen retorted coldly.

His captive shook his head. "You can always change your mind later."

"Alright, I swear on the heavens that I won't kill you if you tell me the truth." Jiang Chen acted decisively.

His captive pondered for a moment before finally nodding. "Alright, I'll tell you what you want to know. The Veranda master has been acting very strangely for the past few years, and it's only recently that a secret was leaked out from the Resplendent Emerald Veranda. Apparently, the Veranda master has found a treasure in secret realm, and he is the only one who knows its exact location. His so-called cultivation breakthrough is just a front. In reality, he's planning to extract the secret realm's treasures."

Chapter 1146: The Master of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda

Hearing those words left Jiang Chen's jaws slack. That piece of news was one of the last things he would've expected. A secret realm with treasure? And the Veranda's master wanted to keep its treasures entirely to himself?

Jiang Chen peered into the man's eyes for a long while. There was no hint of duplicity there. In other words, the captive was probably telling the truth as he knew it. As for whether that was the actual truth, that was another matter. The man was just an underling. He was unlikely to be privy to any important or hidden information.

However, Jiang Chen surmised that it was more likely to be slightly inaccurate rather than outright false. This man was a second level emperor realm cultivator. He was someone strong enough to be a decision-maker, even in the Great Scarlet imperial family. So, did that mean the supposed cultivation breakthrough was just an act? Was a struggle over treasure at the heart of all this?

The revelation astonished Jiang Chen. How daring was this Veranda master, huh? What a monstrous appetite he had! He was planning to keep the treasure all to himself??

But there were still a few things the young man couldn't understand. If the Veranda's master really had found a secret realm filled with treasure all his own, why had he invited so many protectors? Didn't that increase the risk of him getting found out? Or did he think that his cultivation breakthrough was a good enough excuse to bluff to the world with?

If the latter, then his plan had been a thorough failure. It wasn't just the imperial family who was involved now, but a local third-ranked Scarlet Parting Sect as well. This made for two factions in the open, with more likely in the wings.

Jiang Chen brooded a moment, but couldn't quite put all the threads together. He couldn't fully analyze the problem. He didn't have time to do more though. He could only take one step at a time and proceed with caution.

"There's a formation blocking the path up ahead," he declared. "If you don't have an accomplice nearby, then you wouldn't have been able to head on through yourself. Who is your accomplice?"

"Ah, whatever," the man sighed in exasperation. "With things as they are right now, I don't think I can be blamed for selling out a friend. The strongest of the four protectors, Ole Zhang, is also the imperial family's man. I don't think the outside world knows about this though."

Ole Zhang? Jiang Chen had paid attention to the list of protectors a while back. Ole Zhang was the most famous of the twelve, and certainly the highest in terms of cultivation level. He was a whopping sixth level emperor realm expert! Even Elder Gao of the Scarlet Parting Sect was a hair inferior to Ole Zhang.

"How many has the imperial family sent?" Jiang Chen asked once more.

"I'm just one of their many dogs," the man smiled wryly. "Do you think I know everything? I'm following orders, no more than that. I was supposed to come here and contact Ole Zhang."

Jiang Chen nodded, then asked a few questions about their communication techniques and things of note. He was exhaustive in his questioning.

"Friend, I've been very cooperative with you," the man could not resist commenting after the fact. "You're not going to..."

"You're a dog of the Great Scarlet Empire, yes? I won't kill you myself, but I guarantee that you will die."

The man blanched instantly. He hadn't noticed at the time, and his realization that the young man's oath had a hidden clause came too late. With a snap of his fingers, Jiang Chen called out the Rat King.

"Ole Gold, you and your brethren have done well today. I'm leaving this guy as food for you."

The Rat King was overjoyed at the turn of events. An emperor realm cultivator was quite nutritious indeed. Goldbiter Rats ate anything and everything. Every part of a second level emperor realm cultivator was beneficial to them, from flesh and blood to marrow and tendon.

Jiang Chen didn't lie idle himself, either. He immediately began to disguise himself as the Rats' unfortunate victim. It took less than fifteen minutes for the process to be complete.

"This is like finding a pillow when you feel sleepy," The Goldbiter Rat King laughed ingratiatingly. "Now you can get past that formation in the easiest way possible."

"You did very well today." Jiang Chen nodded. "If there's an opportunity later, I'll give you another reward."

Because of his disguise, Jiang Chen was able to walk about in the open with impunity. Before long, he came to the corner of the formation that Ole Zhang stood at. Because he had familiarized himself ahead of time with their communications and its finer points, the old man didn't suspect a thing.

“Go on ahead and find a good place to hide. I will send out a secret order to gather together after everyone else arrives. Remember, don’t wander off. It’s not just the imperial family’s cultivators who came in here this time. The Scarlet Parting Sect, the Sky Eagle Sect, and the Myriad Buddha Sect have their men snooping around as well.” Ole Zhang issued a helpful warning.

Jiang Chen secretly found it funny, but nodded in apparent agreement to the command.

“Go on.” Opening up a corner of the formation, Ole Zhang let Jiang Chen in.

Considering his prior difficulties with the formation, Jiang Chen hadn’t expected the solution to be this easy. Naturally, he didn’t care much about Ole Zhang’s advice. He had only one goal in mind, and that was to rescue Wei Xing’er as soon as possible.

Besides that, he also intended to investigate the treasure at the cause of the earthen pulse. An earth attribute treasure was exactly what he needed. It would be an amazing prize if he could somehow conveniently snag it.

But he didn’t let himself get carried away by his current bit of smooth sailing. He knew full well that the imperial family was only one of the factions with its eyes on the Resplendent Emerald Veranda’s master. There were three third rank factions who shared that stance. Ole Zhang had admitted Jiang Chen, and the other agents within could do the same.

