

Three Realms 341

Chapter 341: Jiang Chen's Sudden Insight, the Examiner Comes to Visit

"What? He left?" Jiang Chen was petrified.

When he'd come to Master Fang's to ask him to launch an investigation, he hadn't thought he'd receive this response.

Master Fang nodded. "Indeed, he came to find me just before the results were announced today. He didn't ask about his ranking, but only requested to depart from the Eternal Spirit Mountain."

"Did he say why?" Jiang Chen was quite depressed and felt a bit lost.

"No." Master Fang laughed wryly and sighed softly. "This person is quite strange. I told him that his ranking was seventh and that he would be moving to the earth quadrant, but he couldn't seem to care any less!"

"Was he possibly threatened by someone?" Jiang Chen couldn't help but ask.

Master Fang thought for a moment and shook his head, "It didn't seem like it. His emotions seemed quite calm, but his desire to leave seemed quite strong. It didn't look like he'd been threatened by anyone. It rather looked like he'd seen through everything and was asking to leave of his own accord."

Jiang Chen's mouth was full of a bitter taste as he was stunned senseless in that moment.

From beginning to end, he'd only known that the other was called Xiao Fei, and was a girl dressed as a guy.

If it hadn't been the accidental events of that night, he might've only thought that it was a pity that seventh place candidate had left just like this.

But after the events of that night, there was an apologetic feeling that remained in Jiang Chen's heart. Although she'd kept saying that she was the one who had dragged him down and caused him to fall victim to a plot, so that night had been something she'd owed him, Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to be unappreciative when he'd benefited handsomely.

"Forget it, she must have her own thoughts if she'd wanted to leave. We will meet again if we're destined to in the future. If we're not, then there's nothing to be done about that as well."

Jiang Chen sighed in his heart and attempted to comfort himself that way. He wasn't the loveless or faithless sort and still felt a bit lost on his way back. n/-O(/V.-e.(l--b(-l.-n

However, he didn't know that a thin figure was standing amidst the trees and shrubbery, keeping an eye on him as he made his way back from the examiners' section.

This figure was Dan Fei, and her body was trembling lightly at the moment, her nose sniffing slightly as she was overcome with emotion as well.

"Jiang Chen, the fact that you're so anxiously searching for a chance acquaintance means that you're a loyal and faithful true man. However, I must go now and I can't accompany you through your adventures in the earth quadrant. I hope... all goes well for you, that you can hack through the waves

and billows and step on all those cocky so-called sect geniuses beneath your feet. I believe that all geniuses within the sixteen kingdoms are dim and lackluster in front of your radiance.”

Dan Fei sighed lightly and only turned resolutely to walk down the mountain when Jiang Chen’s back had vanished in the distance.

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Jiang Chen returned to the residence, standing in the hallway for a moment and watching the water flow beneath the eaves of the roof.

He remembered that Xiao Fei liked to stand in this hallway and watch the fallen flowers being carried away by the waters.

Suddenly, a moment of insight flashed through his heart as he began to laugh heartily.

“Us cultivators have long had our fates set, why should we worry about troubles of our own imagining? Xiao Fei has left, but I remain. These are all the paths that we’ve chosen, why sorrow or fret?”

Jiang Chen had a sudden insight and his feelings abruptly lightened. After his enlightenment, he felt as carefree as the winds and clouds as all his emotions flowed away on the surface of the running water.

“Indeed, everyone has their own path. If our paths intersect, then we will meet again. If they do not, then we will not walk together.” Jiang Chen’s feelings abruptly calmed down after his comprehension.

He laughed heartily and turned to walk back into his room.

Another brisk wave of laughter also sounded from the outside at this moment, “Young friend Boulder, for what do you laugh so heartily? From the sound of this laugh, it’s one of great understanding and insight.”

The owner of this voice was Master Fang of the mystic quadrant. They’d only just parted, but here he was, paying a visit to Jiang Chen?

“That Master Fang is deigning to lower himself to come visit me, my little yard is graced with your presence.” Jiang Chen smiled as he stepped forward in welcome.

Jiang Chen was actually quite admiring towards Master Fang.

He was at least one of the few characters who were impartial and just amongst the sects.

“What, you don’t welcome me?” Master Fang chuckled.

“Not at all, not at all. Please, come on inside Master Fang.” Jiang Chen welcomed Master Fang into his room.

The two sat cross legged as Jiang Chen didn’t put on airs either, bringing out a jug of Nine Magnificence Dew wine and taking out two cups of old vines, pouring wine into both of them.

The look in Master Fang’s eyes changed immediately when the wine was poured. He cried out in shock, “This... this is the Nine Magnificence Dew Wine?”

“Master Fang is indeed someone who recognizes value. Please.” Jiang Chen raised his cup.

Master Fang's eyeballs were about to fall out of his sockets in his stare, his eyes firmly glued to the cup.

His mouth was slightly pursed and his nose kept sucking in air, his demeanor immediately changing greatly, as if his very soul had been lured out of him.

Jiang Chen smiled inwardly to see this. Here was another lover of wine, someone who likely was even more of an alcoholic than vice head Shi of the Myriad Treasures Palace.

"Master Fang." Jiang Chen called out again.

Master Fang suddenly came to his senses as he smacked his head and started laughing, "Hahaha, I hadn't thought, hadn't thought at all that I would have the fortune to drink this wine again in my life."

He lifted the cup of old vines in both his hands as he spoke. His manner was as if the most reverent believer worshipping the image in his heart, an absolutely pious posture.

