

Three Realms 301

Chapter 301: The Fourth Trial, the Perverse Genius Continues

No matter the reason why an origin realm old monster had set his sights on him, Jiang Chen still felt quite ticked off about it.

However, as daring as Sunchaser was and as domineering as his personality was, he still wouldn't be able to directly harm Jiang Chen whilst he was within the legacy territory.

After all, there were three other forefathers present within. Doing as he pleased would surely enrage the other three sects.

Less than twenty thousand candidates of the original four hundred thousand remained after the first three trials had ended.

Even so, that was still an impressive number.

The fourth trial was practical combat, which was the most likely to result in injuries out of all of them.

The remaining twenty thousand candidates were the cream of the crop. With fervent eyes and vigorous spirits, they were all chomping at the bit, craving the opportunity to show off their skills in the fourth trial.

"The fourth trial tests one's practical combat capabilities, as well as one's martial arts techniques."

The organizer pointed at a smooth stone marker, several acres wide, far off in the distance.

"Do you see that smooth, gleaming stone marker?"

Twenty thousand pairs of eyes that in turn belonged to the twenty thousand present practitioners all looked over in unison.

"In a moment, the stone marker will display a martial arts technique called the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death'. The details of the technique will be fully displayed on the marker. You will have, at most, three days to both learn and grasp it. Remember, the focus is on learning and grasping it. That means that you can only simulate how to use it in your mind, but cannot actually practice it. You will enter the 'Great Hall of the Netherworld' to be tested after three days. There are countless secret chambers within the Hall, and each chamber in turn holds golems of varying levels. These golems will only use the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' to spar with you. There are ten levels to the secret chambers, and you have three chances to take the challenge. Those who rank in the top 8,000 will advance to the next trial. All those who remain will be eliminated."

"You're surely curious how the rankings will be determined?"

"According to the rules of ranking, it will be determined by the level of the secret chamber you challenge."

"Some of you may want to ask how the rankings will be determined if two candidates challenge a chamber of the same level?"

The organizer chuckled. "If the difficulty of the secret chamber is the same, then the amount of time used to complete the challenge will be used to determine ranking. The shorter amount of time used in the same level of difficulty, the higher one's ranking will be. If the amount of time elapsed also happens to be the same, then whoever finished grasping the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' first will be ranked higher."

There were only ten levels of difficulty in all, which of course meant that there would be a large amount of candidates challenging the same level.

It was a logical thing to use elapsed time to more finely determine rankings. Whoever used the shorter amount of time would have a higher practical combat strength.

If both used the same amount of time, then whoever comprehended the technique faster had superior powers of comprehension. This too, made sense.

In this regard, the rankings would be very easy to determine.

All of the twenty thousand left had excellent skills of understanding. They naturally understood the rules in a single attempt.

Everyone warned themselves to be on full alert. Only eight thousand of them would be left after this trial.

No one wanted to be disqualified; everyone wanted to be part of the eight thousand left.

Competition existed in every form, whether the level of difficulty in the challenge, the time spent in the challenge, and even the speed of comprehending a new technique.

At that moment, all practitioners felt a strange sense of pressure.

The level of the competition was palpable when more than half of the remaining twenty thousand was slated for elimination.

Jiang Chen sat cross legged in the midst of the crowd, presenting an extremely low profile with lowered head and eyes, concealing his brilliance.

"The 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death'?" Jiang Chen searched for this technique in his consciousness, but sadly found nothing in his past life pertaining to this technique.

"This is likely an ordinary technique, so it's quite normal for me to have no memory of it." Jiang Chen smiled inwardly.

With his knowledge of martial dao, the fact that he'd never encountered this technique before didn't present a problem.

The powers of comprehension from his past life were readily apparent. Just like the national treasure, the "Eastern Amethyst Qi" method in the Eastern Kingdom, he'd carelessly practiced the two foundational techniques of "Amethyst Cloud Palm" and "Eastern King Point" to the legendary realm without a second thought.

That would mark the point where he'd thoroughly conquered the proud Princess Gouyu.

Perhaps the “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” was of a higher level than the “Eastern Amethyst Qi” method, but in the end it was all the same to Jiang Chen.

The organizer called out just as Jiang Chen was musing, “Alright, the four trial begins now!”

Lines of text appeared on the smooth, gleaming marker.

The text was carved quite clearly on the enormous stone marker.

Jiang Chen looked up and committed the entire text to memory.

His strong consciousness and memory were naturally something that other practitioners couldn’t measure up to.

The ten thousand characters of the technique were branded into his memory after one read through, incapable of being obliterated.

Jiang Chen focused his attentions after memorization and entered a state of meditation.

“The ‘Obscure Seal of Life and Death’ is a seal technique that simulates all beneath the heavens to form a hand seal of life and death. All beneath the heavens are encompassed by this life and death...”

Jiang Chen started to ponder the theory of this technique.

Just as he thought, this technique wasn’t a particularly advanced one, and was most suited for those of the small spirit realm.

Anyone below that realm who attempted to practice this technique would find it a bit difficult.

Those above that realm would find this technique a bit useless.

Of course, if any technique could be trained to the realm of great perfection, then that was another matter entirely. Even if an earth spirit realm practitioner practiced this technique to great perfection, the force behind it would be quite frightening.

The innate level of a technique could determine many things.

However, the level of training of a practitioner could also determine many things as well.

Of course, at this moment, Jiang Chen’s mind was purely without extraneous thoughts.

He was going through countless iterations of this technique.

There was a very stringent aspect of the fourth trial in that one could only simulate how to use this technique in their minds before taking on the challenge. Actual practice was disallowed.

If you wanted to practice, you had to enter the “Great Hall of the Netherworld”, and you only had three chances to practice.

One could perhaps choose a lower level room the first time to verify the results of one’s understanding.

One would then move onto a higher level the second time, continuing to gain more practical experience.

The third time however, had to be approached with utmost caution. One had to select the highest level possible in their challenge.

It'd be a huge loss if one didn't make it into the final eight thousand because they had chosen too low a level.

One had to say that this kind of testing method was quite harsh. It made great demands on a practitioner's powers of comprehension.

All candidates wore serious expressions.

Every minute after the start of the trial was quite precious.

Jiang Chen had gained a thorough rudimentary understanding of this technique after two hours.

After four hours, he could go through all the motions very smoothly.

After six hours, Jiang Chen rose to his feet and walked up to the organizer, "I want to take on the challenge."

The organizer had been dozing off, obviously completely unprepared as well.

Ordinarily speaking, there were three days given for learning.

Even a genius with superior powers of comprehension would need at least one or two days, right? Therefore, the organizer hadn't thought at all that someone would take on the challenge on the first day.

"What? Challenge?" He blanked. "Now?"

Jiang Chen nodded.

"Then... alright, come with me." Each trial had a different organizer, so the organizer of the fourth trial was unfamiliar with the "freak with the boulder's heart" and his thoughts didn't travel in that direction.

Otherwise, if he had known that the subject of so much gossip was standing in front of him, then he might not have been so shocked.

"This quick?"

"Taking on the challenge after six hours? Has this fellow practiced the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' before? Can someone learn it within six hours?"

"Eh, I heard that there was a genius who emerged from the previous trials. Everyone called him the freak with the boulder's heart. Is it him again?"

"Oh man, that really is possible!"

"Tsk tsK tsK tsK. A genius is a genius alright. But, to take on the challenge after six hours, isn't that too arrogant? Won't the other practitioners feel dejected?"

“Oh shut up. Since you know he’s a genius, then you should know that we don’t register in his line of sight at all. His competition are those sect disciples in the next selection, those preeminent sect geniuses!”

“Is that so? There will be quite a show to watch then. The genius disciples of the four sects would never think that a genius born in the ordinary world could stand shoulder to shoulder with them. His conflict with them will be a sight to see!”

Jiang Chen headed directly into the Hall with the organizer, paying no heed to the talk in the outside world.

The Great Hall of the Netherworld was exceedingly spacious with countless secret chambers, scattered all over like the stars in the sky. Ten rows of ten rooms were enough to accommodate the several thousand testing at the same time.

There were ten rows because of the ten different levels. They started off from level one and proceeded in an ascending fashion to level ten.

“Do you see these ten secret chambers? The difficulty increases in ascending order. You have three chances, with your best score being recorded. However, remember that if you fail even one of the three chances, you’ll be disqualified. Therefore, think carefully when you select a room, because you cannot afford to fail.”

The organizer was rather kindly and patient as he took the time to explain the rules in detail.

Jiang Chen nodded. He’d actually formulated a plan long ago.

Chapter 302: Passing Easily

“I will challenge the fifth level.” Jiang Chen said.

“What?” The organizer was startled. To start off at the fifth level, wasn’t that too risky?

“The fifth level is equivalent to the second level spirit realm. You’ll face a golem of the second level spirit realm in it, and you can only deploy the ‘Obscure Seal of Life and Death’. Have you made your decision?”

The organizer was rather kind hearted as he said a reminder to Jiang Chen because he felt that this young man’s decision was simply too risky.

Ordinarily speaking, those who could pass the fifth level were absolutely able to rank at the top. They had hope of being in the top eighty, not to mention just the top eight thousand.

Usually, the wisest choice for candidates was either the first or second level secret chambers.

That would be the equivalent of a true qi realm golem. Candidates could get in some practice, familiarize themselves with the technique, and warm up. n-0VElbIn

To challenge the fifth level on his first try, that was an absolute joke! Did this candidate want to shoot himself in the foot?

Jiang Chen flashed a friendly smile to express his gratitude. He did indeed feel the organizer’s kindness through his reminder.

He still nodded resolutely, "Yes, the fifth level. I've decided."

Seeing that the candidate himself was this firm, the organizer naturally couldn't force him to go against his will. He sighed lightly and nodded, "Alright, this is the entrance to the fifth level. You will enter by yourself. Remember, the time of your challenge will become the basis of your ranking."

Although the organizer didn't know who Jiang Chen was, he still rather admired such a young man with such daring and courage.

Jiang Chen stepped forward, pushed open the door, walked through it and felt it close slowly behind him.

The organizer looked at the slowly closing door and shook his head lightly, "When had the ordinary disciples become this impulsive? The ordinary disciples in my memory have always been quite cautious, due to lack of resources and knowledge. They've always been timid and fearful. This young man is rather odd."

The other organizers had walked over.

It was obvious that they were also curious about the candidate who had finished understanding the technique in six hours. They couldn't help but ask, "What level did that candidate choose?"

"Guess!" The organizer purposely put on an air of mystery.

"I'm guessing that it would be the first level, the lowest level. That fellow most likely wants to make use of the easiest level to determine his battle capabilities."

"Indeed! He must want to deepen his understanding through practical combat. If he could fully digest this technique in six hours, then his powers of comprehension would be much too strong!"

"It's also possible that he's practiced the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' before?" An organizer proposed. He didn't believe that anyone would be able to fully comprehend a technique in six hours.

"Heh heh..." The organizer smiled bizarrely. "He chose the fifth level."

"What?!"

"The fifth level? You're joking!"

"That's impossible! To attempt the fifth level after learning this technique for six hours, unless he wants to die, it's complete horseshit that he wants to fight a second level spirit realm golem with an unpracticed technique!"

The organizer shrugged his shoulders with a wry smile, "Believe what you will. He's gone into the fifth level chamber at any rate."

"Crazy, truly mad. Even if he is the freak with the boulder's heart that they mentioned before with incredible potential, he'll still be beside himself with regret if he comes out worse for the wear after attempting such a difficult level!"