The Veranda master’s lifetime of cleverness has been mucked up by this moment of stupidity. He thinks that he can use money to buy these four protectors over, but in actuality, all of them are secretly plotting against him. His impression of the man worsened greatly.

Just as Jiang Chen had guessed, several others had been let in as well. He easily noticed them on his way further in. Despite their skillful concealments, his immeasurably powerful consciousness captured all of their positions. His senses were keen enough to find even great emperors if they weren’t particularly well-hidden.

However, he didn’t find it likely that they would attack him. No one would want to show themselves given the current state of affairs.

Jiang Chen quickly found a private place of his own, and sent out a horde of Goldbiter Rats in every direction to search. At the same time, he used a tracking method to attempt to find where Wei Xing’er was.

He found her approximate location without much delay. Just as the Goldbiter Rat King had said, there was a system of caves hidden deep within the mountain. It was a dark and lightless place. Jiang Chen wasn’t in a rush to barge in, instead relying on a swarm of Goldbiter Rats to scout the way.

Rats were born diggers. There was plenty of feedback before long. The system of caves opened up into an underground city. There were structures of all stripes here, all sorts of alien, exotic, or just flat out weird building styles.

Under the guidance of the rat king, Jiang Chen quickly made his way into the city proper. The buildings here definitely showed their age and were veritably ancient.

“Young master Chen, this place is weird. Why did the Resplendent Emerald Veranda master pick a place like this to break through? I think there’s something we don’t know,” the Goldbiter Rat King said.

“Never mind that, we need to find Wei Xing’er first.” Jiang Chen had a feeling that he was getting closer and closer to her.

“Oh, there’s news from up ahead.” The Rat King’s descendents had managed to scout up fresh information. “There’s a prison area here full of women. More than a hundred of them, by the looks of it.

“All of them are fairly young.

“Wei Xing’er is here too, but there’s someone watching her.”

Tidbits of intelligence streamed in from the rodents.

“Let’s go see, then.” Jiang Chen had a clear advantage when exploring deep underground. The Goldbiter Rat King made way ahead of him with ease, and his Bewitching Lotus of Ice and Fire also excelled at burrowing.

These amenities allowed him to tunnel to the area Wei Xing’er was being kept in in only moments. However, she wasn’t in the best of shapes. She was barefoot with shackles around her ankles. Her expression was completely wooden.

There was an altar not far from her. Around it were all kinds of deviant devices that gave off a sinister, bizarre aura. The Resplendent Emerald Veranda master sat cross-legged beside it, a half-smile hanging on his lips. He seemed lost in meditation, and gave off the same feeling as the inanimate objects beside him.

“After all these years, Cui Yu, you’re finally revealing your true colors. Did you keep me around this long just for this?” Wei Xing’er jabbed at him mockingly.

The Resplendent Emerald Veranda’s master’s name was Cui Yu. His eye twitched, but his face remained expressionless. “Wei Xing’er, I admit that you have reasonable skill. Too bad you can’t say the same for your luck. That’s right, the reason I kept you around all these years was to bring you here. Only here can your life take on a new, higher meaning.”

“Stuff it with your drivel. Cui Yu, I don’t care about what you’re trying to do, but I’d rather die than be a cultivation cauldron for you!” Wei Xing’er began to loudly protest.

“Hmm?” The master blinked, then exhaled serenely. “So you knew about it? I must’ve underestimated you, huh.”

“Me and everyone else in Great Scarlet Capital. We all know that you cultivate with a vile and heinous method that uses living humans as its cauldrons. Even if you prevail today, Cui Yu, you’ll become infamous and die a horrible death. After I die, I’ll haunt you for eternity as a malevolent ghost!” She bit off her words.

“Hahaha, do you think I’m scared of ghosts? Me, a cultivator? The throne of the Great Scarlet Mid Region is at hand. Do you think your accusations of infamy will matter? History is written by the victors. It’s just too bad that you won’t be there to see my victory. Your destiny has already been sealed as a mere stepping-stone. Hahahaha...”

In his pride, the Veranda master began to cackle. Suddenly, his ears picked up something in the air. With a frown and a “hmm”, he glared into a section of empty air.

Chapter 1147: A Formation of Blood

"Hmph. They're here much earlier than I'd expected!" The Veranda master muttered to himself with a sinister smile. He clapped his hands and summoned tongue after tongue of crimson red flames around the altar, flooding the area with a baleful aura.

The Veranda master smiled. "Xing'er, some large rats are attempting to trespass. I must go show them some hospitality. Please excuse me for a second. Don't worry, we're husband and wife after all. I'll give you a proper loving after I take care of the vermin. I'll relieve you of your virginity and have a good time before you die."

Wei Xing'er felt extremely disgusted when she heard those perverted words. "Cui Yu, you unscrupulous bastard! The heavens will smite you one day!"

"Hahaha! If the heavens truly had eyes, they never would've let the Yan clan take over Great Scarlet Mid Region! You despicable humans should've gone extinct a long time ago!" The Veranda master cackled sinisterly and disappeared into thin air with a flash of his figure.

Jiang Chen was hiding in a dark corner and didn't feel the slightest relief when he saw the Veranda master leave. The bizarre actions had given him an ominous feeling. What exactly did the Veranda master mean?

Despicable humans? Does this mean that he isn't a human cultivator? Those two words sent a chill down Jiang Chen's spine. He couldn't help but hesitate after hearing them. Wei Xing'er was right in front of him. Should he or should he not save her? Ultimately, he decided to do what was right.

Even though the Veranda master hadn't gone far yet, he had to save her right now as this was the only chance. He flashed into the area and launched himself at Wei Xing'er with the Kumpeng Meteoric Escape and cleaved through the chains on her leg with the Pentecolor Divine Sword.

Wei Xing'er was flabbergasted by the unexpected turn of events. "You..."