Master Fang threw back his head after draining the cup, narrowing his eyes and shaking his head from side to side slightly. He was tasting, evaluating, and conversing with the wine.

Indeed, to true wine lovers, they would feel that a good wine had a spirit to it, so their wine tasting was akin to conversing with good wine.

Jiang Chen looked at Master Fang's form. He was completely serious and the epitome of reverence. Jiang Chen couldn't help but become grave and respectful as well.

Although Master Fang also loved alcohol as much as life, his bearing was so much better than vice head Shi's. Vice head Shi loved drinking as well, but his was a type of crude and unappreciative drinking.

Master Fang was an elegant alcoholic. His current state of shaking his head back and forth was similar to one of a poet writing sentimental verse to the moon and air, full of a learned and refined air.

Master Fang sighed after a long while as a look of gratitude shot out from his eyes. His next moves made Jiang Chen's mouth drop open.

Master Fang actually stood up to bow deeply towards Jiang Chen!

"Master Fang, this cannot do." Jiang Chen hastened to get up and return the gesture.

"It can, it can." Master Fang sighed in succession. "You've let me drink a wine that is as marvelous as though it'd been crafted by the gods. It is a natural order of heaven and earth that you accept my gesture."

"There are many who have a love of wine in the four great sects, and some of them often gather together to discuss the fine wines they've drank. One of them happened to mention the Nine Magnificence Dew Wine before, but no one else present at the gathering had tasted it before. That person was quite proud in that moment, and everyone else's splendor was suppressed by him. This wine had almost become our internal demon after that gathering. Therefore, when you took out the jug and the cups of old vines, I voice these words subconsciously."

Master Fang spoke of an old matter between him and the wine.

Jiang Chen couldn't help but laugh. "So it turns out this has happened before."

Master Fang laughed, "I'll have something to talk about if we meet again. That person only sipped that little half cup previously, how could he experienced what I enjoyed today? Hahahaha!"

Master Fang's expression was animated and he was quite excited, clashing with his previous image of a stern examiner.

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully, thinking that alcohol was indeed something that could cause one to unmask themselves and reveal their true personality. Master Fang was rather a forthright man.

"Since this is the case, Master Fang should drink some more so that you have more to talk about when you gather again." Jiang Chen smiled. "If you don't mind, please take the entire jug."

Master Fang laughed heartily, "There are no gains without effort, you're bribing an examiner!"

This was naturally a joke. The tests of the mystic quadrant had concluded by now and Jiang Chen was the champion. There was nothing about this that would be a bribe.

Jiang Chen smiled, "There's been a saying since ancient times of setting up a banquet to thank one's teacher or master. Although Master Fang isn't my teacher or master, you have helped me understand some theories and thus are more than worthy of this jug of wine."

Master Fang was rather open as well, "Then I shall accept this with a thick face."

To a lover of wine, whether they were the crude type or the elegant kind of alcoholic, they always lacked resistance to beautiful wine.

When Jiang Chen saw him put away the wine carefully, he laughed, "Master Fang must have some words of wisdom to impart to me in traveling here. I am all ears."

"You, kid, are truly a freak. All the disciples in the mystic quadrant now call you a freak and are incredibly happy to hear that you'll be leaving the area. They're acting as if they're sending off a god of plague, wanting you to leave as quickly as possible." Master Fang joked.

Jiang Chen was at a loss for words, "Am I really that unpopular?"

"Alright, all joking aside, let's be serious now. I had indeed wanted to chat with you this time." Master Fang was quite forthright. "You won't be coming back to the mystic quadrant after your departure. We may not have any interactions in the future. I have been aloof all my life, so much so that only a few people are capable of entering my eyes. You, young man, are one of the few."

Jiang Chen listened intently. He knew that Master Fang was opening his heart up to him in interacting with him. The two were more like friends in this moment, and not of examiner and candidate.

"My personality is one that doesn't like young folk who keep a high profile. However, you are different. I've always felt that you are hiding a great power within you. You seem high profile, but you're different from those arrogant sect disciples. I had been quite dismissive of your initial string of victories, but then felt that I had underestimated you upon further thought. Different people undertaking the same matter can be cocky for some, and confident for others. I slowly saw confidence in you, and not overweening arrogance."

Sincerity shone in Master Fang's eyes.

“Young man, I won’t recruit you on behalf of the sect. I’ve come here only to give you a word of warning that the human heart is incomprehensible in the four sects. You must be on your guard in the earth and sky quadrants. Some people will go to all measures possible when they scheme.”

Jiang Chen felt slightly touched. That a sect elder who had no relationship with him and nothing to ask of him could speak thus was truly a difficult thing.

Master Fang was indeed a warm hearted and compassionate person. This kind of honest personality was a rarity within the sects.

Jiang Chen spoke seriously, “I will take Master Fang’s pointers to heart.”

“Kid, you likely have your own thoughts even without my pointers. I’m rather anticipating to see the day in which you soar to the skies.”

Chapter 342: Advancing into the Earth Spirit Quadrant

Master Fang was indeed an open and upright gentleman. The two talked for a long time, but he never asked where Jiang Chen was from nor wanted to recruit Jiang Chen on behalf of his sect.

This kind of demeanor made Jiang Chen admire him from the bottom of his heart.

The two chatted late into the night before Master Fang rose to take his leave, still feeling that he hadn’t fully expressed all that he wanted to.