"The young are arrogant, perhaps his earlier successes have inflated his head?"

“The ordinary practitioners still lack that bit of calmness without the cultivation from the sects.”

The organizers all sighed with emotion, patently not thinking much about Jiang Chen’s actions.

The main organizer also sighed, “I also subtly hinted all this to him, but he was quite resolute and he didn’t seem like someone who could be convinced.”

“Then it’s right that he should suffer for his lack of flexibility.”

“Uh huh, if he really is that freak with the boulder’s heart, then the four sects will still fight over him, even if he fails the trial.”

That was also the truth. Although this was a trial and the rules were the rules, Jiang Chen’s previous performance as a genius of the heart, superior spirit potential, and being the last to be bounced out of the magnetic golden mountain destined him to be a hot commodity.

The doors to the chamber opened again as the organizers were chatting.

Jiang Chen walked out with a leisurely expression. It looked like the edges of his clothes hadn’t even been ruffled, that he’d gone in only for a cup of tea.

“What?!” The organizers all goggled. “What are you doing out here?”

“Can I not leave after the exam is over?” Jiang Chen was taken aback.

“What? Over?”

It was indeed over. When the organizers confirmed this point, their expressions became quite a sight to see.

They had thought very little of him, but this candidate had taken care of the golem of the fifth level with a shake of his body. This candidate had settled things so quickly that it was like it had been as simple as killing a fly.

Had cheating occurred?

There were countless eyes surveilling the secret chambers. A candidate would be immediately disqualified if they used any other martial arts technique.

This was to say that this candidate had truly used the ‘Obscure Seal of Life and Death’ to pass the exam and crush the gatekeeper of this level.

Jiang Chen’s results were recorded in his token.

The organizer’s tone was noticeably more polite when he returned the token to Jiang Chen. “Young man, will you continue your challenge?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “I’ve gained some knowledge in this battle. I need to digest these new findings and I will return in an hour.”

In an hour!?

All the other organizers were stunned. There were a full ten days allotted for this trial.

There was no need for the candidates to be in such a hurry.

The main organizer sighed as he watched Jiang Chen walked out. "We've truly grown old. When did such a perverse genius appear in the mundane world?"

"Haha, interesting, how very interesting! I really want to know who this fellow is behind the mask!"

"I'm guessing that it's one of the outer disciples of the four sects, stooping in order to conquer, biding his time in order to emerge from the masses in the great selection."

It wasn't that the organizers thought too little of the mundane disciples, but that their first thought was still that, it made more sense for such a genius to appear in the outer arms of the four sects.

Even though it was the outer arms, they were still somewhat linked to the sects even if they couldn't enjoy the core resources of the sects.

It was possible that a couple geniuses would appear in the outer arms of the sects every now and then.

Jiang Chen appeared as he said he would, an hour later.

He once again jumped levels and wanted to challenge the seventh level.

The fifth level was the equivalent of second level spirit realm, but the seventh was at the peak of third level.

He was one step away from the earth spirit realm, and the difficulty of the seventh level was much greater than the fifth level.

Some of the organizers looked at Jiang Chen with an odd look when they saw that he'd risen to the seventh level in one go.

They didn't dare suspect this crazy genius now, but they also wanted to see how far this genius could go.

When the door to the seventh level secret chamber closed slowly, the main organizer sighed once again.

"We had thought that he was the crazy one, arrogant beyond belief and having the vision of a frog in a well from the ordinary world. It turns out that we were the ones with the limited outlook instead."

These words made some of the organizers unsure of whether to laugh or cry.

Although they didn't care for these words, they made sense.

The golem of the peak of the third level was indeed much stronger than before.

Jiang Chen realized that this golem wouldn't be a pushover as soon as he came face to face with it!

However, he too was at the peak of the third level spirit realm as well. Add to that his various advantages, he would still be able to flit through this level with ease.

But, Jiang Chen didn't pursue a quick fight this time.

On the contrary, he was actually sparring with the golem, making use of it to train himself.

If he'd sought speed in the first challenge, then he was aiming for slowness in the second challenge.

He would be able to comprehend the essence of the technique through a slow battle.

He was going to make use of this opponent with the same level of strength as him to harden himself, continuously perfecting the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' and pursue the legendary realm of mastery.

He was well aware that he could challenge at most the eighth level of difficulty if he reached the level of perfection.

Although the difficulty of the eighth level was enough for him to be on top, Jiang Chen's goal was the challenge the highest level of difficulty. He would challenge the peak since he had entered the trial. Such was the true essence of martial dao.

The golem in the highest difficulty level was the equivalent of an earth spirit realm practitioner at fifth level spirit realm.

However, the golems wouldn't be as capricious nor as wily as humans.

However, the level of their strength was there. Jiang Chen wanted to make use of practical combat to increase his understanding of the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death'. Using practical combat to increase his own combat skills was his strategy.

He would have hope of battling the tenth level chamber golem only if he comprehended the legendary realm of this technique and deployed it beyond the level of great perfection.

Bam!

Jiang Chen flung out a hand seal that was the same as the one that the golem was forming. His body danced like falling leaves as his left hand cast out another seal.

Wham wham wham!

The blows rang out continuously as air currents suddenly exploded in the chamber, forcing high pitched sounds from the air, witnessing the ferocity of the fight.

Chapter 303: Jiang Chen's Goal

"It looks like this freak with a boulder's heart is finally going to get his comeuppance?" An organizer chuckled.

"Mm. It's not necessarily a bad thing for a young genius to get a face full of dirt."

"Things are a bit odd this time. He finished with the fifth level difficulty in less than fifteen minutes, but he's been in the seventh level chamber for two days? Even if he is having a difficult time, it shouldn't take him this long, should it?"

Indeed, it'd been two days since Jiang Chen had started his second challenge.

Meanwhile, the other practitioners had also started their challenges in these two days.

However, Jiang Chen had yet to emerge during this time.

The organizers even started to wonder if Jiang Chen was up to the challenge!

In truth, Jiang Chen hadn't sunk into a difficult battle like the outside world had thought. On the contrary, he had made tremendous gains.

Through sparring with the golem, his comprehension of the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' had continued to increase and there were signs that he was about to break through from the great perfection stage.

"All life is encompassed within life and death. The seal of life and death embodies the mysteries of life and death. If I combine the mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist, I wonder if it would mesh with the mysteries of the seal of life and death?"

Jiang Chen suddenly had an exceedingly fascinating thought.

The Divine Aeons Fist was indeed an incredible technique. He had often combined it with other techniques to obtain stunning results.

The mysteries of Divine Aeons Fist were greatly enhanced when combined with the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

Jiang Chen had also added in the Divine Aeons Fist when practicing the "Moonshatter Flying Daggers". When combined with the Divine Aeons Fist, the Flying Eagle Form and Pouncing Tiger Form had combined the rhythms of the wind and the wildness of water to thoroughly injure an earth spirit realm Silvermoon Monsterape in the Autumn Hunt.

It was apparent that the mysteries of this technique had the ability to make what was foul and rotten into rare and ethereal.

Jiang Chen had new gains every time he deepened his understanding of the cycles of blooming and wilting.

Thus, unexpectedly, marvelous effects once again appeared when he combined the Divine Aeons Fist with the Seal.

"Eat my seal!"

Jiang Chen extended his right hand and made a pushing motion as a seal rushed towards the golem with a severe, lethal wind.

His left hand drew a circle at the same time, forming another seal brimming with the mysteries of neverending life, completing the circle of life with the seal that his right hand had formed.

The power generated by the two seals instantly doubled. The enormous strength, seemingly capable of making the heavens and earth tremble, crashed down on the golem.

Bam!

The golem was struck directly and smashed into the wall, shattering into a million pieces and tinkling downwards.

Jiang Chen was overjoyed. Indeed, the power of the Seal after being combined with the mysteries of life and death caused it to break through great perfection in the span of a second, exceeding the limits of the “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” and reaching the legendary realm.

This blow was as if he’d truly triggered the powers of reincarnation, completely pulverizing the peak third level spirit realm golem!

The great door opened slowly.

Jiang Chen had completed the second challenge!

Only three days had passed.

This was to say that Jiang Chen still had seven days to challenge the tenth level. Of course, he’d also used two of his chances and had only one left.

After resting for half a day, he once again appeared in the Great Hall of the Netherworld.

As for the other practitioners, only a few of them had shown uncommon skill thus far. The organizers were all rather bored.

As organizers, their greatest joy was in discovering geniuses.

But so far, apart from the freak with the boulder’s heart who’d stunned them again and again, none of the remaining candidates had particularly delighted any of them, even when some were clearly ahead of the pack.

None even came close to the freak genius, much less be on par with him.

Therefore, when the bored organizers saw Jiang Chen again, delight crept across their faces.

The appearance of the freak with the boulder’s heart meant that the time for boredom had passed, and exciting thrills had arrived.

“Taking the challenge again?” The main organizer’s face was wreathed in smiles.

Jiang Chen nodded. Why else would he be here?

“What level do you plan on challenging this time?” The organizer’s eyes were full of expectation.

He’d been worried that Jiang Chen had jumped to too high a level in his first challenge, and he’d had actually wanted to convince him not to be impulsive. But now, he seemed rather concerned that Jiang Chen might go for something too low level.

Multiple pairs of eyes stared fixedly at Jiang Chen, full of anticipation.

He’d even completed the seventh level, so that meant he had to at least challenge the eighth level.

If he completed the eighth level challenge, that meant his strength was on par with the best of the sect geniuses. Not to mention the extraordinary potential of this candidate, together it meant that in the future he would absolutely soar on top of the sect geniuses and vault into the ranks of the most elite geniuses!

"Let's raise the bar even higher this time. I plan on challenging the tenth level." Jiang Chen said. n-
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"What?"

"The tenth level? The highest level?"

"Going to the tenth level from the seventh? Isn't... isn't this too ridiculous?"

The organizer's minds were once again struck dumb by Jiang Chen. They knew of his strength, none of them denied that now. They even looked forward to him challenging the eighth or ninth level.

However, they hadn't dared to think of the tenth level.

One had to understand that the tenth level was equivalent to the peak of the fifth level spirit realm. With the fighting capabilities of an ordinary practitioner, even if one wasn't limited to a single martial arts technique, challenging that kind of level was simply offering themselves up for torture!

There weren't that many past the fifth level spirit realm amongst the twenty and thirty year old geniuses in the sects either.

Although this secular genius had amazed everyone time and time again, he was going for the top this time! The fifth level was a level reserved only for the preeminent sect geniuses.

Forget the tenth level, for a mundane practitioner to challenge the eighth level was already an absurd act.

The organizers stared at each other, dumbfounded. In the end, the main organizer was the first to find his voice. "The tenth level is equivalent to the peak of the fifth level. Young man, are you sure about this?"

Jiang Chen nodded his head resolutely. "Yes."

Since he'd come to participate in the great selection, Jiang Chen had given no thought to reigning in his strength. Eternally striving to be number one on the path of martial dao, that was the notion all practitioners held in their hearts.

Most people could never be number one due to restrictions from their potential. But any practitioner with the slightest aspiration and ambition would never give up the fight to be first.

Once they lost that urge, they would also lose the motivation to move forward.

Only when a practitioner stands at the peak and looks down on all life at their feet could they experience the cruelty and joy of training.

One would only comprehend the true meaning of martial dao in the struggle between life and death.

The doors to the tenth level of difficulty opened as Jiang Chen's upright figure strode slowly into the room.