Jiang Chen made a sweeping gesture. "Don't speak. Come with me."

Wei Xing'er sucked in a deep breath when she heard Jiang Chen's voice. "Y-you... how did you find me? Didn't I tell you not to come?"

Jiang Chen answered blandly. "I had a feeling you wouldn't consume the powder, so I had a backup plan. Leave the talking for later. There's something very off about the Veranda master. We aren't safe here."

Wei Xing'er nodded. Her life was more important than answers. "He's a lunatic! Let's escape now! That pervert isn't right in the head!"

Suddenly, a sinister laugh echoed through the air.

"Indeed. I'm a pervert with something very wrong about me. Hahaha! Wei Xing'er, you're more charming than I'd expected! Someone actually came to save you? This is truly out of my expectations!"

As the laughter died down, the Veranda master suddenly appeared at the outer regions of the altar like a ghost. He stared at Jiang Chen and Wei Xing'er as though they were prey. The faint smile on his face thoroughly conveyed his bloodthirst.

Color drained from Wei Xing'er's face when the Veranda master reappeared. She immediately pushed Jiang Chen away. "Go! Leave me!"

She didn't know what the Veranda master was planning, but she understood him well enough to know that he was up to something very bad.

"Go?" The Veranda master smiled blandly. "Can you really run away from me?"

His face darkened as he glared at Jiang Chen. "Brat, who are you? How did you contact her with her under my eye? This wench is a lot more of a temptress than I thought! There are actually men who'd actually risk their lives for her!"

Wei Xing'er was overcome with dread and anxiety. She knew from the master's voice that he was completely enraged, that his next steps was to commit murder!

Jiang Chen smiled blandly. "Master of the Veranda, you must be really pleased with yourself for having come up with these plans. However, you probably don't realize that you're being seen as a walking slab of meat by your four protectors! The royal family and the three great sects have already set their eyes on you! Do you honestly still believe that you can claim the Great Scarlet throne?"

Jiang Chen thought that his words would enrage the Veranda master, but the latter didn't seem to be affected at all. In fact, his smile was even tinged with jeering.

"Royal family? Three great sects? So what? My schemes and plots were all for the sake of this day! I'd be even more disappointed if they didn't come! I've meticulously planned everything to lure them here!"

"What?" Wei Xing'er and Jiang Chen were taken aback.

Jiang Chen had already suspected that the Veranda master was up to something after the first spiel to Wei Xing'er. His question had merely been a probe to unearth the master's true motives. The reply had confirmed his suspicion that everything was part of a bigger plan.

There was a very meticulous and well-made plan and actually had plans with a plan. Using a cultivation breakthrough as a front, the Veranda master had left breadcrumbs and revealed the treasure in a secret realm at the most appropriate timing. He was casting food to lure fish into the net.

Each part was connected to another and was overall very intricately woven. Jiang Chen didn't know how the Veranda master planned on dealing with the onslaught from the Great Scarlet Mid Region, but the latter's confidence was a clear indicator that everything had been accounted for.

The royal family and the three great sects believed that they'd successfully infiltrated the Resplendent Emerald Veranda and gained access to the Veranda master's secrets, but the tables had actually long been turned on them instead.

Jiang Chen glanced coldly at the Veranda master. He didn't want to participate in the dogfight between the people of Great Scarlet. He'd rather stand aside and watch the fight play out if the circumstances allowed it. However, he couldn't help but feel a sense of danger looming ahead of him.

The Veranda master smiled leisurely at Jiang Chen. "Brat, I'm just a bit impressed. Being able to keep your calm under these circumstances is a talent in itself! The others have all gone for the earth attribute treasure, yet here you are. Do you perhaps love women more than power?"

"Cui, do you really think that victory is at hand?" Jiang Chen smiled coldly.

"Isn't that the case?" The Veranda master spoke in a mocking tone, like a hunter fooling with his prey.

"Hmph! We shall see then!" Jiang Chen grabbed onto Wei Xing'er's waist and activated the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape into action. He transformed into a flash of light and shot for the outskirts.

"Hmph! You're quicker than you look!" The Veranda master smiled indifferently and made a sweeping gesture. A crimson red flag suddenly appeared in his hands.

As the flag fluttered, a sea of blood emerged from thin air and sealed off the surrounding area. Jiang Chen was quick, but the bloody ocean was quicker. He was just about to break free when the waves came roiling towards him.

The bloody light was extremely corrosive and could instantly dissolve a cultivator's flesh. Jiang Chen felt a chill shoot down his spine as it came closer. He brandished his sleeves and swept away the light right before it struck him. He wasn't afraid of the corrosive light. He was merely worried that Wei Xing'er's body wouldn't be able to handle it.

He continued to attempt an escape, but no matter how hard he tried, the ocean was always one step ahead of him and blocking off his route. Tidal waves of gory light materialized and dematerialized on the outer regions. They flashed like a red sky, imparting an ominous sense of doom. The blood-red ripples had sealed off the area around the altar completely.

Jiang Chen kept trying, but gave up in the end and returned to a far corner of the altar.

"Brat, you're pretty quick. It's unfortunate that you weren't smart enough. Why would you come here even though you knew that only death awaits?" the Veranda master mocked.

Jiang Chen looked solemnly at the bloody light around him. He knew that it was a very advanced formation and was likely powered by the altar.

If he fully activated his Demons and Gods Body and incorporated it with the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, he was ninety percent certain that he could break free. However, if he had to bring Wei Xing'er with him, the probability would drop all the way to ten percent. Having another person didn't really affect his speed, but he was worried that Wei Xing'er's body wouldn't be able to cope with the erosion.

"Cui, this blood formation is a demonic art. You must've sold your soul to the demons." Jiang Chen's voice was cold and foreboding.