He hadn’t thought either that he would be able to chat so harmoniously with a young man from the ordinary world.

What he’d thought had been the oddest was that the knowledge and bearing of this young man, and his insights into many matters, had surprised him multiple times as well. The level and breadth in which he approached a question made even him, a senior executive in the sect, feel a bit inadequate.

Just what kind of freak genius was he? Was he really a secular disciple?

Master Fang laughed wryly in his heart, but his confidence in Jiang Chen was further affirmed. The rise of this kind of young man, even if he’d been born in the ordinary world, was inevitable.

“Alright, here is good. You will be reporting to the earth quadrant tomorrow. I will say only this, the keeper of the earth quadrant is Master Shuiyue of the Purple Sun Sect.”

An explosive went off in Jiang Chen’s mind. As the saying goes, a careless word may reveal much to an attentive listener.

Master Fang’s kind reminder was definitely without any other connotations. Master Fang had no idea of his true identity, and even if he did, he wouldn’t necessarily know of Jiang Chen’s past grudges with Master Shuiyue.

Master Fang’s key point of emphasis here was actually the Purple Sun Sect.

When it traveled to Jiang Chen’s ears, however, it became Master Shuiyue.

Master Fang clapped Jiang Chen's shoulder, "Rest well. Report to the earth quadrant in your most well-rested state. I believe that with your potential, the earth quadrant won't be able to keep you down either."

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A list of names made it to keeper Shuiyue.

There were only ten names on the list—those who had emerged from the mystic quadrant. Master Shuiyue gave it a cursory glance and immediately frowned.

"There are actually two secular disciples?"

Master Shuiyue was a beneficiary of the ordinary world as her most prized disciple had emerged from the Eastern Kingdom.

However, even though this was the case, she still couldn't fully cast off her prejudices against the secular disciples, particularly as all sorts of rumors had traveled to her ears from the mystic quadrant during this time.

Although Guo Ren wasn't of her faction, it was still reprehensible that a vaunted sect disciple had ended up in such ignoble straits!

Master Shuiyue had privately cursed that Guo Ren was trash for throwing away the sect's face when she heard of this, but she truly didn't have a good impression of this secular disciple either.

"I'd like to see if this freak genius of the boulder's heart truly has three heads and six arms?" Master Shuiyue threw the list away to the side.

She raised her hand and sent out a few commands, turning them into a cloud of light and having it vanish into the air.

Four disciples arrived in front of Master Shuiyue before too long.

"We greet our honored master." The four disciples were all Master Shuiyue's prized favorites.

"No need to stand on ceremony." Master Shuiyue's noble features held traces of stern dignity. "You four number amongst my ten major disciples, yet not a single one of you have made it into the sky quadrant in the first three months. This truly is disappointing."

The four of them were the very depiction of shame and felt quite fearful.

"It's a good thing that three other major disciples of my Shuiyue faction are retaining face for me in the sky quadrant. Now, I'm setting a target for you. No matter what, one of you must make it into the sky quadrant within the next three months. Do you have confidence in doing so?"

Master Shuiyue asked faintly.

These were all Master Shuiyue's personal disciples. Apart from the three disciples in the sky quadrant, they were the strongest level of existences beneath Master Shuiyue.

"Your disciples will do all in our power to do so!" The four disciples bowed.

“Hai Tian, you rank third amongst my ten personal disciples, second only to first senior brother Ceng Shi and second senior brother Chu Xinghan. Of course, Long Juxue has an innate constitution and I will not mention her in the same breath as all of you. Apart from the three of them, you’re the strongest amongst the disciples left. I hope you can focus your concentration in these three months and don’t disappoint me. Strive to make it into the sky quadrant in the next three-month period.”

A young man with no eyebrows standing on the left hand side nodded firmly. “Honored master, your disciple will try his best to obtain a placement in the top ten for the sky quadrant, even if my bones are all shattered in the process.”

“The three of you can’t be remiss either. The competition within the earth quadrant is exceedingly high and our Shuiyue faction counts as an important party within the Purple Sun Sect. If you four don’t deploy your talents well, as strong and dominating Long Juxue and Ceng She might be in the sky quadrant, others will still say that the Shuiyue faction only has a few geniuses and the others are all quite mediocre. Are you willing for others to poke at you like this?”

“Your disciples are unwilling!” The four answered in unison.

“Right. Ten have arisen from the mystic quadrant this time. No attention needs to be paid to the others, but you must pay some attention to a secular freak amongst them.”

Hai Tian asked out of curiosity, “Honored master, what kind of incredible person has come from the mystic quadrant, and from the ordinary world at that?”

“Don’t you underestimate your enemy. Although I’ve never met this secular freak, he’s made quite a name for himself in the mystic quadrant. He’s defeated all in that quadrant, and first seed Guo Ren of our sect was frightened into forming internal demons. He grew so angry that he spat out blood and is completely wasted.”

“What? Something like this happened?!” The four disciples all had a look of surprise on their faces.

They’d been consumed by the nervous atmosphere of the competition in these three months. The earth quadrant disciples were all highly capable and strong, with minuscule differences between each other. Therefore, the battles were abnormally fierce. They didn’t have time to spare on matters in the outside world.

They were all shocked when they heard Master Shuiyue mention this.

“Mm. You must pay attention when you meet this person.” Master Shuiyue warned them again.

The four of them feigned a servile manner but were privately dismissive. They all felt that Guo Ren was true trash; he’d fallen without even fighting and had been frightened into forming internal demons. How embarrassing!