Several of the organizers felt rather woozy in this moment, as if they were witnessing the birth of a legend and the descent of a genius.

In that instant, that lonely, proudly upright figure deeply imprinted itself on their minds.

And, they would likely find it difficult to erase this impression for the rest of their lives.

The secret chamber of the tenth level was much more spacious than all the others.

The golem that was equivalent to the peak of the fifth spirit realm brought with it an overpowering aura as it stood in the middle of the chamber. It seemed to be as though a butcher, showing not the slightest hint of human emotion as it awaited the next thing to lie across its chopping board.

Wham!

The golem immediately slapped out a seal burning with flames as it saw Jiang Chen, sending it hurtling towards Jiang Chen. This was one of the moves from the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death'.

Seal of Hellfire!

Jiang Chen didn't dare treat this lightly as he circulated the power of his ice attribute and formed a "Seal of Frostchill" and dodged lightly to the side, flanking the golem.

The golem's only flaw was that it didn't possess human intelligence. Apart from their instinct to do battle, they lacked the ability to adapt to a situation.

Jiang Chen's greatest advantage was the memories of his two lives and the intelligence of two lifetimes.

In terms of actual combat strength, Jiang Chen's strength at third level spirit realm was obviously not up to directly facing off against the golem.

If he didn't use any other methods, it would be exceedingly difficult for Jiang Chen to gain the upper hand using only the "Obscure Seal of Life and Death".

The golem waved its arms without waiting for Jiang Chen to react, sending an infinite array of seals rushing towards Jiang Chen.

This kind of wild attack was an obvious attempt to seal all the space within the chamber and force its opponent into a corner with no retreat.

As long as it locked down all the space, then all that was left for the golem to do was torture its opponent!

Jiang Chen quickly saw through the golem's fighting style but was still inwardly shocked. "This golem has an abundance of energy and would likely still not be exhausted after three days and nights of fighting. If it maintains such a crazed level of attack, the entire chamber will be sealed off by it sooner or later. Then, I'd become a sitting target!"

Jiang Chen's rich battle experience helped him react immediately.

However, the golem would never tire, and the ferocity of its seals grew in strength. Although Jiang Chen could react quickly, but no matter how quick his speed was, he was still only flesh and blood.

This back and forth sparring had continued for less than an hour before Jiang Chen knew that he wouldn't be able to hold up for long if he continued to passively take this beating.

“I must restrict its movements so it can’t continue to act this wildly.” Jiang Chen’s thoughts spun furiously as he suddenly changed tactics, forming several seals in rapid succession. In an instant, he sent out dozens of elongated seals and formed a chain of spirit power.

The golem leered as it threw a vicious punch towards that spirit chain.

When he saw this, Jiang Chen immediately moved like a swimming fish and dodged behind the golem. His arms moved furiously as endless seals flurried out like a howling blizzard.

“Let’s see if the magnetic force can slow down this golem!”

Chapter 304: The Decision of Victory in the Midst of Risk

This particular seal had departed from Jiang Chen’s usual dragon-like momentum, and had transformed into one that seemed as harmless as a snowflake.

Only Jiang Chen knew that his seal contained magnetic force, which he’d formed into countless restraining forces, and was now raining down countless seals to form a magnetic force-field.

This technique was still the “Obscure Seal of Life and Death”, but he’d infused the magnetic force from the magnetic golden mountain into it, and had turned it into a spirit chain imbued with magnetic restraining power.

Even if this battle were to take place in the outside world, it’s likely that very few would’ve understand the intricacies of his moves.

Those with a keen eye would only be able to see that Jiang Chen had used the seal in order to coalesce a force-field.

Before the force-field was fully formed, the magnetic force didn’t have much restraining force to it. It flowed through the air, and was exceedingly difficult to discern.

However, once it took shape, the restraining force it produced would be incredibly frightening.

Jiang Chen had only refined the magnetic heart a short while ago. Otherwise, he’d be able to temporarily freeze the golem by forming a small magnetic storm.

Jiang Chen was confident that he’d be able to destroy the golem if he was able to gain even a split second advantage.

This golem was quite strong with its power sitting at the peak of the fifth level spirit realm, but even a human practitioner at this level wouldn’t dare to simply stand there and take a harsh blow from someone at the peak of the third level.

Unless the person in question had some heaven defying armor, or had trained in some techniques that aided their body.

Otherwise, the full blow of someone at the third level spirit realm would still be enough to destroy the defenses of someone at the peak of the fifth level spirit realm.

Of course, this was just an idealistic daydream. Jiang Chen’s control of the magnetic force—at this stage—was still at a bare minimum. It was far less than adequate to form a miniature magnetic storm.

However, the constant flow of the magnetic force was still enough to obstruct the golem, decrease its momentum, and generally slow down its movements.

Once its speed was decreased, the threat at it posed would be greatly decreased.

Indeed, once the magnetic force-field had been formed, the situation in which the golem had been advancing one-sidedly and cornering Jiang Chen was slowly reversed.

Jiang Chen also gradually gained control of the greater picture from his passiveness.

However, the tenth level was still the tenth level after all. The golem's wild and ferocious attacks were only slightly affected by the magnetic force.

It'd be difficult for Jiang Chen to destroy the golem this easily.

However, thanks to the magnetic force, Jiang Chen had additional insurance which had reduced the power of his opponent by thirty percent.

With this balancing of the scales, Jiang Chen was roughly on par with the golem.

"To think that I'd only be on the same level as the golem after utilizing the magnetic force. The difficulty here is truly on another level."

Jiang Chen reflected with emotion as he continued to trade blows with the golem.

The two sides were so well matched that neither held the upper hand, resulting in a stalemate.

Jiang Chen was already employing the "Obscure Seal of Life and Death" at the legendary realm, but his cultivation level, compared to the golem's, simply had too much of a difference. It wasn't very likely that he'd be able to defeat this golem without using any other techniques, or deploying any other arts.

"Unless I can use the Lotus, or haul out the magnetic golden mountain, it's going to be tough for me to bridge the gap between our levels, even though I'm deploying this technique to its maximum potential."

The difference between the two realms was simply too great.

The stalemate between the two continued.

Three days passed...

Five days passed...

The battle raged on. Jiang Chen had already taken many pills to replenish his spirit power, but the golem seemed to have an infinite source of spirit power, and seemed as if it would never tire.

"This fight has continued for five days, and I have at most one or two days left in me. Can it be that I, Jiang Chen, won't be able to defeat a golem, something without flesh and blood, in the end?"

A draw was something very unacceptable to Jiang Chen.

As a practitioner with extreme ambitions, Jiang Chen would never be willing to accept a result as meaningless as a draw.

“The path of rebirth has honed the strength of my heart. I also absorbed a great deal of spirit energy in the caverns of heavenly fire and water that has yet to be fully melded into my spirit ocean. If I’m able to transmute this energy to use in my training, then perhaps I can assail the fourth level of the spirit realm, and step foot into the earth spirit realm.”

“My strength will surely increase greatly once I set foot in the earth spirit realm. I’m on par with this golem at the moment, and neither of us are able to gain the upper hand. However, I’ll have a ninety percent chance of destroying the golem once my strength increases. Should I take the risk?”

Jiang Chen debated the two decisions in his heart.

However, it wasn’t a difficult decision to make for someone with courage.

He came to a conclusion in almost a second.

“How can a mere golem at the peak of the fifth level spirit realm, with no flesh, blood, and subpar intelligence, block the progress of my trials?”

Jiang Chen no longer hesitated when his thoughts reached this point. He decided that even though it was an enormous risk, he was going to assail the next level.

He’d be able to make use of the surge in strength when he broke through to the earth spirit realm to destroy this golem!

Jiang Chen began to circulate the spirit power within his body without another thought, and simultaneously began attempting to breakthrough to the next level!

To continue fighting, and try to assimilate the spirit essence within his body at the same time... this greatly taxed Jiang Chen’s mental capabilities. This was splitting his heart for two completely different purposes.

It was a good thing that his heart’s strength was particularly strong, thus he barely managed to balance out the two efforts.

During the trial of talent, Jiang Chen had chosen the highest difficulty caverns, and had then absorbed all the essence of heavenly fire and water within them.

Those essences were still concentrated within his spirit ocean, still yet to be digested.

As he simultaneously continued to fight the golem and assimilate the essence at the same time, Jiang Chen knew that he was currently facing the most difficult challenge thus far in his life.

Two hours passed.

Four hours...

Six hours...

Time continued to pass on. Thanks to his distraction, Jiang Chen wasn’t able to fully devote himself to the battle. As the pressure on the golem let up, the golem’s counter attacks also began to grow in strength.

It was a good thing that his magnetic force field continued to operate within the chamber.

In this regard, although the golem wasn't as threatened by Jiang Chen, the restraining force of the magnetic field was still present.

Therefore, as strong as the golem's attacks were, it still wasn't able to truly injure Jiang Chen, thanks to its restricted movements.

In the outside world, almost all of the candidates had completed their trials by now.

However, because Jiang Chen had yet to emerge from his trial, the organizer of the fourth trial was unable to announce the end of the stage.

After all, everyone knew that the tenth level's chamber was the main focus of this trial.

Now that it was the last day, if the freak with the boulder's heart technique was still unable to win out over the golem, then Jiang Chen would be deemed to have gotten a draw.

A draw didn't count as a fail, but it wasn't a success either. His results would then reuse the results of his last attempt, which were from the seventh level.

Of those who'd participated in this time's selection, those who'd successfully passed the seventh level were few and far in between. $n/\mathcal{D}/\mathcal{V}(e-\ell)/l/n$

However, of those rarities, there were actually three who'd made it past the eight level.

Since this was the case, the organizers held even more anticipation towards Jiang Chen.

"It looks like we underestimated the potential of the secular practitioners previously. There seems to be quite a few geniuses in the ordinary world. There were even three who made it past the eighth level. This was rather out of my expectations!"

"Those who've made it past the eighth level are usually only the outer disciples of the four great sects, so they're still sect disciples at the end of the day."

"That may not be the case. None of their identities have been revealed yet, so no one knows if they're from the four great sects."

"Is there really any need for doubt? If they weren't the outer disciples of the four great sects, how could they have sufficient resources to develop as they have? I suspect that that freak with the boulder's heart is one of the outer sect disciples as well. He must have some deep foundations, and was waiting to stun everyone with these moves in the great selection."

"Heh heh, I'd thought that that freak would rank number one when he passed the seventh level difficulty earlier. To think that there were three that passed the eighth level. That means that, if that freak can't pass the tenth level by the rest of the day, his results for the trial will be based on the seventh level. He'll be in fourth place then."

"That kid was truly arrogant as well. If he'd solidly and steadily maintained his path, I feel that he'd have had plenty of hope in completing both the eighth or even ninth levels of difficulty."

“Indeed, but to be able to hold on for so long in the tenth level’s difficulty without being defeated, he must have stunning battle capabilities as well. If he were slightly more cautious, he would’ve been almost guaranteed success in the eighth level. He’d have a seventy to eighty percent chance of success at passing the ninth level as well. What a pity, geniuses are always so proud of themselves, and must always challenge the peak.”

“Indeed. What a pity, such a pity. If he doesn’t rank number one in this trial, then this will instead be a disgrace, a regret for him. The most preeminent geniuses should always be on top in every test. If he fails this test, then the luster his image holds will be greatly reduced, even if he is a genius.”

“Not to worry, there’s still half a day left. Perhaps this freak with the boulder’s heart is waiting to give us a surprise? Don’t forget about the third trial. If it wasn’t for the the magnetic golden mountain disappearing, who would’ve thought that he’d climbed to the ninth floor and was about to challenge the tenth?”