The Veranda master was mildly taken aback. "Y-you... who exactly are you? You seem to know a lot."

Jiang Chen nodded. "As expected. To think that a demonic follower would appear outside of Myriad Domain! Cui, from now on, you shall be the common enemy of the entire human domain!"

"Hahaha! Humans?" The Veranda master broke into a wild laughter. "What's good about being human? The human race should've gone extinct long ago! The might of the ancient demons are known

throughout the heavenly planes! As long as the sacred flame continues to burn, the demon race will never die!”

“A frog in a well.” Jiang Chen sniffed dismissively.

Indeed, the demon race was one of the most powerful races among the heavenly planes. They were natural fighters with an extremely invasive bloodline that could transform most other races into a demon. However, calling them unrivalled under the heavens was a clear overstatement. There were many races that were just as strong, if not stronger than them.

The demon race was only notorious for their strength because of their aggressiveness. The common races couldn't help but tremble in fear when they heard about the demons. Occasionally, this fear would transform into a mindless worship. The Veranda master was a good example. He was human, yet he'd fallen prey to the demon's brainwashing and become their loyal follower.

Chapter 1148: Saving Wei Xinger

Jiang Chen didn't bother trading verbal barbs with the Veranda master. He focused all of his thoughts on investigating the secrets of the formation.

The Veranda master snorted disdainfully when he saw that Jiang Chen hadn't panicked despite his predicament. Suddenly, the ghost of a sneer appeared on his face as he stared at the duo. “I'm going to deal with those people first. As for you two ants, enjoy being trapped by an ocean of blood while I'm gone!”

The Veranda master flew away with an ugly chuckle and vanished into the air.

Wei Xing'er didn't feel relaxed in the slightest even though their enemy was gone. She stared anxiously at Jiang Chen in apology. “Sorry for dragging you down in the end.”

Jiang Chen didn't give her a response. He simply stared at the formation with calm and serious eyes. Although the corrosive light was deadly, he noticed that its full power hadn't been deployed yet. The Veranda master was able to activate this formation, but it was obvious that it was slightly lacking in energy. As a result, it wasn't able to operate at full power. If his calculations were correct, he should be able to resist the bloody light's corrosion if he pushed his Golden Body of Demons and Gods to the absolute maximum.

“Miss Wei, this formation can only unleash its greatest power after a sacrifice is made. Since Cui hasn't done so, it's still possible to break out of this formation. I'm fast enough that this shouldn't be a problem for us, but I must say that there is still a certain amount of risk involved.”

Wei Xing'er was delighted to hear this. “I'm not afraid of risks. Take me away from this place as quickly as you can! I won't blame you even if we're eaten away by this bloody light in the end.”

She thought she could die peacefully as long as it was in Jiang Chen's embrace. That was why she didn't hesitate at all when Jiang Chen told her this plan.

Jiang Chen nodded and activated the Golden Body of Demons and Gods. A moment later, a golden light about thirty meters tall surrounded him.

“Are you ready?” Jiang Chen held Wei Xing’er in his arms and dashed forwards with lightning speed. After activating the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, the duo flew towards the periphery of the formation with perfect form.

Their speed was that of a loosed arrow. The Kunpeng’s arc was nearly flawless. However, this formation was no ordinary trap. Its current corrosive power was less than a tenth of what it was truly capable of, but still extremely deadly.

While Jiang Chen was attempting to escape, the bloody light surged and attacked from all directions. The light of his golden body sizzled ghastly as it was eaten away. The protective golden hue was an incredibly high level defensive aura, but it was devoured continuously all the same. Thankfully, all he needed was a breath’s time. He managed to break out just as the corrosive light was about to overcome the golden aura completely.

That was close! Jiang Chen exclaimed silently. Still holding Wei Xing’er, he didn’t stop and dashed outside immediately. He might’ve escaped the deadliest zone, but he dared not linger for long to see if anything new cropped up. The eerie formation scared even him.

It was only after they had dashed out of the underground maze entirely did Jiang Chen put Wei Xing’er down. The woman brimmed with the joy of having escaped certain death. At the same time, she was staring at Jiang Chen with a complicated gaze. It was a look of worship, adoration, concealed resentment, and sorrow.

Jiang Chen had swooped down and saved her from death’s grip like a god from the heavens. Such heroism made women most susceptible to falling for their savior. However, Wei Xing’er also knew better than anyone that this enigmatic genius didn’t tread the same path as her.

She was a vain woman, but after meeting Huang’er once in the past, even she had to admit that only that angelic woman should be paired together with this unparalleled genius. She herself was unworthy of him. In her opinion, even Ling Bi’er was unworthy.

“Miss Wei, this isn’t a place to linger for long. Let me take you away first.” Jiang Chen didn’t pause along the way. He called upon the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape to the utmost and flew at top speed.

While enjoying the rush of the speed and dense musk of a man, Wei Xing’er struggled to rein in her emotions as her heart hammered. She was hailed as succubus and a beauty with the heart of a scorpion, but she was in fact a virgin. Everything that had happened so far was making her icy heart warm with anticipation. If Jiang Chen decided to do anything to her right now, she knew that she wouldn’t reject him. She would even meet his demands and satisfy him in the best way possible.

However, such thoughts were completely absent from the young man’s mind. Jiang Chen arrived at the edge of the large formation not long after. No one was guarding this area of the formation at the moment. It might be incredibly hard to invade the formation from outside, but the same couldn’t be said about exiting the formation at all.

Jiang Chen summoned the Goldbiter Rat King immediately. “Ole Gold, tell your descendants to guide Miss Wei away from here. Tell them to take her back to Taiyuan Tower first.”

Wei Xing’er looked surprised. “You’re not leaving?”