As four of the ten personal disciples beneath Master Shuiyue, they were on a completely different level than Guo Ren.

Although they nodded their assent, they were still very unaccepting of this. n/-O**Ve**l**b**1n

“You are dismissed.” Master Shuiyue waved her hands and dismissed the four disciples, but waves of irritation rose in her heart.

She, too, knew where the irritation came from. It'd started ever since she'd seen this list of names.

This irritation was due to the secular genius.

Master Shuiyue herself didn't know either why she would be this sensitive to that secular genius. However, this kind of irritation came from the intuition of an expert, and it made her feel slightly uneasy inside.

Master Shuiyue suddenly recalled something and a stunning thought raced through her mind.

"It can't be that much of a coincidence that this secular genius might be Juxue's rival from the ordinary world?" This notion suddenly dashed through her mind.

It became uncontrollable after it'd taken root.

"What is there to worry about even if it is him?" Master Shuiyue comforted himself. "As extraordinary as he is, all is nothing in front of an innate constitution. None of the ordinary geniuses can measure up to an innate constitution. Juxue has already set foot into the fourth spirit realm after two years under my care, and the trials of the first three months have surely helped her cultivation progress another step forward to at least the fifth level spirit realm. That is a level of existence that no one can ignore in the sky quadrant. With her talents, there's a seventy to eighty percent chance that she can assail the sky spirit realm in these three years. When she breaks through, she will be a bird flying where it should in the skies, and a fish jumping where it would in the seas. The seat of champion of the great selection is destined to be hers!"

Master Shuiyue's irritated feelings slowly calmed down when she thought of Long Juxue. This unparalleled disciple had given her boundless confidence, allowing her to daydream about the future of the Shuiyue faction.

Perhaps, there might come a day in which the disciple that she had so sagely taken in would become the second origin realm expert after forefather Sunchaser.

Master Shuiyue was full of excitement when she thought of that. At that time, her Shuiyue faction will surely leap up as well and become an unsurpassed existence within the sect!

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A new day finally arrived as the top ten of the mystic quadrant was led to the earth quadrant by an examiner.

Impressive and magnificent buildings greeted their eyes when they set foot into the boundaries of the earth quadrant. The atmosphere was quite imposing. All sorts of towering trees that reached to the sky or rare fruits and flowers could be seen along the way.

The environment of the mystic quadrant was immediately shown as inferior in this regard.

"The earth quadrant is indeed superior to the mystic quadrant. The spirit power concentration here is at least twice that of the mystic quadrant. It looks like the sky, earth, mystic, and yellow quadrants are divided appropriately by level." Jiang Chen's senses perceptively captured the differences between the two areas along the way.

"We're here." The examiner brought them to the entrance of the earth quadrant and seemed to be afraid of Master Shuiyue. He didn't want to go in and only said, "You can make your way inside."

An enormous public square greeted them after the entrance. There were some lifelike sculptures scattered around the public square, giving one a thick sense of great history.

A group of candidates had gathered there much earlier. There was also a group of people wearing the outfits of examiners standing in front of the candidates. There was a woman in their center with a noble set of features, looking roughly thirty or so years old.

This lady was wearing plain clothes and was still attractive despite her age as she had a tantalizing air to her. However, her frosty countenance made her rather unapproachable.

Jiang Chen didn't need to think at all to know that this person was the keeper of the earth quadrant, Master Shuiyue.

She was also Long Juxue's teacher in the Purple Sun Sect, her backer.

Master Shuiyue's gaze shot over like lightning, a powerful bearing encompassed within it even from such a far away distance. This single gaze made the ten newcomers shiver all over, apart from Jiang Chen.

"What a cold woman." The thought struck Jiang Chen as he became on guard. This woman was putting them down as soon as they'd met. It seemed like she was absolutely not someone easy to get along with.

According to the experiences of Jiang Chen's past life, these kinds of girls who liked to play dress up were all hypocrites. They yearned for adoration, but had to pretend to be cold as ice.

"You there, get over here. Are you expecting me to go and fetch you?" Master Shuiyue's voice was cold, and the temperature around her seemed to decrease by seven to eight degrees when she opened her mouth, making the listeners shiver.

Jiang Chen paid attention to the reaction of the others. He was neither humble nor pushy as he walked over.

There were far fewer candidates in the earth quadrant than the spirit quadrant. There only five hundred in number.

Chapter 343: Five Kinds of Rings

Fewer numbers of people didn't mean that competition wasn't as fierce.

Jiang Chen didn't want to make a name for himself having just arrived, so he stood in the back of the crowd. He also knew that according to the conventions, the newly promoted candidates would be fourth level candidates in the earth quadrant. There were no other scenarios that could happen.

Indeed, someone quickly sent over their earth quadrant candidate tokens before too long.

Jiang Chen had been champion of the mystic quadrant, so his token was number 491. The others ranged from 492 to 500.

The numbering was easy to understand, but “fourth level” was carved on the back, proving Jiang Chen’s speculation right.

“Fourth level indeed... even though I’ve won a hundred matches in a row, I’m still fourth level.” Jiang Chen tucked the token into his waist with a wry smile.

Master Fang of the mystic quadrant had at least explained to them why they were fourth level.

Here, it was obvious that Master Shuiyue couldn’t be bothered to even introduce the area.

Jiang Chen didn’t mind. He stood in the crowd with his eyes and head lowered, not wanting to give anyone any evidence against himself. He observed the earth quadrant candidates silently.