Jiang Chen had told others that he’d only made it to the ninth level, in order to keep his abilities a bit of a secret.

The organizers were waiting outside, full of expectations, as Jiang Chen continuously assailed his spirit ocean with the two great forces of spirit power in his body.

As two columns, one of fire energy and one of water energy, continued to assault his spirit ocean, his spirit ocean continuously expanded in turn.

He’d reached a critical moment in striving to break through to the fourth level.

“The spirit essence of both heavenly fire and water are indeed domineering. Whether I succeed or fail, all will be determined now!” As Jiang Chen thought this, the two great currents of spirit energy leapt up like a soaring dragon and pouncing tiger, crashing into each other inside of his consciousness.

Wham!

Jiang Chen suddenly felt the inside of his spirit ocean tremble as the two thick spirit veins actually broke apart into numerous thin rivulets, as gentle as a breeze and rain showers in spring, as they slowly assimilated into his spirit ocean like they were nourishing everything within.

His entire spirit ocean slowly became as pure and ethereal as land right after a rainshower.

Chapter 305: The Fifth Trial, the Valley of Destruction

Jiang Chen’s spirit ocean had just endured the baptism of tumultuous waves and became as beautiful and impressive as a rainbow after the rain.

“Is... is this the allure of the earth spirit realm?” Jiang Chen could feel the spirituality and strength of his spirit ocean and how it embodied endless life force.

Compared to the previous small spirit realm, there was a noticeable increase in quality.

Wham, wham, wham.

Jiang Chen briefly deployed his spirit ocean and could feel the subtle accents of both thunder and wind in his spirit ocean.

It seemed that the level of one's spirit ocean in the earth spirit realm was indeed quite extraordinarily different!

Jiang Chen could feel that the level of his spirit ocean was twofold, or even threefold what it'd been before.

He could feel vigorous vitality suffuse his entire body and boundless life force surging and flowing within his body, as if a slowly awakening beast wanting to burst out of the bonds of its imprisonment.

"Good, good! To make a breakthrough in the midst of battle, this ought to sweep away all the dejection of the past couple of days!" Jiang Chen felt a wave of heroism rise when he felt his strength increase.

He deployed the Seal and threw out a seal.

Wham wham wham!

This seal actually carried with it the breath of a dragon and roar of a tiger, vibrating with spirit energy, giving others a suffocating feeling as it broke through the air.

The earth spirit realm had indeed brought Jiang Chen a noticeable leap forward in the quality of his spirit ocean.

Bam!

The golem took a few steps backwards when it was struck by that seal.

Jiang Chen was in his element, akin to a duck taking to water. Enormous inspiration suddenly surged in his mind as his comprehension of the "Obscure Seal of Life and Death" was suddenly elevated. He delivered blows that were as powerful and unconstrained as a heavenly steed soaring across the skies. Each seal was as if executing a freehand brush stroke, fluid and natural.

Jiang Chen handled all movements dexterously, like an immortal from another realm, ethereal and intangible, but as impressive as the myriad scenes of nature beneath the heavens.

The "Obscure Seal of Life and Death" encompassed all beneath the heavens, and all its hand seals were formed from the heart through comprehending all scenes upon the world.

The seal suddenly seemed like the ancient mountain ranges of old, repressing monsters and evil.

The seal then seemed as if the boundless, raging oceans devouring the earth.

It abruptly became the dragons soaring through the nine heavens, and then a tiger howling through the mountains.

One moment like the crack of thunder, another the arrival of the aurora borealis.

Such a seal of life and death brimming with an immense aura suddenly gave rise to all various phenomena in the universe, indicating that Jiang Chen had deployed the Seal to a realm that he never had before.

The power behind this attack had also risen by two to threefolds since Jiang Chen had broken through to the earth spirit realm.

Add to that the restraining force from the magnetic force field, the golem sank into the role of passively suffering a beating in the span of a second.

This scenario was like the golem was Jiang Chen's training tool, and solely existed to be pummeled by Jiang Chen.

Countless numbers of seals blasted into the golem. Even though the materials making it up were heaven defying and its defensive capabilities utterly astonishing, it still wasn't enough to bear up beneath this destructive assault.

Bam!

The final seal crashed into the golem like a blow of thunder and wind, completely destroying the golem.

Jiang Chen slowly wound himself down and looked down at the remains of the golem on the ground, also thinking that he'd been lucky.

Based on his own calculations, it'd been almost ten days. If he hadn't been decisive in the last moment and achieved a tangible breakthrough, he wouldn't have had a single hope of destroying this golem.

The joy of breaking through to the earth spirit realm and passing the test in the last second brought about the result of two joys descending upon Jiang Chen at the same time, resulting in great gains.

When he opened the door, countless pairs of eyes focused on him in the same instant.

"What? He... he's emerged?"

"This... this means he's defeated the golem?"

"Isn't the time not up yet? The golem will naturally stop when time is up. The golem hasn't stopped, so what is he doing out here?"

"Can it be that he really defeated the golem?!"

According to the rules, the door to the secret chamber wouldn't open before the golem was defeated. The golem would only stop and the doors open when time was up.

However, there was still half an hour until the final deadline. According to the rules, the golem shouldn't have stopped yet.

The doors naturally wouldn't open if the golem hadn't halted.

After all of the organizers' brains had hiccuped with shock, they suddenly recalled something.

"The golem won't stop before the time runs out. This means that this candidate actually passed the tenth level of difficulty? How, how can this be?"

"Tsk tsk, he's the freak with the boulder's heart alright. A true genius! And we were saying that three people had passed the eighth level of difficulty. It seems that they are destined to be the backdrop for

this genius. The most preeminent of geniuses must trample over the bodies of others to become the most brilliant star in the sky!”

“This was the tenth level of difficulty! This freak of the boulder’s heart not only has a strong strength of heart, exceptional talent, but his ability in practical combat is at such a frightening level! This was the equivalent of the peak of the fifth level spirit realm. Can this young man’s level of training already be at this level?”

“I had thought all the remarks saying that he had the right to challenge the the most preeminent geniuses of the four great sects were hyperbole, but now it looks that he truly does have the right to do so.”

“Indeed, don’t forget that there are three years for the second selection. If this time is utilized well, then this genius will surely soar to the heavens.”

“I have no doubt that this genius isn’t the slightest bit less than any of the sect geniuses. It was a pity that he hadn’t been discovered by the sects before. If he had been on the same starting line as the sect geniuses, he may be the first amongst the younger generation now!”

The compliments cascaded down upon each other with increasing degree.

Of course, they didn’t think that their praise was too high. For a secular genius to reach this level, they were well aware of what this meant.

If such a genius had received the sect’s full resources from the very beginning, then he truly would be on par with all the sect geniuses.

The main organizer didn’t dare put on any airs now when he accepted Jiang Chen’s token.

No matter what the future was, the organizers all knew that this young man was destined to soar to the skies, unstoppable in his momentum. n//Q//V)(e-.l()&//l./n

Therefore, even though he was an organizer, he didn’t dare treat this genius lightly.

The three who had passed the eighth level of difficulty were all privately depressed to see Jiang Chen walk out from the secret chamber.

However, they all had to admire him as well. This kind of ability did indeed give them the feeling of gazing upon a high mountain.

After recording these results, the organizer returned the token wreathed in smiles. “Congratulations, passing the tenth level of difficulty has truly opened our eyes. You are the first amongst the secular disciples, and your placement cannot be challenged by any.”

This wasn’t mere praise, but purposeful flattery already.

Jiang Chen smiled as he accepted the token, “This one is unworthy of the organizer’s regard.”

After Jiang Chen had emerged from the secret chamber, the fourth trial was officially announced to have come to a close.

What followed then was a tense period of ranking. Of course, there was no doubt about who was at the top.

The top eight thousand candidates were quickly ranked.

Those below the top eight thousand were all sent out of the legacy territory of ancient times. The victors triumphed and losers were discarded. Such was the cruel reality of this selection, with no room for the slightest bit of personal relationships.

The ones who remained, particularly those who ranked further to the back, all breathed silent sighs of relief.

However, they knew that competition would only become greater in the remaining challenges.

The sects would only select three thousand in the end, this meant that five thousand out of their group were destined to pass by the doors of the great sects.

However, if any of those rejected had given a stunning performance in the second trial, they would still receive particular attentions going forward and still had a ray of hope.

“Alright, four of the five trials have now passed. You eight thousand are quite lucky to make it into the fifth trial. I will tell you now that no one will be disqualified in the fifth trial.”

“What? No one will be disqualified?”

“No one is eliminated in the fifth trial? That means all of us are qualified to enter the four sects and receive the boundless glory of being a sect disciple?”

The candidates were all beyond themselves when they heard that no one would be eliminated in the fifth trial.

“Don’t be too excited too early, there are only three thousand slots to enter the sects. The fact that no one is being eliminated in the fifth trial doesn’t mean that all of you have entered the four sects. The fifth trial tests fortune. Fortune and luck are intangible and mysteriousness. Whether or not you believe it, fortune and luck are present in the path of martial dao. The stronger one is and higher the comprehension, the more one will sense their existence.”

“In this trial you will enter a place called the ‘Valley of Destruction’ for ten days. In this trial, all of you will encounter various fortuitous encounters, challenges, and even danger. How your life will be will materialize in this trial. If your luck is strong and fortune steady, then the lucky star may shine upon you and you may pick up a treasure even by bending over. If you lack good fortune, then you may run into disaster every three steps and a calamity every five steps. You may sprain your ankle when you walk and choke when you drink water...”

Of luck and fortune, Jiang Chen was a devout believer.

In his understanding of everything in his past life, he naturally had a deep understanding of fate and the heavenly law. He also knew that whether it was ordinary folk or the Celestial Emperor, none could escape the being affected by fortune.

"I was the son of the Celestial Emperor from the moment I was born, so it has to be said that my luck was quite good. However, my meridians were crippled from birth and I couldn't train, this meant that I was lucky but with no fortune. With this reincarnation, setting aside the matter of luck and fortune, at least I can train. At least I grasp my destiny in my hands. If I happen to be blessed with luck and fortune as well, then it would make perfection even more perfect. If I lack this in this life, then I will use my strength and abilities to triumph over this destiny. The ancient adage goes that man's will, not heaven, decides, and that the world is determined by man. Fate exists, but it is not incontrovertible. Within the operation of the heavenly law, the most inferior fortune will have a silver lining, and the best destiny will always have some flaws. I have obtained the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice in this life and the magnetic golden mountain. Who says I have no fortune? This is obviously not that case. But if this had landed on anyone else, then they may not have been able to make it their own. Thus, it can be seen that opportunities are only given to those who are prepared."

Jiang Chen's thoughts became even clearer when his thoughts traveled here. "I believe in fate and fortune, but cannot lose myself in this. In the end, destiny is held in one's own hands."

Chapter 306: The Strong Determine Their Destinies

The strong controlled their fates.

The weak were directed by their destinies.

Jiang Chen's heart was more resolute than anyone's in that he would be the one to dictate his own destiny in this life. He would never be a weakling and be at the mercy of the fates!

The organizer's voice continued to sound by his ear as he made up his mind.

"Alright, everyone rest tonight. The Valley of Destruction will be opened tomorrow. You will face the trial of fortune for the next ten days."

All the remaining practitioners all began to wind down and rest after the main organizer's order.

Jiang Chen sat cross legged and began to solidify his training at the fourth level spirit realm.