The ghost of a strange smile tugged at the corners of Jiang Chen's mouth. "How can I miss such a grand occasion? Plus, the Veranda master has submitted himself to the demon race. It is only a matter of time before he becomes a scourge to humanity if he's allowed to escape."

Wei Xing'er felt very conflicted when she saw the look of confidence on Jiang Chen's face. The reason she didn't consume the powder he gave her was because she didn't want to drag the man into the mess. It was because she didn't think highly of his strength as a Myriad Domain genius.

However, it turned out that she had gravely underestimated Jiang Chen. Not only had he come alone to save her, the amount of skills and trump cards he possessed seemed endless. Even when he was fighting the Veranda master, a seventh level emperor realm cultivator, he looked calm and didn't seem pressured at all. It had only been ten years or so since the destruction of Myriad Domain. Could a Regal Pill Palace genius really grow this much in just ten years?

Wei Xing'er's disbelief was only natural. Even those who thoroughly knew of Jiang Chen's strength were shocked by the speed of his growth.

She felt like saying something, but she also knew that it would only be a pointless waste of breath. Even if she wanted to stay behind to help him, she dared not utter a word considering how serious Jiang Chen was looking right now. Plus, with her level of strength, she would be nothing more but a burden to him.

"In that case... take care." Wei Xing'er sounded a little cautious. "Um, thank you for saving my life. I'll repay this favor even if you want me to serve you as oxen or horse."

Jiang Chen hadn't saved her to enslave her though, so he waved it away. "Everyone's attention is focused inside, so you should be able to leave safely. Remember, this is your one and only chance at rebirth. You won't get another one if you miss this."

His tone was a little stern. Feeling a bit apprehensive, Wei Xing'er hurriedly promised. "Don't worry, I will treasure this chance."

After sending Wei Xing'er away, Jiang Chen looked around the formation again before turning to the Goldbiter Rat King. "How many people have come inside, Ole Gold?"

The Goldbiter Rats covered at least several hundred kilometers of ground. They were everywhere and Jiang Chen's personal spy network.

"Young master Chen, preliminary calculations suggest that around seventy to eighty people have entered the formation. They're all emperor realm cultivators."

Jiang Chen nodded thoughtfully. "This means that at least half of the experts of the entire Great Scarlet Mid Region are gathered here right now."

Great Scarlet Mid Region was just an average middle region. There might be a lot of emperor realm cultivators, but not so many that one could find such a cultivator randomly on the streets. Compared to the Upper Eight Regions, the number of emperor realm cultivators in Great Scarlet was pitifully small.

"Young master Chen, it is highly likely that Great Scarlet's emperor realm cultivators are not the only ones here," the Goldbiter Rat King said.

“Never mind that, let’s head back inside. There must be a powerful earth treasure somewhere considering the earth pulses being generated. These people must have come for it. Ole Gold, tell your descendants look around and find out where it’s hidden.” Jiang Chen ordered.

There were two reasons Jiang Chen didn’t want to leave just yet. One, he wanted to claim the earth treasure for himself. Two, he had to deal with the Veranda master who’d surrendered to the demon race.

As of late, the demon race was popping up everywhere. Although a large scale demonic calamity hadn’t broken out yet, it was obvious that the demons were itching to make a move. Jiang Chen knew very well that even he wasn’t exempt from this calamity when it truly started. He was ultimately a member of Divine Abyss Continent. No one could escape the demonic scourge when it erupted.

That was why Jiang Chen had no choice but to treat all incidents relating to the demon race with caution, if only to protect himself from harm. This was without mentioning the promises he had made to Emperor Peafowl. He himself was very wary of the demon race. He knew them very well thanks to his past life. It was exactly due to this knowledge that he knew just how bad things could be if the demon race were to revive completely. It wouldn’t be a surprise if entire races and species were eradicated as a result.

If the ancient cultivators hadn’t risen to the occasion and fought valiantly during the war against demons, if they hadn’t barely sealed the demon race with their remaining strength, the demons might have already conquered Divine Abyss Continent. Nowadays, the human race didn’t even possess even one tenth of their former martial dao strength or level. It was easy to imagine what kind of fate would befall humans when demons emerged once more.

Thankfully, Divine Abyss Continent didn’t just have humans. There were plenty of other races out there.

Before the demon race showed up, the major races often fought and killed each other out of personal interests. However, they were unusually united against the demon race. They knew that Divine Abyss Continent would become a barren land with no other races if they lost. This wasn’t a mere fight for territory or resources. It was a life and death struggle and a fight for all race’s survival.

As a member of the human race, he might not be so passionate that he would actively seek out the demon race and thwart their plans. But now that he actually encountered a plot, he had no intentions of letting it take root right before his eyes. He would eliminate this threat even if it was as insignificant as a spark. This was Jiang Chen’s bottom line.

Chapter 1149: Defense from the Four Great Wandering Cultivators

Wei Xing’er’s departure alleviated the last of Jiang Chen’s concerns. His load thus lightened, he was ready to jump back into the fray. He lingered another few moments on the formation’s edges before he readied himself for reentry.

Just as he was about to move, something tickled at his ears. He slowed his body and footsteps, pausing beneath a tree and probed the surroundings with his consciousness. His eyes were focused straight ahead.

“Come on out!” he harrumphed softly. His scan had told him about the ambush in the wings. There were two assailants on each side, clearly prepared to intercept him.

Jiang Chen found this a little odd. On his first time out with Wei Xing'er, there had been no one here. He hadn't taken long to send the girl off, and yet four new people had suddenly shown up.

Have these people come specifically for me? Jiang Chen mused in surprise, but let none of his astonishment show through. His consciousness told him that these four assailants were quite strong. All of them were third level emperor realm. However, there was nothing for him to be afraid of. His own cultivation level was far too high for that.

“Kekekeke...” An ear-piercing cackle suddenly came from his right. A figure in hemp flew out from within the grass.