“The earth quadrant is greatly different from the mystic quadrant alright. There was at least a noticeable lack of mockery and dismissive glances when we walked in. It looks like the maturity and shrewdness of the people who could make it here are all far superior to the trash in the mystic quadrant.”

This was his first discovery after arriving here.

Master Shuiyue’s voice sounded again. “You are all candidates of the earth quadrant, and thus different from the mystic quadrant. Your goals should be to move onto the sky quadrant. Therefore, your hundred challenges will be different in this cycle. This time, the rings in which your matches take place will not be without any external interference. Your rings will be divided into the following: ring of gravity, ring of fire, ring of ice, ring of thorns, and ring of spirit devouring.”

Jiang Chen memorized the five different names.

Master Shuiyue continued, “This means that in this cycle, you will not be fighting in the ordinary rings. You will be faced with a random selection of these types of rings.”

“What? No ordinary ring?” Wails rose up from the earth quadrant candidates.

“No way! These five kinds of rings sound terrifying. So not only will we have to fight against our opponents, but we’ll have to resist the ring’s effect as well!”

“I know right? These names make my skin creep. Goosebumps are crawling all over my arms!”

All the candidates of the earth quadrant were quite dejected.

Their hundred challenges had taken place in the regular rings three months ago.

But Master Shuiyue had suddenly announced that the rings were intrinsically changing. This was simply too abrupt! The candidates present all found this a bit difficult to accept.

“Silence!”

Master Shuiyue’s tone was solemn as she called out coldly. Several currents of cold air blew upon the candidates’ faces, as if wanting to freeze the very air.

The loudly grousing candidates all became ashen faced and as silent as the winter cicadas.

“This woman has a temper and really likes to throw her weight around!” Since Jiang Chen knew that she was Long Juxue’s master, he naturally wouldn’t have the slightest bit of respect for her.

However, the circumstances now were that she was the keeper of the earth quadrant. This made Jiang Chen have to tread gingerly.

He'd learned from Master Fang just how much power a keeper had.

If the keeper wanted to cheat, the other examiners would find it difficult to even question them. If the keeper wanted to suppress someone, they'd be able to pull it off so flawlessly that no one would be able to point out any misdoings.

"My reputation in the mystic quadrant has likely already traveled to her ears. With her personality, she's likely going to pay special attention to me. Heh heh, it looks like I won't have an easy time of it during the three months in the earth quadrant." Jiang Chen could only look for the silver lining.

There were five hundred of them, therefore the concentration of matches would surely be less than those of the mystic quadrant's.

However, the duration of these matches would certainly be longer.

Indeed, Master Shuiyue continued, "The rules of the challenges are the same as the previous three months. Everyone must complete a hundred challenges, and the time allotted for fighting is one hour. If you do not defeat your opponent within the allotted time, the development of the battle will be used to determine who wins and who losses. Those of you who still have questions may ask them now."

A candidate from the mystic quadrant immediately raised his hand, "Master, will the order of the matches still be randomly selected?"

"I've already gone over the nonsense of how the rules are the same as before! Apart from the rings and the match duration, everything remains the same!" Master Shuiyue hectored loudly.

Jiang Chen kept a low profile. He couldn't be bothered to ask. He would gain nothing from speaking up now apart from inviting hatred and suppression.

The rules were such, and he'd long since familiarized himself with them when taking part in the hundred challenges in the mystic quadrant. Since only the rings and the time limit had changed, then everything was the same as prior.

"The old rules apply. Everyone return to your residences to prepare. The challenges begin officially tomorrow at the chen hour (TN: 7am - 9am)." Master Shuiyue waved her jade-like arms. "Dismissed."

Jiang Chen dragged his feet as he trailed in the back of the crowd en route for the residences.

They all had their numbers now anyways, and their numbers corresponded to their residences. He wasn't worried about being unable to find his residence. He had to say, the earth quadrant was the earth quadrant alright. Even the fourth level candidates enjoyed a residence to themselves.

Of course, there were only five hundred people here, so there were more than enough residences to go around. There was naturally no need for a huge crowd of people to squeeze into one yard.

Jiang Chen rather liked the feeling of having a bit of territory to himself.

When he entered the yard, Jiang Chen took a look around and familiarized himself with the surroundings according to his old habits. Caution is the parent of safety, and it was absolutely the right thing to do to get a lay of the land when entering a new environment.

“Mm, as domineering as Master Shuiyue is, she wouldn’t dare publicly do anything to the residences.” Jiang Chen didn’t discover anything out of the ordinary after scouting around for a bit. n)-o)(V--e.-l--b.(1.-n

He then entered the house. The house was actually designed quite like a secret room, fully protecting the privacy of the inhabitants.

The layout of the residence was such that it cleverly surrounded and protected the house in its center.

Jiang Chen sighed with amazement. “I wonder who designed this legacy realm of the ancient times to design it so cleverly! Can it be that this Eternal Spirit Mountain was also a place of trials and training in ancient times?”

Jiang Chen was filled with curiosity towards this realm all of a sudden.

He took a spin around the house and sat down cross legged once he was thoroughly familiar with it. He shifted his attention to thoughts pertaining to the earth quadrant tests.

Five kinds of rings. Jiang Chen mused over all of them in his mind.

“The ring of gravity isn’t difficult to understand. It’s undoubtedly a ring that is heavily restricted by amplified gravity. The usage of strength and energy under the pull of gravity will be an enormous test for the candidates.”