To breakthrough in the midst of battle was a very risky move. Now that he had a night of rest, he naturally was going to make use of this to solidify his training.

After all, he'd been splitting his concentration when battling the golem and had been unable to stabilize his new level.

He would make use of this time to rectify the situation.

Out of the five trials, four had passed, and his results had been the most noteworthy among the rest, head and shoulders above the other practitioners.

Although Jiang Chen was happy, he didn't forget himself. nove-~~l~~**B**/1n

"To emerge from the masses of the secular disciples is but a warm up act. The true challenge of this great selection is in the second selection. I must emerge from the second selection and obtain a spot in the final battle. I'd rather like to see how exceptional the first class geniuses of these so-called four great sects are!"

The mighty sentiment of heroism rose in Jiang Chen's heart.

"In the world of martial dao, hiding one's capacities and biding one's time may result in self protection, but a lack of revealing one's abilities may result in being bullied and suppressed wherever one goes. I, Jiang Chen, either chooses not to show my light, or stun all with a single move. With my current foundations, the sixteen kingdom alliance can no longer contain me, so why should I continue to hold myself in check?"

When he thought about the Purple Sun Sect disciples' arrogant faces in the Eastern Kingdom and how his hated rival Long Juxue had been taken away when she'd been about to be destroyed, a repeated sense of repulsion grew in his heart.

So what if he had the Skylaurel Medallion in the Skylaurel Kingdom? Those from the Precious Tree Sect had provoked him without fear time and time again, oppressing him, and even desiring to drive him into the ground. If it hadn't been for Ye Chonglou's protection, his circumstances might have been even worse.

The forefather from the Purple Sun Sect had even interrogated him with a harsh air for the matter of the magnetic golden mountain in the legacy territory.

As a practitioner, no matter strong or weak, would have their own self respect on the path of martial dao.

The oppression of power had not only not crushed Jiang Chen's feelings regarding martial dao, but had sparked his own pride and his rebellious feelings.

"How dare a mere sixteen kingdom alliance think of suppressing me? How dare they restrict me at every step? Why must I cower and bow in front of these people?"

"The strong determine their own destinies. From now on, I will not retreat even half a step in this sixteen kingdom alliance. If no one troubles me, I will not make trouble for them. If anyone troubles me, I will return it to them tenfold!"

Jiang Chen had thoroughly stabilized the level of his spirit ocean after a night and had cleaned out all the impurities from his body. With this, Jiang Chen's spirit ocean grew even stronger.

One had to say, a spirit ocean crafted from the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill was indeed superior. Jiang Chen could clearly feel that his spirit ocean was brimming with potential, and the more his realm rose, the more apparent the boundless feeling of this potential.

"Perhaps the potential of this body is far below than that of an innate constitution, but through my efforts and my abilities in changing my destiny, I trust that I will walk a further path than those with so-called innate constitutions! So what of a constitution? Potential determines only the height of one's starting point, but doesn't determine how far one will be able to go!"

Jiang Chen thought of Long Juxue and all their prior grudges.

"Long Juxue, I hope your innate constitution doesn't disappoint me when we meet again."

Jiang Chen opened his eyes as an almost intangible beam of golden light pierced through the clouds, somehow reflecting the splendor of the rising sun.

“Mm? To think that the level of the God’s Eye has also risen after I’ve broken through to the earth spirit realm. In that case, I can train the last two moves of the ‘Moonshatter Flying Daggers’.

Jiang Chen stood up happily. It was about time for the fifth trial.

The eight thousand lucky practitioners were all gathered outside a mountain valley.

“The fifth trial is about to begin. I will emphasize this one last time. No one will be actively eliminated in this trial, but that doesn’t mean that no one will be eliminated. Remember, the only way you will be eliminated in this trial is by death.”

“There are those who will set foot on the golden path in this trial as well as those who will walk upon the path of hell. Everyone has their own fates. There are no restrictions in this trial. The only thing you must do is to stay alive.”

No restrictions?

What did this mean? This meant that the rules allowed candidates to kill and scheme against each other.

“Mm? These rules encourage the candidates to fight each other?” Jiang Chen’s thoughts spun exceedingly quickly, quickly gleaming this meaning from the organizer’s words.

Of course, he was utterly fearless.

“I hope nothing happens. If any idiot dares set his sights on me, then it’s his unlucky day.” Jiang Chen laughed coldly in his heart.

The organizer smiled remotely, “There are no rankings in this trial. All those who remain alive will make it into the second selection. But of course, not only will danger exist, but so will various gains. Various dangers exist within the Valley of Destruction, but they lie amidst numerous treasures. Remember, it is said that fortune walks closely with risk. Finally, whatever you obtain and however much you gain, it will belong to you. The sects will not be able to take the slightest bit away. Now, whoever doesn’t wish to take this risk can step out. There is still time to change your mind.”

Doesn’t want to take this risk?

That was a useless question. Of those who had made it to this step, who wouldn’t think that he was a proud son of heaven, someone born with great fortune?

How could they have passed through the four trials and made it to this step without luck and fortune?

Fortune in the face of great risk!

The eight thousand practitioners were well aware that there would be untold risk, challenge, and gain in this trial.

This was a gamble of who had the better luck and stronger vitality!

To train in martial dao, one should never fear danger or yearn for life. That was one of the basic psychological requirements of each practitioner.

Therefore, the only thing that greeted the organizer was a reply in unison. "We have no regrets and are willing to strive with our lives!"

Gratified, the main organizer smiled and waved his hands. "Since this is the case, come forward. There is a transportation array at the entrance that will take you to the Valley of Destruction. Remember, ten days time. Stay alive and meet with more fortuitous occurrences!"

All the practitioners surged through the entrance with looks of excitement.

The organizer also sighed in his heart as he watched the figures disappear through the entrance. "What a pity. If I was ten or so years younger, I wouldn't be willing to pass this opportunity by. It's a pity that it's exceedingly difficult to open a doorway to the legacy territory."

A great price had to be paid to open the legacy territory.

Therefore, even those of the four great sects likely would only have one chance to enter the legacy territory in their lives.

Most of the sects had never set foot into the Valley of Destruction.

The forefathers had paid a great price and could still only keep the entrance open for ten days. All participants would be automatically ejected when ten days was up.

This was why the organizer was feeling thus, that these secular disciples were incredibly lucky to encounter the great selection and the moment when the forefathers were cultivating talents with complete disregard for the price.

When Jiang Chen followed the group to the entrance of the valley, a beam of white light surrounded his body and swallowed his body, sending it into the valley.

Jiang Chen's vision returned to normal after the white light had vanished.

He deployed God's Eye and Psychic's Head to the extreme, cautiously assessing his surroundings.

A noticeably desolate valley and a lush forest greeted the eye. Every large tree seemed to be ten thousand years old, only able to be spanned by many people holding their hands together.

The body of one person seemed particularly small in this deep valley, particularly under those towering trees. It was as if Jiang Chen had stepped into a giant's world.

He recalled the organizer's warning that everyone's experience in the Valley of Destruction was different. Some could pick up a treasure with a bend of their waist, others could sprain their ankle just walking on the path.

This was to say that no one knew if treasure or fatal danger awaited ahead of them in the Valley of Destruction.

Jiang Chen wouldn't be rash whether it was for treasure or danger.

Staying alive would always be the highest priority.

Jiang Chen looked around and still didn't feel any sense of danger from his surroundings. He felt that the sunlight filtering through the canopy gave one a very leisurely feeling.

"The sun is shining so gaily in this Valley of Destruction. It's truly hard to believe that this is a place brimming with danger." Jiang Chen sat down cross legged and leaned against a tree.

He felt that the surroundings were rather a nice place for training.

At least there was sufficient spirit power.

The breeze was pleasantly warm, the swaying tree branches and dappled sunlight gave Jiang Chen quite a lazy feeling. He vaguely felt a desire to rest here.

This desire became uncontrollable when it appeared. It was like a psychological hint, making Jiang Chen's emotions more and more relaxed and at peace.

It was like the rhythm of the branches swaying were the most wondrous lullaby in this world, continuously destabilizing Jiang Chen's mental defenses.

"I should rest since the surroundings are so lovely." This notion kept rising in Jiang Chen's mind, continuously hinting at him.

"Hmm?" A disharmonious thought suddenly rose in Jiang Chen's consciousness. "Why can I rest after arriving in a foreign place?"

Countless hypnotizing thoughts immediately surged in his mind, attempting to shoo this stray thought away.

Chapter 307: The Divine Tree of Dreams

"What's going on?"

Jiang Chen suddenly shook himself awake just before he drifted off to sleep. His strong strength of heart transformed into a bolt of lightning towards his consciousness, cleaving apart his sleepy internal demon.

Wham!

Jiang Chen felt his brain buzz continuously.

He regained clarity in the next moment, his forehead beaded with sweat. He'd almost... almost really fallen asleep just now.

What was going on?

Jiang Chen's heart palpitated with fright as he sprang up and away like a rabbit.

He had truly been one step away from falling asleep just now.

However, the strength of the heart of an earth spirit realm practitioner was great. How was it possible that he'd almost fallen asleep, with no forewarning at all?

Without a doubt, the problem didn't lie with him.

Since it wasn't an issue with him, then it was an issue with the environment. This seemingly placid forest embodied a frightening power to hypnotize people.

Jiang Chen sniffed the air as a thought passed through his mind. "The Divine Tree of Dreams?"

Some memory fragments from his past life jumped out in Jiang Chen's mind. He looked at the towering tree and compared it to the information regarding the "The Divine Tree of Dreams". As he continued to compare the two, he felt that the two were a complete match with no differences whatsoever.

"The Divine Tree of Dreams soars hundreds of meters upwards. Its silver white sap seeps continuously from its branches and it doesn't have any color or fragrance. It can numb the heart and mind and help one sleep... The rhythm of the tree's swaying will create a wondrous ripple that promotes quick sleep..."

Information regarding this divine tree all matched against the data in his mind. There wasn't the slightest bit of aberration.

"Disaster is imminent with every three steps in the Valley of Destruction. It looks like this wasn't an empty bluster. However, karma makes a full circle, and fortune lies behind every disaster. In the same vein, disaster may lurk behind good luck. The sap of this Divine Tree of Dreams doesn't have any color or smell, but it possesses an enormous hypnotizing effect. If I can collect this in large quantities, I will be sure to find use for it."

With just a little bit of time, Jiang Chen immediately thought of many uses for it. He was delighted, "Fortune follows on the heels of disaster alright! The sap of this tree is an absolute treasure. It's a pity that the tree is too big. It would be something wondrous if I could transplant several of them."

Jiang Chen sighed, but he didn't feel too regretful.

He held his breath and he reminded himself not to follow the swaying of the tree with his eyes as he took out his tools and started collecting the sap.

The sap was sticky, but it kept oozing out of the branches and so it wasn't that difficult to collect.

He had gathered quite a bunch after a while.

"That's about it. If I continue lingering, despite my ability to hold my breath, it would be a sticky situation if this sap seeped into my consciousness."

Jiang Chen didn't get too greedy and he transferred all of the sap into his space ring, leaving swiftly. This patch of divine trees stretched about three to five li into the distance.

He made it out of that area in a short amount of time.

Taking a deep breath in, Jiang Chen had the feeling of being a lucky survivor of a disaster. He'd been this close just now to being thoroughly hypnotized.

"I wonder if the other practitioners have run into the Divine Tree of Dreams? If everyone runs through this patch of forest, then I'm afraid that many will not make it out of the Valley of Destruction alive."