With that figure came a ray of blinding light. Suddenly, a strong sensation of danger crept into his heart. Jiang Chen instinctively dodged.

A pillar of gold shone down like a blast of harsh sunlight. It was a storm of gold needles, shot at an impossible speed!

A decrepit old woman wearing tattered hempen clothes stood before him. Her face was as wrinkled as a sun dried orange peel, utterly ugly to behold.

“Hmm. You got out of the way of granny's gold needles, eh? Not bad, kid. Too bad you've come to the wrong place!” The old woman was one of the twelve protectors that the Veranda master had handpicked. She was Granny Goldneedle and one of the four wandering cultivators.

Jiang Chen had seen the four's reception by the Veranda master. This old granny had definitely been there. But shouldn't she be with the other couple of protectors right now? And shouldn't they be somewhere else?

The Resplendent Emerald Veranda master's misdirecting strategy involved sending off a group of protectors with an impostor. In theory, the old lady should've been there. So why was she here?

Did they return after going somewhere else? What's the point of having a plan in the first place, then? Jiang Chen was thoroughly confused. This was growing curiouser and curiouser. There was a grand conspiracy behind all of this, an invisible man behind the curtain. The puppeteer... was the master of the Veranda.

Or... is he? Jiang Chen was doubtful that a man of his abilities could set up such a large game board on his own.

Does he have helpers? Or is he one of the puppets too? The young man felt a jolt of sudden unease. This was where his Boulder's Heart came in. He was able to maintain mental calm despite his anxiety.

“There's more of you. Are you mice? Do you plan on hiding forever?” Smirking, Jiang Chen look straight at the remaining trio's hiding place. He hadn't seen the other three yet, but they were sure to be none other than Old Man Clearcloud, the Silversand Cavalier, and Sir Miao. The other three wandering cultivators had also come.

“This is no place for your insolence, child!” A thunderous shout cracked through the air, heralding the entrance of another figure into the fray. This man had uniquely silver eyebrows. Yep, the Silversand Cavalier.

From the left and the right, two more showed themselves. Old Man Clearcloud had snowy hair, and Sir Miao, a handsome appearance. The four wandering cultivators took one corner each, pressing Jiang Chen in.

With lightly furrowed brow, Jiang Chen swept his God’s Eye across the quartet’s eyes. His gaze was deep and soul-searching, piercing against the defenses of their consciousnesses.

Refusing to be cowed, the four emperor realm experts sneered back. There was apathy, devilry, disdain, and solemnity. The personality of each member in the quartet was revealed in their look.

Granny Goldneedle was the apathetic one, Sir Miao, mocking; Old Man Clearcloud, disdainful, and the only solemn one was the Silversand Cavalier. The last of these was the only one who took Jiang Chen seriously. It had something to do with his experiences. Having once been part of a sect, the Cavalier had the painful experience of having his entire sect wiped out. Therefore, he tended to be a bit more cautious than the others.

Granny Goldneedle was undisciplined and unruly, and used to having her own way. Her aloofness biased her towards apathy.

Sir Miao was young, famous, talented, and flippant. In his eyes, Jiang Chen was a mere ant. He was easy prey, nothing more—hence his more toying attitude.

Ole Clearcloud was a man of high position amongst the wandering cultivators. A well-traveled individual, he found very few people worthy of serious consideration. This transferred to Jiang Chen as lackadaisical disdain.

“Tsk tsk, the Resplendent Veranda Master is overcautious. Why did he ask the four of us to deal with a child?” Sighing, Sir Miao shook his head. Clearly, he found the task to be joyless and boring.

The old granny’s face gained a few wrinkles. “Don’t take him too lightly, Sir Miao. He dodged an attack from my gold needles. He’s no lightweight.”

Sir Miao smiled serenely. “Why flatter him like that, granny? He’s just a half-step emperor realm cultivator. Any one of us can easily take him.”

“Alright,” Old Man Clearcloud spoke up. “We were paid to do a job and now we must deliver. We have the instructions. Even if it’s as easy as a tiger hunting down sheep, we still have to put on a show. Since you’re so confident, Sir Miao, I’ll leave him to you.”

“Why are you leaving him to me?” Sir Miao shrugged.

“You’re the youngest one here,” Old man Clearcloud frowned. “We’re giving you a chance to shine because we trust you.”

“Don’t feed me that nonsense. Granny Goldneedle struck first. I think there’s no point bothering someone else to do it. After you, Granny.”

“You’re all too selfish,” Granny Goldneedle huffed. “Fine, I’ll do it.”

Ole Clearcloud nodded. Sir Miao smiled, but said nothing.

“Don’t underestimate him, Granny,” the Silversand Cavalier said unexpectedly. “There’s more to him than meets the eye.”

A disconcerting grin appeared on the old woman’s face. “Don’t worry. That kid is pretty fast, but dealing with the fast ones is granny’s specialty!”

Granny Goldneedle was a master of needles. Her attack from ambush a few moments prior had only been testing the waters. Her adeptness with gold needles was almost legendary. When pushed to her limits, she could fill the air with nothing but needles. No matter how quick one was, it was difficult to make full use of that speed given the needles’ density. After all, each emperor realm cultivator had their own domain.

“Get ready to back me up!” A low bark heralded the granny’s preparation to attack.

A sneering Jiang Chen chose this moment to laugh aloud. “Ole Clearcloud, a sectless man unafraid of authority... the Silversand Cavalier, a man whose sect was destroyed and yet refused to bow to his enemy... I thought you two were men of character. As for you, Granny Goldneedle, with how individualistic and maverick you tend to act, I imagined that you would have your own principles. How... unexpected. But I suppose fame is often undeserved.”

“Hmm? Are you trying to get me to kill you on the spot, kid? Saves you some suffering in the long run, eh?” Jiang Chen’s words darkened the granny’s face.