Jiang Chen went over the basic theories of gravity in his mind. In actuality, this kind of ring was a type of force field.

To cultivators, gravity wasn’t something that they were completely unable to shake off.

Of course, this was only relative. How much they could shake off depended on how strong the gravity was.

If the gravity was ridiculously strong, then even the cultivators who could fly through the sky or earth would find themselves unable to escape even with wings!

If the gravity was at normal levels, then cultivators who could grasp the rhythm of the force field and who were adept at breaking through the restraining force of the force field wouldn’t be much affected at all.

Ever since Jiang Chen had refined the magnetic golden mountain, he’d had a certain mastery over magnetic power. This force field actually had some similarities with that magnetic power.

The magnetic power was also a restraining force field. Of course, it could also attack, devour, and destroy in addition. It was much stronger than a simple gravity force field.

“The ring of fire must be as its name, a battlefield of high temperatures. To provide a tangible example, it must be like fighting in a cauldron while being cooked at high temperatures. That domineering temperature and the hunger of the fierce flames is an enormous test to cultivators.”

“The ring of ice is similar to the ring of fire, but their attributes are the exact opposite. One is a fiery cauldron, the other is an icy cavern. To cultivators, they’re merely different environments and different trials. These two rings are no different to the ordinary ones for me.”

This wasn’t blind confidence from Jiang Chen. Ever since refining the Flaming Heart of Ice, Jiang Chen had the most adept control over the attributes of fire and water.

He’d face such environments with the Lotus multiple times but had always emerged unscathed.

Even if he didn’t use the Lotus, he had the Redscaled Firelizard’s armor. That was enough to ensure that he wouldn’t be burnt by flames or frozen by ice.

The Firelizard’s scales would automatically absorb the power of the flames and would automatically emanate the imbued fire spirit power when faced with icy conditions.

This was one of the biggest reasons why Jiang Chen had put his whole heart into enmeshing the Firelizard’s scales into the skysilk soft armor.

The events of those days had been to prepare for situations like these.

“The ring of thorns sounds like a ring filled with thorns and thistles. However, I shouldn’t only decipher the surface meaning of these words. In my view, the five rings are echoing the five elements. The ring of gravity is attributed to earth, as are the rings of fire and ice to fire and water. Will the ring of thorns be to the metal or wood attribute? If wood, then is the ring of spirit devouring mapping to the metal attribute?”

Jiang Chen couldn’t come to a conclusion immediately with the last two rings.

“Forget it, I’ll think about it when I’m actually in that environment in the future. These five rings hearken to the five elements, so the remaining two rings must be attributed to the metal or wood elements. I just need to keep this in mind and make my preparations.”

Jiang Chen was even more reassured after thoroughly researching the five rings.

He sat down cross-legged and began to meditate.

Chapter 344: Second Level of the Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods

Time was money in the world of martial dao. Advancing along its path was like rowing a boat upstream, whereupon not advancing meant that one was going backwards.

Even if Jiang Chen had the extraordinary advantage of having retained the memories of his past life, he didn’t dare rest on his laurels at all.

He’d trained diligently everyday during the three months in the mystic quadrant, and his efforts had been rewarded. Three months of hard practice had enabled him to grasp the first level of the Nine Transformations.

The exterior of Jiang Chen's body now was as if a layer of armor. Although it wasn't up to the level of the Firelizard's scales, the level of defense it provided meant that those with a similar level of strength to him would find it difficult to harm him.

With this level of protection and the protection from the Firelizard skysilk armor, it meant he had dual layers of insurance. If the current Jiang Chen called himself number two in defense amongst his peers now, then absolutely no one else had the right to call themselves number one!

"The second level of the Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods is one of refining the flesh and blood. The trials of this level will surely be tenfold more arduous than those of the first level. Humans are made of flesh and blood, and the refinement of these two will surely be accompanied by agony on the level of purgatory flames."

Jiang Chen had long since been mentally prepared that the path of body refining wouldn't be an easy one to travel.

He'd have to undergo these trials if he wanted to create an indestructible body on par with that of the demons and gods. If a piece of jade isn't cut and polished, it cannot be made into anything. The art of body refining was the same as cutting jade, the material being something that had to be thoroughly tempered.

He deployed the metal essence force from the magnetic power and pierced his skin with it to let it sink into his flesh and blood. The pores on Jiang Chen's body immediately opened as beads of sweat the size of beans speckled on his forehead.

This feeling was as if countless steel needles had all suddenly stabbed into his flesh and blood. That kind of heart-wrenching pain made even a person of strong determination like Jiang Chen almost cry out in pain.

"Hold it in! If I want to become a man above all, then I need to be able to endure agony that others cannot. Although I have the memories of my past life, the potential of this body isn't high. If I don't put forth hard effort and steel myself over and over again to form solid foundations, the gap between me and the other disciples with renowned talents will become ever apparent as my level rises."

Jiang Chen was trying so hard and was willing to endure so much because he'd always had a sense of looming danger.

He knew he had his advantages, but this advantage of memories from another lifetime wouldn't be able to ameliorate the insufficiencies of this body in an instant.

Even though Jiang Chen had defied the heavens to change his own fate several times, and was likely at the apex of existence in the sixteen kingdom alliance. However, the world was vast, and he would never be satisfied with a small piece of land at the size of the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Therefore, Jiang Chen didn't dare let up for even a second in the reforging of his body and internal structure.