He'd almost fallen victim, even with his great strength of heart. Those with slightly weaker mental fortitude would've fallen asleep almost immediately.

The most frightening part of the forest was that once one fell asleep, if they didn't wake up in time, it would be an eternal sleep after falling asleep deeply. It'd be difficult to wake the victims up again.

However, Jiang Chen hadn't studied this tree in particular in his last life and he only knew that this tree would become stronger, the more stronger the opponents it met.

The stronger their would-be victim's mental strength was, the more sap that the tree would secrete and the stronger the swaying of the branches.

The hypnotizing abilities of the tree would also increase if it met someone with strong strength of heart.

No matter what, Jiang Chen felt quite lucky. He didn't dare take things lightly now that he'd been taught such a humbling lesson.

The terrain was complicated in the deep valley. Although there were many advantages to Jiang Chen's God's Eye, he still wasn't able to see as clearly into the distance as he could in the outside world.

All sorts of dire and ghastly screams and roars sounded in his ears. The sounds didn't seem to be of human origin, so they most likely belonged to the violent creatures within the Valley of Destruction.

The fact that eight thousand humans had suddenly rushed into the Valley of Destruction would surely break the peace of the valley.

The strong creatures that lived within the valley would then inevitably attack these unwelcomed guests. After all, no one liked to be disturbed within their own territory.

Jiang Chen didn't mind this. With his expansive consciousness, he'd be able to more or less judge where the strong creatures were.

He'd just circle around them or hide if they were too strong.

"There will be no problem at all if I just stay where I am for the next ten days. However, this trial of fortune is about gains in the face of risk. What is the point of me entering the valley if I'm not taking any risks?"

Jiang Chen was naturally unwilling to be a coward.

"I now have the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice and am currently at the earth spirit realm. With the magnetic golden mountain and all sorts of other trump cards, I will still be able to put up a fight even if I meet a spirit rank creature. Not to mention, I also have the ultimate ace of the Goldbiter Rats."

Jiang Chen had great courage due to his superior abilities, and he began adventuring through the Valley of Destruction.

All their gains within the Valley of Destruction were theirs alone. This was a free chance to make it big, and, thus, Jiang Chen would naturally not let it go.

He wouldn't hesitate even in the face of great risk.

He bumped into a few candidates along the way, but he always avoided them adroitly.

Jiang Chen didn't wish to meet anyone face on.

Everyone was a competitor here. Even if he didn't possess the desire to harm others, that didn't imply that others wouldn't harm him.

Jiang Chen had to evade them because he didn't want to be tailed. If any idiot sought to do anything to him, he'd have to deal with a whole slew of irritating matters.

Therefore, he purposefully avoided the crowds along the way and attempted to go where fewer people were.

However, eight thousand people had indeed surged into the valley after all. It would be a bit unrealistic to be able to completely evade everyone and play to his heart's content by himself.

He was still able to bypass a lot of unnecessary trouble though.

Jiang Chen had seen many of his peers battle and kill each other over the past day. There were various reasons, such as fighting over a paltry spirit medicine, or killing each other over a dead spirit animal. There were also fights for no reason at all, killing each other purely for the reason of doing away with the competition.

Jiang Chen witnessed all sorts of ugly situations over the past day.

"Are these idiots worried that they're not stirring up enough trouble? Kicking up such a fuss for such small matters, do they think that the Valley of Destruction is their own backyard?"

Jiang Chen shook his head with a wry smile. Even if these disturbances didn't result in great trouble, small irritations were sure to follow. He didn't want to become mixed up with these people.

Before long, he'd arrived to the precipice of a cliff and gazed out towards the mountain face in the distance.

He'd been attracted here by a strong sense of the fire attribute. Standing on top of a jutting rock almost completely in the empty air, he shaded his eyes and looked out.

A flower bloomed with fiery flames in the midst of the clouds, unfurling proudly on the mountain face.
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"To emanate such a strong sense of fire spirit power from such a distance, the level of this flower certainly won't be low. It must be a heavenly treasure."

Jiang Chen looked out, but even the God's Eye couldn't determine what kind of flower it was.

The mountain face on the other side was three thousand meters away. There was no way that he'd be able to pick the flower if he couldn't fly through the air.

However, if he could make it to the bottom of the mountain face and climb upwards, there might be a trace of hope there.

“What a pity, if I could’ve brought the Goldwing Swordbirds and flown through the air, I would’ve been able to obtain it with extreme ease.” Jiang Chen sighed in his heart and then thought of the Rat King.

However, Jiang Chen didn’t want to alert his enemies beforehand.

The Rat King was at the spirit rank level, and if he accidentally ran afoul with the stronger local spirit creatures, then he’d be in great trouble.

Therefore, Jiang Chen didn’t want to bring out the Rat King unless he had no other choice.

As he was thinking, Jiang Chen suddenly arched an eyebrow and looked towards the mountain face. There were actually two figures at the bottom that were slowly crawling their way up towards the fiery flower.

Good items had a huge attraction, and others had clearly also been attracted by the flower’s abundant spirit power.

And, looking at those people, they were in a noticeably better position than Jiang Chen- right below the flower. He, on the other hand, was watching from across the great divide, and couldn’t do anything unless he grew wings and flew.

“What a pity that someone’s beaten me to the draw.” Jiang Chen was sighing when his expression suddenly froze, and an uneasy feeling surged to the fore.

Two balls of flame flew out at this time on the mountain face. Upon closer inspection, they were actually two Fire Ravens, shooting towards the two climbers like two red streaks of lightning.

The Fire Ravens opened their mouth and sent a gout of flame forth, which transformed into a cloud of fire and spewed towards the two.

The two on the wall didn’t even have time to react before they were struck by the flames. When the flames hit them, it was like a hot fire touching kindling as they immediately started burning up.

“Ah!!! AH!!!!”

Ghostly screams rang out through the entire valley, echoing amongst themselves.

Two burnt corpses disengaged from the mountain wall in the next moment, landing with two dull thuds.

No other sounds could be heard from them.

Jiang Chen had watched the rapid action with unblinking eyes, and had only come back to himself when the two fell into the valley.

“Right, the spirit lifeforms beneath the heavens will not exist by themselves on a mountain wall. It’s said that nothing is solitary, and everything is connected. This wondrous flower must have its own protectors, and it might be the companion to another stronger lifeform, even.”

Jiang Chen looked at the noble and pure flower, feeling a few more traces of desire grow in his heart.

Even the Lotus within his body was stirred to action, obviously determined to obtain this flower.

Chapter 308: A Frightening Massacre

Jiang Chen took a few steps back and hid his body within a crack of a random rock outcropping.

The scene he'd just witnessed cooled his head.

Based on his visual estimation, the strength of the Fire Ravens just now were the equivalent of the human first level spirit realm. If it was just the two of them, then they weren't much of a threat.

However, according to Jiang Chen's speculation, if this wondrous flower brimming with spirit power was indeed the companion of another spirit creature, then it wouldn't just be two Fire Ravens guarding it.

He was basically certain that the two Fire Ravens were just the small fry.

For two Fire Ravens equivalent to the first level spirit realm to only be pawns, then most likely, an incredibly frightening level of existence was hidden within this mountain face.

"It looks like I can only use wits instead of brute force. I've also got to investigate how many more Fire Ravens are hidden within the mountain face."

As a stranger in a strange place, although Jiang Chen had his sights set on the flower, he didn't give in to his impulses.

If there was a nest of Fire Ravens within the mountain face, with their strength and agility, they were a group that even Jiang Chen was unwilling to irritate.

So he decided to observe for a moment and wait for the right moment.

The fact that the first two mountain climbers had been burned to death didn't dampen any of the candidates' fervor. After a few more hours, a batch of practitioners swung into view.

It looked like they'd come prepared.

"Hmm? Coming in a group? Now this is strange." Jiang Chen was rather surprised to see a group of more than ten together.

He had seen too much slaughter and battle along the way.

These fellows could actually set aside their differences and form a group. It seemed that no enemy was forever, only profits were eternal!

Jiang Chen decided to conceal himself. Since they had come in a group, then let them try their luck first. Whether they could or not, at least Jiang Chen could get a better handle on the situation.

As the old saying went, the mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind.

If this group of people somehow succeeded in taking that flower, then Jiang Chen didn't mind being the oriole and taking it from them instead.

If they failed, then Jiang Chen would at least know roughly how many Fire Ravens were hidden within the mountain face.

They would've accomplished something if they could flush out the trump cards of the Fire Raven army.

This group of people had obviously absorbed the lessons of before. They set up camp for a long while beneath the mountain face and discussed their plans, in no hurry to make a move.

Below the mountain face was a deep mountain valley below, with there was several hundred meters between the deep valley and the wondrous flower.

Jiang Chen utilized Ear of the Zephyr in an attempt to hear what they were discussing.

The clouds within the mountain valley could block vision and affect his God's Eye, but there were no obstacles within these vast plains for his Ear of the Zephyr, so he could actually make out some words.

They were indeed discussing how to pick the flower.

One of them said, "We must first pick this flower and then fight over it according to how we discussed before. Now, let's draw straws to make this fair."

"Then let's draw straws. Four of us will climb and the others will cover them, fighting the Fire Ravens."

Although a distance of several hundred meters was quite large, it was still no problem to the practitioners unless it was a completely vertical climb with no footholds.

Even so, when one reached the spirit realm, one would be able to climb as long as there was the slightest area to push off from. One would be more limber than a monkey.

What they feared were the attacks from the Fire Ravens.

If it hadn't been for the Fire Raven ambush, the two climbers from earlier still would've been able to land safely as long as they could grasp onto the slightest area and slid down the mountain face.

Therefore, as long as they had cover, those climbing up wouldn't face much danger.

Even though this was the case, there weren't that many willing to take this risk. n(/ø)/v//e--l-.b.)1-(n

After all, no matter how small the risk, it was still a risk. What if there was not just two Fire Ravens here, but a nest of them?

What if these so-called comrades felt they were outnumbered when they saw the true numbers of the ravens and retreated?

A hastily thrown together team in which everyone didn't know the identities of the others naturally wouldn't be that reliable. It was obvious to see that no one would lay their lives on the line for others.

Everyone was quite unwilling to take this risk, so they could only draw straws in the end.

The results were quickly revealed, with four practitioners chosen. They were all a bit unwilling, but had to toe the word of the agreement they'd agreed to earlier. If they didn't, they would become everyone else's enemy. They could only drag their feet and start making their preparations.

The others all breathed a long sigh of relief when they weren't chosen and rushed the four onwards.

When the rushing got slightly out of hand, one of the four said, "Stop rushing us. I'll speak frankly before we go up. All of you must swear that even if there are too many Fire Ravens later, you must cover us

until we land before fleeing. Otherwise, if you flee first and leave the four of us, we'll be dead without a doubt."

His words reminded the other three, who all nodded in agreement.

"Right, these words are spoken truly. All of you must swear not to get cold feet, or we're not going up to be cannon fodder."

"Makes sense, swear! You must swear to the heavens and earth, or there is no power behind the oath and you can leave us behind at any time. What use is a verbal agreement?"

It was normal that no one trusted anyone else in a newly formed team.

Although the others weren't happy about it, in order to make the four climb up, they all had to swear oaths that they wouldn't leave their companions behind in the face of any danger. They would cover the four until they landed safely on the ground and then flee.

If they broke their word, they would be condemned by the heavens.

In the world of martial dao, the oaths to heaven and earth were the most secure.