“You’re well-known, Granny Goldneedle, but don’t let that fame get to your head.” Jiang Chen was back to his default faint smile. “I’ll stand without moving a finger. You can attack with your gold needles all you want. If you can hurt one little hair on my body, then I’ll let you do whatever you want with me. Deal?”

The old woman’s eyeballs bulged. She was angry enough to cough up blood. “Do you just not know any better, kid, or are you getting your last words out before you die?”

“I suppose words aren’t convincing enough.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Try me.”

A wave of his hand caused something to materialize in his palm. It swiftly expanded to the size of a mountain—no, it was a mountain in the first place!

It was his magnetic golden mountain!

Enraged by Jiang Chen’s arrogance, Granny Goldneedle swept her sleeves towards him. Countless gold needles flew at the young man from every direction, assaulting him like a torrent of hairs.

Her needles weren’t simple throwing weapons. Each and every one of them had been specially refined. The granny had full and absolute control over their movements. Because of this, she could change their trajectories at any time. Indeed, each needle followed its own path.

They moved almost as if they were sentient. They automatically sought their target’s weak spots, and constantly looked for defensive openings. With a shift of his eyes and a push of his palm, Jiang Chen

magnified his mountain instantly. It became ten yards tall, and exerted a terrifyingly powerful magnetic field. This caused a strange scene to occur.

The innumerable needles were sucked up by the magnetic field like a dragon drinking water. None of them were left airborne, each and every strand of metal tightly held in place by the mountain's magnetic force.

In a flash of golden light, the mountain's absorbing power took the refined needles as its own.

"Do you have more?" Jiang Chen's faint smile grew wider.

Granny Goldneedle's eyes were as big as porcelain plates. She could hardly believe what she'd just seen.

"How can this be?" The others echoed her surprise.

The wandering cultivators present were all aware exactly how scary the granny's needles were. They had relied on Granny Goldneedle to take care of it precisely because they had faith in her ability to fight speedy cultivators. How could they have thought of the possibility that the young man would devour the granny's entire attack?

"What dastardly trick did you pull, kid?!" Granny Goldneedle was grim. Her gold needles were precious to her. She had plenty more left, but she didn't want to waste them.

Chapter 1150: Shocking Emperor Realm Cultivators

Jiang Chen rarely ever used the magnetic golden mountain. He hadn't even used it once in Myriad Domain and once during the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering, but the audience was mostly citizens of the capital. Others who recognize it were dead by now.

The four wandering cultivators were active within the confines of Great Scarlet Mid Region, located tens of thousands of miles away from Veluriyam Capital. The fact that they knew nothing about the magnetic golden mountain was no surprise.

The cultivation world was simply too big. Jiang Chen wasn't reknowned throughout the world yet and hadn't had much of a chance to shine. His arsenal was relatively unknown. His abilities would only be recognized when he transcended to great emperor realm and became the biggest topic in the entire human domain. Maybe then, others would instantly recognize his treasures and techniques.

For now though, he didn't need worry about such things. The magnetic golden mountain was capable of multiple forms. All he needed to do was switch it up a little and no one would be able to recognize it.

"Granny Goldneedle, feel free to throw everything you have at me. Like I said before, count it as my loss if you make me move." Jiang Chen remained as nonchalant as ever before, but the granny had completely changed her attitude.

She was extremely furious, but not a complete idiot. Even though her golden needles were powerful and ever-changing, it was obvious that her enemy was in possession of a treasure that directly countered them. No matter what variation she tried, her needles were not going to be very effective against him. It was so pointless that she might as well be throwing sticks instead!

This infuriated Granny Goldfinger even more. Her cultivation was completely based on her needles. She'd faced a number of difficult foes over the years, but she'd never lost to someone in such an embarrassing manner before. It completely crushed her will to fight! Without her needles, she was basically worthless.

Sir Miao burst into an eccentric cackle when he saw this. "Granny, your gold needles are a lot more situational than I'd imagined. Old Brother Clearcloud and Silversand, what do you make of this?"

Silversand Cavalier frowned. "Sir Miao, you're going overboard. We may not see things eye to eye, but we're on the same side in the end. Granny Goldneedle's loss reflects badly on all of us."

Old Man Clearcloud nodded in agreement. "That brat is a freak! For the sake of fairness, we should join forces! We can cover for each other that way."

Sir Miao shrugged. "All four of us? Against a nameless scrub like him? I refuse to stoop so low. You three can join hands against him if you want to. I'll be backup."

Jiang Chen smiled blandly. "Why waste your breath? All of you have gone beyond your bottom line and stomped on your own faces when you became the Veranda master's lackey. You should join forces. It saves me the trouble of taking you on one by one."

"Such impudence!" Old Man Clearcloud flew into a rage after being ridiculed by Jiang Chen. "Brat, by the looks of your abilities, I can tell that you're not from an ordinary background. Don't think you can put airs because you're from a great sect!"

"Hahaha! Put on airs?" Jiang Chen suddenly crowed with laughter. "My respect is only given to those that are worthy. You're strong, yet you serve a master that's clearly unworthy of your loyalty. How do you expect me to show you respect?"

"The Veranda master pays us for our labor. It's only right that we serve him well!" Old Man Clearcloud said bluntly.

"Only right?" Jiang Chen replied in a mocking tone. "Even though the Veranda master has betrayed humanity and devoted himself to the demon race?"

"What?" Old Man Clearcloud was taken aback. He didn't understand.

The Silversand Cavalier was stunned as well. "Demon race? Young man, clearly you lie!"

Granny Goldneedle stared at Jiang Chen solemnly. She didn't understand why the latter had spoken those words either.

The large smirk on Sir Miao's face suddenly flitted between uncertainty and uneasiness.