"Just as an innate constitution could've appeared in Long Juxue in this mere sixteen kingdom alliance, then there must be many more stronger geniuses in this world. My vision will absolutely not be confined

by this alliance. The four great sects are just a stepping stone for my rise. If I set my standards at the level of the four great sects, then I would truly be abandoning all hope for myself."

Jiang Chen would use this harsh reality to spur himself onwards whenever he thought about giving up.

"The potential of my body is likely that of an ant once I leave the sixteen kingdoms and enter the Myriad Domain, not to mention the Upper Eighth Region. I may very well fall down in some place one day if I don't continuously improve."

With last time's experience, Jiang Chen's demands on himself had become more strict.

"Come, let the reforging from this metal essence power become even fiercer!" A hint of a crazy smile appeared on Jiang Chen's mouth as the metal essence power redoubled, once again surging into his body.

"Hiss..." Jiang Chen sucked in a cold breath.

Twice the metal essence power surged into his body all of a sudden, and Jiang Chen spasmed uncontrollably. Enormous pain spread throughout every nerve in his body.

It was said that there were eighteen levels of hell. The pain he was currently going through was absolutely placing him within it.

Jiang Chen shook his head and sent sweat flying, trying his best to keep his mind clear. Boundless pain could numb one's nerves and make one's reactions become slower.

Jiang Chen repeated his actions again and again.

He spent the first night since arriving in the earth quadrant in the midst of self-mutilating training. When day broke, Jiang Chen opened his eyes and sensed the changes brought about from his training.

"One reaps no more than what he has sown. If it wasn't for this pain, how would I be able to forge the indestructible golden body then? Think of a phoenix being reborn from the flames. People only see its beauty from rebirth, but who knows the pain and agony it suffers through when it's bathed in flames?"

Jiang Chen got up and walked to the yard outside, lightly breathing in the morning air and feeling the abundant spirit power ripples in the earth quadrant.

"The earth quadrant is already thus, the sky quadrant is likely even more wondrous. It's a pity that brother Xiao Fei isn't here. It will be quite lonely over these three months without a bosom friend I can truly talk to." Jiang Chen sighed lightly, but didn't lose himself in the sorrow of Xiao Fei leaving.

He took a look at the hour and realized it was about time.

Jiang Chen had truly become a loner this time around as he traveled to the area of the Hundred Challenges Arena.

This Arena was originally an ordinary facility, but many mechanisms and formations had been built into it at its bottom when it was designed.

Adjusting the formations would cause changes to occur in the Arena.

Jiang Chen looked down and saw that the formations were all sparkling with intriguing light. It was apparent that the formation had activated already.

He wasn't unfamiliar with formations, but the combination of formations and an arena was a small innovation that Jiang Chen hadn't come in much contact with in his previous life.

He became a bit lost in thought as he stared at the formations.

"Master Shuiyue arrives!"

The somewhat lackadaisical candidates immediately snapped to attention and stood up. It looked like Master Shuiyue had established quite a bit of authority in the previous three months. The candidates all looked frightened out of their wits. Jiang Chen couldn't help but wonder, *just how badly had these guys been tortured by that woman?*

They'd lost all composure the very moment they heard her name.

Master Shuiyue's stern eyes swept across all five hundred candidates. When her gaze passed by Jiang Chen's mask, her look seemed to pause purposefully with a severe indication of prejudice. Master Shuiyue's shrewd eyes seemed to want to peer into his internal heart through his eyes.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, *want to read my mind through my eyes? Dream on!*

He'd practiced the Boulder's Heart and possessed extremely high mental defenses. Even the evil mental eye hadn't been able to turn him into a golden-colored sculpture on the magnetic golden mountain, so what of a mere Master Shuiyue?

It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't think much of her. In terms of cultivation, this woman was obviously near the peak of the spirit realm, and likely only a step behind Ye Chonglou.

She was someone with whom Jiang Chen could absolutely not fight at the moment.

However, in terms of strength of heart, Jiang Chen didn't feel that this old woman was stronger than him at all.

He lifted an eyelid with ease and looked openly upon Master Shuiyue. There were a few hints of judgement in his eyes as well.

Master Shuiyue grew uncommonly enraged when Jiang Chen met her eyes. This was because she could feel a flippant flicker in his eyes, as if a lecherous pervert toying with a gentlewoman.

"This country animal is indeed rude to dare look so blatantly upon me and size me up!" Master Shuiyue was heavily incensed. The other had needed only to flick a single glance at her to give her the feeling of being completely exposed to him.

In ordinary times, which sect disciple dared look so openly upon her? Almost all of them evaded her eyes and didn't dare meet her gaze.

Master Shuiyue greatly enjoyed this feeling of being feared.

This was precisely the reason why she'd had the feeling of being molested when someone else had looked her in the eyes. Jiang Chen actually hadn't meant that at all.

Of course, as angry as she was, she couldn't very well openly pin a crime on someone just for looking her in the eyes.

After taking a look around, Master Shuiyue raised her right arm. "Do you see that? Formations have been activated in all of the rings. These rings are no longer ordinary rings. Each of you will spend twenty matches each in the five different types of rings."

Five rings and twenty matches each happened to make precisely one hundred matches total.

"Alright, I now announce that the second Hundred Challenges Trial officially begins."

The second cycle officially began with her announcement.

Jiang Chen really was unused to someone murmuring beside him. However, there were advantages to being in the earth quadrant. Those who were looking to cause trouble for him had also decreased as well.

However, they'd only decreased but hadn't disappeared entirely.