It was said that whilst one may deceive the human heart, it was impossible to do so to the heavenly law. Whoever did so and went against their oath would have an exceedingly gruesome downfall.

Seeing that their companions had all taken oaths, the four could no longer find any excuses to delay.

They started climbing carefully, holding a weapon in one hand and climbing equipment in the other. In actuality, with their strength, they didn't need any climbing tools at all.

The climbing equipment was simply there as additional insurance. If the Fire Ravens attacked, these tools could be leveraged to stabilize their bodies in midair, freeing up their hands and feet to handle the Fire Raven attacks. They wouldn't be killed without trying to defend themselves.

Jiang Chen appraised them from a distance. There were more than a dozen people in this group and they were going about their activities with great fanfare. They all also looked to be first level spirit realm.

It looked like they were outer disciples of the four sects.

However, no one could make out anyone else behind the masks. The most incredible thing was that the masks could also conceal everyone's voices, so everyone spoke with the same voice.

Of course, Jiang Chen suspected that even through the masks, uniforms, and change in voices, disciples of the same sect could still communicate through previously agreed upon signals.

Thus, if there were disciples from the same sect in this group, they'd still hold the advantage.

Even though this was a loud and noisy group, seeming to have strength in numbers, Jiang Chen still had a hunch that this group would find it difficult to succeed.

He looked at the four people who'd kept climbing. They'd already reached two thirds of the way to the flower.

They'd be able to close in on the wondrous flower burning with holy fire if they climbed a little bit more.

At this moment —

Chirp, chirp, chirp.

Countless ear piercing cries sounded.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh.

Fiery streaks shot out from the mountain face in a neverending stream .

One, two, three... ten... hundreds... thousands.

Thousands of Fire Ravens had shot out in almost an instant, covering the skies above the mountain face and forming red clouds, transforming the sky into a flaming red ocean.

Jiang Chen wasn't unfamiliar with this scene at all.

When he'd commanded the Swordbird Army above the Second Crossing in the Eastern Kingdom, its scale had been thousands, tens of thousands greater than this.

But he'd been the master, the ruler of the Swordbirds then.

And now, he was a bystander who could just as easily become the victim.

These two feelings were absolutely disparate.

The sharp bird cries broke through the air. The ear piercing sound waves created by the thousands of Fire Ravens cawing at once formed a massive force field.

The sharp sound waves were shapeless blades as they sped towards the candidates.

The candidates were also obviously scared out of their minds. They didn't even have time to raise their weapons before the randomly intersecting bird cries cut them into fragments of flesh and blood.

The four on the mountain face didn't escape either. The tumultuous sound waves formed an ocean, locking down the entire vicinity of the area.

This scene was as if the candidates had been thrown into an enormous blender in midair. The density of the attacks rendered them completely helpless.

Jiang Chen's scalp tingled with numbness from this sight.

Even a sky spirit realm practitioner would have to avoid such concentrated attacks, much less those of the small spirit realm.

One would easily die with regret if they weren't careful.

Perhaps only the origin realm old monsters could make use of their incredible origin realm aura to make mincemeat out of the Fire Ravens.

Otherwise, even at the peak of the spirit realm, one would likely still be unable to withstand this sound wave force field.

“Tsk tsk, to think that the Fire Ravens would have such a strong force field attack apart from fire. They’re a meat blender! It was a good thing that I wasn’t impulsive, or I would’ve suffered as well for my haste.”

Jiang Chen felt all his hairs stand on end as he suppressed the impulsive feeling in his heart.

He observed for a bit and noticed that even through the Fire Ravens were strong, their king had yet to appear.

This meant that an even stronger ruler of these Fire Ravens had yet to reveal himself.

A king who could control such a large flock was destined to be different.

Just as he was observing, Jiang Chen felt a frisson of warning as the Fire Raven army then flapped their wings in unison. Each seemed to have been trained as they turned their heads towards the mountain face, continuously nodding their heads as if paying their respects.

They were as reverential and in awe as if they were welcoming their king!

Chapter 309: Fire For a Hundred Li

The thousands of Fire Ravens were all at least at the first level spirit realm, and their stronger brethren were even at the third, fourth level spirit realm.

When all these Fire Ravens released their spirit power in unison and flapped their flaming wings, the enormous spirit power formed a large wave and made the trees on that mountain face quickly wither, shrivel, turn into ash and dust at a speed that could be visibly observed by the human eye.

Waves of hot air beat down on Jiang Chen even from afar, making him feel like countless needles were stabbing into him in an exceedingly uncomfortable fashion.

“Since these Fire Ravens have released their spirit power and formed this fire attribute force field, it means that they are surely summoning their leader. It looks like the king of the Fire Ravens is about to appear.”

Jiang Chen was privately astonished. The destructive abilities of a couple thousand fire ravens were vastly superior to the million strong Swordbird Army he’d possessed previously!

After all, the Swordbirds were all mortal rank creatures equivalent to the human true qi realm. None of them had advanced to the spirit rank and were unable to form a strong spirit force field.

Naturally, their abilities were nothing compared to these spirit rank fire ravens.

Not to mention that it was obvious the king of these fire ravens was about to emerge.

“Chirp!”

A desolate chirp broke through the air, as sharp as an arrow, full of boundless presence like it would break through the air.

The might of this chirp from the king actually cause the mountains his subjects to cry out in response. The waves of response rolled and reverberated through the sky.

Jiang Chen’s face immediately changed when he heard this voice.

From this presence alone, the fire raven king's level of training was at least on par with the Goldbiter Rat King!

He could even judge from this stunning posture that this king was likely at the half step origin realm.

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to be surprised or dejected now.

He hadn't thought that the struggle over this wondrous flower would give rise to such a large disturbance.

Indeed, a crack suddenly appeared in the mountain face as a spray of stunning sparks spewed forth, shooting towards the red clouds.

As the red clouds churned and covered the skies, a Fire Raven King that was as large as one of the ancient elephants of old appeared.

The Fire Raven King's wingspan was quite astonishing. With his outstretched wings, he could encompass almost a small mountain.

The Fire Raven King's feathers were all red, and he seemed to be bathing in red flames as a red haze surrounded him. This made the king seem even more like the vermillion bird, one of the four mythical creatures, being reborn as his immensely awe-inspiring aura flared and ruled over all.

Chirp — —

Another long chirp rang out as the Fire Raven King shook his wings and took to the sky, forming a marvelous line and rising like an enormous pillar of flame. It was quite an impressive sight.

The thousands of fire ravens below all began cawing excitedly, chirping and calling out as well, full of worship for their king.

It was like their king was their totem, their god.

Jiang Chen prayed inwardly when he saw this scene, "Go, hurry and leave. Take your children and descendants and go for a walk. I'll be able to pick that flower if you give me even fifteen minutes." n(-Ovelbln

Jiang Chen still hadn't lost hope. That kind of wondrous flower was something one could only wish to stumble upon within the sixteen kingdom alliance, and he was absolutely not willing to give it up.

If he missed it, it would result in regret for a lifetime.

However, he also knew that even if he didn't know the exact details behind this Raven King's level of training, he knew that this wouldn't be a character to antagonize lightly, judging from the Raven King's presence.

It would be an absolute disaster to provoke this Raven King, and the level of the repercussions wouldn't be any less than when he'd been surrounded by the rat tide.

"Children, the day in which the Cloudflame Flower blooms is the day in which this king assails the saint rank. But these disgusting, pathetic humans have dared to disturb the peace of the Valley of Destruction and even polluted our territory in this valley. Isn't this hateful?"

“Hateful!!”

“Do we kill them or not?!” The Fire Raven King continued to caw mightily.

“Kill!” Thousands of ravens cried out in unison.

After entering the spirit rank, these ravens all had their own consciousness and spoke the ancient beast tongue.

The hairs on Jiang Chen’s body stood on end when he heard these words. He only had one thought in his mind, the practitioners in the valley were going to be in for it!

Jiang Chen knew that the double provocations from the two batches of candidates had thoroughly infuriated the Fire Raven tribe. Even the Fire Raven King had been disturbed. It looked like a bloodbath was about to befall the humans currently in the Valley of Destruction.

“I command you, in my name as the Fire Raven King, all those within a hundred li must be set on fire. Even one li less than a hundred is unacceptable. All that who you pass must be turned to cinders!”

The Fire Raven King gave the order, full of severe majesty.

“Fire for a hundred li...”

“Fire for a hundred li, all turned to ashes!”

All of the Fire Ravens started wildly agitating in great excitement after hearing these words. All of the Fire Ravens shot out like loosed arrows in all directions after receiving their king’s order. They transformed into streaks of fireballs and started spreading out in the vicinity.

Jiang Chen’s heart sank when he saw this.

“This is bad, with the Fire Ravens’ fire spirit power, all the places that they cover will be turned to ash and cinders. Nothing will be left alive!”

A strong sense of danger hit Jiang Chen.

His first thought was to retreat, but he quickly dismissed the notion.

It was obviously too late to retreat. The thousands of Fire Ravens had already spread out, and with their speed, a human on two legs would never outpace them.

To run out at this moment was to become their living target and seeking death!

Jiang Chen was strong, but he wasn’t strong enough to the point where he could afford to be chased to death by thousands of Fire Ravens at once, not to mention there was a king at the peak of the spirit rank.

Jiang Chen had heard the king earlier in that he was planning on using the Cloudflame Flower to assail the saint rank, the equivalent of the human origin realm.

As confident as he was, Jiang Chen didn’t think that his training was enough to meet a Fire Raven King at the peak of the spirit rank in battle.

Jiang Chen wouldn't have been so arrogant as to publicly meet the king in battle even in the outside world, not to mention this was the Fire Raven's territory.

"Remain calm, I must remain calm." Jiang Chen kept reminding himself. "I'm only courting death if I run out at this moment. All of the Fire Ravens have gone out at this moment, and I would run out straight into the middle of their operations. Even if the Fire Ravens don't attack me, the fires burning within this hundred li will prevent my escape. They shouldn't have discovered me hiding in here for now."

Jiang Chen's emotions became calmer the more dangerous the situation was.

He'd calmed himself in this moment between life and death. The only silver lining was that he was hidden in a stone crack a far distance from the mountain face and had yet to be discovered.

It was also that he possessed adept methods of concealment, otherwise the Raven King's consciousness would've easily discovered a human even a far distance away from the mountain face.

At this time, the dire sounds of human cries and wails continuously traveled to Jiang Chen's hearing.

These sounds were close and far, panicked or ghastly.

"Ah! What is this?!"

"They're spewing fire! Oh, heavens, help! Someone help me!"

"Fire is just fire, but there's fire on all sides, we've been surrounded!"

"Flee! Hurry and flee! We can't be cut off by the fire or we'll be dead without a doubt!"

All sorts of sounds faded in and out, filtering into Jiang Chen's consciousness through the Ear of the Zephyr.

Jiang Chen sighed, "What an undeserved catastrophe. These candidates may have no idea what the Cloudflame Flower is but have been unexpectedly gotten embroiled in this. What an unexpected misfortune."

He knew that only practitioners outside of this hundred li area would have the hope of escaping. Otherwise, their king had said to set fire to a hundred li, and precisely a hundred li would go up in flames. No matter how fast they were, the candidates would never be faster than wingbeats of the Fire Ravens or the swiftness of the fires.

They'd be hard pressed to escape even if they grew wings.

The thousands of fire ravens circling in the sky had completely cordoned off the surrounding area, and the fires were spreading faster and faster.