Like an all-seeing clairvoyant, Jiang Chen threw a piercing glare at the last. "Sir Miao, I heard that you've become quite famous among the wanderers in recent years. So it seems you're quite pleased with the fame you've received in exchange for your devotion to the demons!"

A bloodthirsty expression instantly flashed onto Sir Miao's face. "Brat, how dare you resort to slander? Are you trying to escape by turning us against each other?"

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. "Even that formation with the bloody light couldn't hold me back! What can a demon runt like you possibly do to me?"

A glint appeared in Sir Miao's eyes. An odd expression slowly emerged as he glared at Jiang Chen.

"Old Brother Clearcloud, Old Brother Silversand, Granny Goldneedle! That cunning brat is trying to turn us against each other! This cannot do! We must join forces and eliminate him before we're influenced any further!" Sir Miao suddenly shrieked at the top of his lungs.

Granny Goldneedle roared for a fight, but Old Man Clearcloud kept silent. The Silversand Cavalier shifted his gaze between Sir Miao and Jiang Chen. A grave expression began to surface on his face as well.

"You claim that the master of the Veranda has devoted himself to the demons, but do you have proof?" The Silversand Cavalier asked.

"Proof?" Jiang Chen smiled coldly. "You'll know what I'm talking about once you see the demon altar and its formation, but I'm afraid you won't have long to live after as you'd be a blood sacrifice then."

"Altar? Blood sacrifice?" The Silversand Cavalier shifted his gaze towards Old Man Clearcloud. "Old brother, what do you think?"

Old Man Clearcloud shook his head. "I'm not good at making judgements. Silversand, you've always been the clear-headed one. What do you think?"

The Silversand Cavalier furrowed his brows. "I'm on the fence. The Veranda master's actions are indeed a little out of the ordinary."

"Listen, I don't have the time to listen to your discussion. I don't care whether you believe me or not. By the time you're done prattling, the blood sacrifice would be completed and a demon lord will be summoned into this world. No one here will be left alive then." Jiang Chen unleashed the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape in the middle of his sentence and broke through their encirclement. He was so quick that they didn't even have the time to react.

"Please hold!" The Silversand Cavalier immediately yelled.

Jiang Chen suddenly stopped and launched a lightning quick Supernova Point at Sir Miao. The latter reacted very quickly and engaged the powerful finger strike with his fan.

"Don't believe his lies!" Sir Miao yelled in exasperation. He swung his fan and launched a frighteningly powerful hurricane at Jiang Chen.

The latter snorted coldly and unleashed the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape again. Whoosh! He instantly vanished into thin air. The crowd stood with their mouths agape as Jiang Chen vanished before their very eyes.

Sir Miao's ears twitched. He immediately swung his fan around defensively after that.

Bang bang bang! Explosive sounds reverberated through the air. Multiple runes suddenly appeared in front of Sir Miao and exploded in spectacular fashion. He had been hit by a sneak attack! If it wasn't for his superior defenses, he would've died to the strange attack!

Jiang Chen's attack potential had increased exponentially ever since he cultivated the Kungpeng Meteoric Escape and gained a drastic advantage in speed. He'd gained many more viable ways to fight his enemies.

Sir Miao was struggling. Granny Goldneedle frowned at the Silversand Cavalier and Old Man Clearcloud. "Are we going to just stand aside and watch?"

Old Man Clearcloud asked blandly. "Who do you think we should help then?"

"But we were all hired by the Veranda master!" Granny Goldneedle answered in a depressed manner. There was nothing she could do against Jiang Chen. She bore a subconscious hatred for the young man because her anger hadn't subsided yet. The fact that he'd taken her needles didn't help matters either.

The Silversand Cavalier shook his head. "I find this matter incredibly bizarre. Sir Miao's background has always been a mystery. It's against logic for a wandering cultivator to rise that quickly. Even the geniuses from influential sects can't achieve such a meteoric rise in such a short time."

"What are you saying?" Granny Goldneedle couldn't help but ask.

"It's unwise to take this matter lightly. Especially when the demon race is involved." The Silversand Cavalier didn't have a clear stance on this matter, but he no longer had a reason to be at odds with Jiang Chen.

"You believe that brat's lie? The demon race is just imaginary! Why would they suddenly appear in Great Scarlet Mid Region?" Granny Goldneedle remained unconvinced.

"Nobody has seen a demon in the human domain yet, but rumors of their reappearance have been spreading all over the lands. Many groups of cultivators have gone missing in the desolate wildlands in the past few years. Apparently, they are never seen or heard from ever again when they wander into the restricted lands," the Silversand Cavalier murmured lowly.

"Those are mere rumors, not solid facts!" Granny Goldneedle remained adamant.

"But those rumors can possibly be true! Years ago, the restrictions in the restricted lands was weakened for a short period of time and gaps appeared every now and then. After that, a powerful expert appeared out of nowhere and set a powerful formation to reseal and barricade the restricted area from other cultivators. It's impossible to know how many entered the area and how many demons have escaped before that." The Silversand Cavalier spoke solemnly.

Old Man Clearcloud suddenly asked. "Silversand, what do you think we should do then?"

"We should head inside the formation and get a better bearing on the situation. That young man is determined to enter. If he's lied to us, it's easier to defeat him inside. If this matter is really related to the demons, I cannot sit idle and do nothing."

Old Man Clearcloud nodded and glanced at Granny Goldneedle. "Goldneedle. Silversand has made a good point. The fate of the human race is at stake here. We cannot afford to be negligent."

Granny Goldneedle was extremely dissatisfied. "If you want to go, go by yourselves then! This is absurd! Demons can't possibly be real! Even if they are, why should I care? As long as it doesn't affect me, who

really cares if they are demon or human? When I was at my most desperate, not a single human offered me a hand! Why should I care about the fate of the human race? What a joke!”