The momentum of the fires were akin to the tides, continuously pushing forward and expanding. A radius of a hundred li in the immediate area had been turned into a fiery ocean.

The fire had spread so quickly and ferociously that those who were caught up within it had no time to escape.

Apart from humans, even other lifeforms trapped within the fires had no chance of escaping.

Various desperate wails and screams, numerous ghastly growls and furious roars were all futile in this world destroying fire ocean.

Jiang Chen had occupied high ground on this cliff and so the fires hadn't made their way up yet. However, the direction had been set and the flames kept roaring upwards.

Wave upon wave of hot air crashed into the cliff as if the tidewaters.

Judging from this situation, Jiang Chen's hiding place would be engulfed soon.

He raised his head to look up into the sky and saw that the Fire Raven King hadn't moved. He'd remained hovering in mid air and exuded a boundless, severe countenance, as if releasing his majestic dignity upon his children and descendants.

"Damn it, that king isn't moving at all. I'll be revealed if I move the slightest bit beneath his purview and he'll discover me."

Jiang Chen inwardly cursed the Raven King. He'd wanted to wait for him to move away and make use of the opportunity to pick the flower.

It looked like that'd been idiotic daydreams. The Raven King was obviously not leaving the Cloudflame Flower's side and wouldn't let his precious item slip out of his sight.

"Damn, at this rate, even if the king doesn't discover me, I'll be baked to a crisp by the heat waves."

Jiang Chen knew he'd be in great trouble if this continued.

The flames would burn for three days and nights once they started. However, Jiang Chen would've still been confident in making it out if the Raven King hadn't been there.

But since he was here, destructive attacks would quickly follow if Jiang Chen made the slightest move.

With the might of this king, Jiang Chen didn't think he'd be able to withstand a blast of his flames.

Chapter 310: The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, Flying Through the Earth

Jiang Chen's situation became quite awkward in this regard as he could neither retreat nor advance.

He would come face to face with the Fire Raven King if he went out with a nine out of ten chance of dying, or have no chance of living at all.

If he didn't go out and remained where he was, Jiang Chen didn't think that he'd be able to shoulder the burden of the temperature of these flames and the ever encroaching fire.

He thought of the Rat King. However, he wasn't confident himself that the Rat King being able to create a tunnel within the cliff in such a short amount of time.

The fire was so close at hand that it was practically singing his eyebrows.

Summoning the Rat King would also surely alert the Raven King.

If the two creatures at the peak of the spirit rank met in battle, the situation would become even more chaotic.

“No, the Rat King is timid and he will surely be shocked when he feels the aura of the Raven King. His battle capabilities will also be greatly affected as a result.”

Jiang Chen thus dismissed the thought of summoning the Rat King.

“The Lotus?” Another idea popped into Jiang Chen’s mind.

“Yes, the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice!” Jiang Chen suddenly thought of how he made use of the six Lotuses in the second trial to protect his body in the cavern with the spirit vein of heavenly fire, preventing the fires from rampaging into his body.

However, the current fiery situation was noticeably tenfold more frightening than that in cavern at least.

After all, the cavern was just a testing site and the fires were under control. They weren’t ravaging wildly like the fires in front of him currently were.

These fires were now purposefully set out of control by the Fire Ravens, continuously moving forward. The degree of their destruction was absolutely more than even the tenfold estimation he’d previously made.

His thoughts racing, Jiang Chen immediately deployed the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

The immensely strong Lotus vines continuously explored beneath the ground.

Now that he’d broken through to the earth spirit realm, he could control twelve lotuses at any given time.

Half of the vines were of fire, the other half of ice.

The fire lotuses were on the outside, and the ice lotuses on the inside.

Jiang Chen curled himself up and jumped into the petals.

The twelve vines burrowed into the ground, going deeper and deeper.

He could still feel the heat from the outside world in the beginning, like it would burn through through the earth’s surface and spear through to the land’s core. As the Lotus continued to drill down however, the searing feeling faded and things became much easier to bear.

“Hmm?” The Raven King’s conscious suddenly flickered, seeming to detect something. His savage gaze shot in Jiang Chen’s direction.

He investigated carefully, but he didn’t find anything.

“That’s odd, I felt a ripple of something just now, why isn’t there anyone there?” The Raven King also felt that it was odd.

However, the Raven King was also highly proud and he paid no heed to it. He thought that it was some armadillo type spirit creature that was drilling deep below to flee for its life.

The Raven King was conceited by nature and naturally, he disdained further investigation of what was going on.

In addition, although the Fire Raven tribe was strong, their advantage was still in the air after all. The Fire Ravens would be unable to deploy any of their strengths once they entered the ground.

Jiang Chen was safely enclosed in the midst of many petals as he sat cross legged on an ice lotus, safely in the depths of the earth.

He didn't know how far down he was either. He only knew that it was quite dark and cool all around.

Jiang Chen knew that he'd most likely arrived at a place very deep in the ground as he couldn't sense the strong heat waves from the outside world.

"The Fire Raven tribe is indeed brutal and savage. I wonder how many candidates will die from the fires burning for a hundred li? Of the eight thousand who entered the realm, I'm afraid that at least a third or even half of the group will be burnt to ashes..."

Jiang Chen also sighed inwardly when he thought of the cruelty of this spirit creature race.

However, he wasn't the sort to be so emotional as to grieve over the passing of spring. Although he felt a bit sad at the downfall of his own kind, the path of martial dao has been this harsh since ancient times.

This trial tested fortune. n(/σ)/v//e--l-.b.)1-(n

One could only say that the practitioners in that radius lacked sufficient luck.

"Judging from these fires, they'll burn out in about three days and nights. I'm in no hurry to go out, but that Cloudflame Flower..."

Jiang Chen still felt a bit of regret when he thought about the Cloudflame Flower.

However, the Fire Raven King wasn't budging at all, and so Jiang Chen had his hands tied.

Although he had countless methods and all sorts of divine arts, it was almost impossible to steal the Cloudflame Flower out from beneath the Raven King and the Fire Raven army.

Even if he got lucky and somehow obtained the flower, one mouthful of fire from each of the Fire Ravens in the army would be enough to reduce him to cinders where he stood.

As strong as one person's strength was, there was no way for him to fight back when he was faced with thousands of opponents.

It was only possible when he had overwhelming strength and could kill all the Fire Ravens with a flip of his hand.

If he really did have that kind of power, then he wouldn't necessarily be interested in the Cloudflame Flower.

Jiang Chen thought for a moment and he felt that he had no clues as to how to resolve this situation. He decided to throw it all to the back of his head and sit down with aplomb, meditating with crossed legs.

The air was thin below the ground, but with Jiang Chen's level of training at the earth spirit realm, he didn't have a constant need for fresh air like ordinary people.

In the earth spirit realm, a practitioner wouldn't have to worry about the thinness of the air even if they were living below the ground for ten days or half a month.

After all, they would be able to breathe in their spirit ocean.

This was how practitioners with a high level of training could meditate for months on end. They would've transformed external breathing into internal breathing as they meditated, eliminating the need for outside air.

Jiang Chen cautiously arrayed the twelve lotuses in formation around him, so that he'd be able to protect himself if anything happened.

"I hadn't thought that I'd be surrounded by danger in this trial of fortune. Does this mean that I have large amounts of luck, or lack of good fortune?"

Jiang Chen felt that he couldn't draw one overall generalization when it came to fortune and luck.

He could only say that fortune and disaster went hand in hand.

When the Cloudfire Flower had appeared, many practitioners had felt that this was an enormous stroke of luck. Even Jiang Chen's first thought had been so as well.

However, the Fire Ravens' appearance and their actions in setting a radius of a hundred li on fire had turned this fortuitous occurrence into disaster.

Therefore, Jiang Chen's understanding of fortune and luck had deepened by quite a bit.

"Just as I'd thought, what looked like fortune actually concealed disaster, every cloud has a silver lining for what appears to be danger. I am currently forced to flee for my life, but who knows when things may take a turn for another in this situation?"

Jiang Chen's thoughts traveled down this path, bringing a better mood with them.

It was a fiery ocean in the outside world right now anyways, he decided to ignore everything, throw all stray thoughts to the side and organize his gains and losses over the past couple of days.

Overall speaking, Jiang Chen's gains had been enormous after entering the legacy territory.

He'd trained his strength of heart on path of rebirth and passed the most arduous test of mental strength.

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In the caverns of heavenly fire and ice, Jiang Chen had used the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice to absorb boundless spirit power.

He'd become the greatest winner in the third trial and refined the entire golden magnetic mountain. Although it didn't seem that useful now, it was without a doubt, an enormous treasure, and its uses would become more apparent when he grew in strength.

It could be said that in the long run, the benefits from the magnetic golden mountain wouldn't be any less than the Lotus.

In the fourth trial, Jiang Chen had broken through the shackles of martial dao in practical combat and entered the earth spirit realm. This was naturally a significant gain as well.

And now, in the fifth trial of fortune, he'd collected the sap of the Divine Tree of Dreams at the very beginning, adding this to the long list.

Therefore, Jiang Chen didn't lose hope even though he was trapped underground right now. He wouldn't give up this easily unless the Cloudflame Flower had been thoroughly devoured by the Fire Raven King.

Jiang Chen sank into a state of meditation after going through all this.

He'd been on the move since entering the earth spirit realm and he had lacked the time to meditate. His various martial arts techniques hadn't had time to be consolidated with his new level of training.

Jiang Chen took advantage of these three days to thoroughly meld them together.

There was no concept of the passage of time below the earth.

Three days passed silently.

When Jiang Chen emerged from meditation, he had gained a lot again.

"I wonder if those incredulous fires in the outside world have retreated?" Although Jiang Chen had been in a meditative state for these three days, the unending darkness still gave him a bit of a stifling feeling.

"I need to go out and take a look. If the Fire Raven King is still present, then I have no hope of taking the Cloudflame Flower and I should stop wasting my time here."

Jiang Chen settled on this notion and he located the appropriate direction beneath the ground. He continued to drill into the rocks with the Lotus.

He suddenly felt the rocks around him start trembling with a roar.

The fact that such a strong vibration was occurring in the depths of the stone rather surprised Jiang Chen. His first thought was that underground lava was about to erupt.

However, he quickly realized that these ripples weren't from beneath the earth, but from the rocks surrounding him.

Although the vibrations were rather large, they were a bit of a distance away from him, and so even though Jiang Chen could sense the strength of this movement, he couldn't detect any immediate danger.

"Can it be that a strong underground creature is passing through?" Jiang Chen guessed.

He took a close read of the situation and reaffirmed his belief in this speculation.

"That's right, the vibrations are so frequent that an underground life form must be passing by, and at a high speed at that. It can move at such high speed through the rocks, and a bit faster than the Rat King's

drilling speed at that! In addition, this momentum is like a fierce dragon fording a river. Its aura and presence isn't similar to the Rat King's cautious style at all. Just what kind of strong, underground creature is this?"

Puzzlement weighed heavy in Jiang Chen's heart. He felt this all a bit hard to understand.

This place should be the Raven King's territory, and so logically speaking, there shouldn't be another strong life form around.

However, the violence of these tremors were obviously from a strong life form, and Jiang Chen could be certain that this kind of creature that could fly through the ground was definitely not the Raven King.

One Raven King was already enough to give Jiang Chen a migraine. If he added another creature moving through the earth like it was on flat ground, then even with Jiang Chen's methods and countless trump cards, he'd be in for a world of trouble!

Jiang Chen immediately stopped the Lotus' explorations and retracted all signs of his presence to avoid disturbing this creature.