Although Jiang Chen hadn't purposefully observed things, he could still feel a few looks from the shadows roving over his body.

He'd long since grown used to such furtive glances, so he didn't pay much attention to them.

"I wonder when will I appear on the first day of the earth quadrant matches?"

There were only five hundred in the earth quadrant, so even if the selection was done at random, the proceedings should move at a brisk pace.

After all, the names of those who were selected and failed wouldn't go back into the list of names.

Therefore, selecting one name meant that there was one fewer name in the pool.

Jiang Chen did indeed welcome an auspicious beginning on the first day.

His number was selected not long after the matches had begun.

His opponent was also quickly selected afterwards—they were a fourth level candidate.

A fourth level in the earth quadrant was the equivalent of a mid to upper tier genius.

The ring they would battle on was also selected. It was a ring of ice.

The ring of ice was a good environment for Jiang Chen. He could feel the icy air as soon as he set foot on the determined ring. The formation beneath the stage rippled as it sent forth currents of icy power, shrouding the surroundings of the ring with layers of frost.

"Mm, this power of ice isn't that bad. The defenses of the Firelizard's armor are enough to withstand it." Jiang Chen was reassured after he took a small reading. The Firelizard armor would be enough to defend against this level of icy power.

He wouldn't need to spend any of his inner energy to defend against the cold.

This was absolutely a huge advantage for when two candidates fought. Jiang Chen stood ramrod straight within the ring. He had a dapper air, giving one a feeling of lofty loneliness.

"Damn, this is really cold! This damn ring is freezing me to death! How are we supposed to fight?" A complaint traveled over from the other end.

Jiang Chen's opponent was a chubby little fatty who seemed like he refined pills on a regular basis. This person was a Myriad Spirit Sect disciple. Judging from his imitation of a meat ball, he was afraid of the cold.

"Brother, I've heard of you. I've heard that you were invincible with only one move from the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' in the mystic quadrant!" The little fatty actually slyly made his greetings to Jiang Chen.

Chapter 345: A Comical First Win in the Earth Quadrant

This little fatty had on a merry expression as he made faces at Jiang Chen, keeping his voice very low, "Brother, let's speak candidly. I'm the one being challenged, so it doesn't affect my score if I lose. Therefore, I don't want to win this fight at all. How about we put on an act? Don't be too serious, and I won't be too fake. Let's play fight for a while, then I'll voluntarily head off the stage. I seriously hate this ring of ice. I don't want to waste my inner energy here and really go head to head with you."

The little fatty's tiny eyes kept rolling around as he spoke with a tone of a businessman wanting to engage in a deal.

Jiang Chen had met all sorts of opponents, but it was a rare sight to meet someone who openly wanted to cheat.

"C'mon brother, let me know your true thoughts." The fatty asked hastily when he saw that Jiang Chen wasn't responding.

Jiang Chen nodded faintly, "Then it depends on whether you really want to put on an act, or you're acting about not wanting to fight for real."

The little fatty grinned from ear to ear. "You'll know soon."

He then roared loudly and started charging towards Jiang Chen with his ball-like body. The entire ring began to shake with loud sounds when this enormous meat ball started rolling.

He did appear to be creating a huge uproar, but the little fatty seemed quite sincere in not wanting to use his internal energy in this match. He was purposefully leaving some flaws open as he rolled.

It wasn't that the little fatty had a low level of cultivation, but rather was doing this on purpose to indicate that he truly didn't intend on winning.

Since the fatty was playing the game so conscientiously, Jiang Chen could only act accordingly.

When the fatty saw that Jiang Chen was diligently acting with him, he also privately complimented Jiang Chen; he was a good brother alright! The two of them panted and huffed on the ring, radiating dominating auras and going ahead at full speed.

Someone who wasn't involved in the match really wouldn't be able to tell that they weren't fighting for real. Their yells were ferocious, but hadn't the barest hint of internal energy expenditure.

The fatty's shoulder suddenly dropped after fifteen minutes as he let out an agonized cry. His rotund body dropped straight off the elevated ring as if he'd been struck by lightning.

Jiang Chen really wanted to laugh when he saw this exaggerated act.

The comical fatty didn't forget to throw Jiang Chen a look of "heh, my sly plan worked!" as he fell off the stage.

Thus, Jiang Chen secured his first win in such a comical manner.

"The candidates of the earth quadrant are different to the mystic quadrant alright. If this fatty candidate had truly fought me, he likely would've been able to exchange a few moves with me. Even though his cultivation level is only at the fourth level spirit realm, in terms of actual battle strength or aura, he's different from the mystic realm candidates."

Jiang Chen had actually paid quite a bit of attention and noticed that the sect disciples of the mystic quadrant were mostly of the third and fourth level spirit realm. The earth quadrant were mostly fourth level spirit realm, with a few fifth level—but those were much fewer.

However, despite also being of the fourth level spirit realm, no matter what the measure, the fourth level candidates of the earth quadrant was far superior to those of the mystic quadrant.

"I'm also of the fourth level spirit realm, but my actual fighting ability is absolutely something that no ordinary fourth level cultivator can measure up to. The candidates in the earth quadrant are basically all second tier geniuses, some even preliminary first tier geniuses. All of them must have areas in which they excel in and are quite different from the mediocrity in the mystic quadrant. I was able to sweep the mystic quadrant, but thanks to various restraining factors here, I probably won't be able to do what I did in the mystic quadrant."

Jiang Chen had formed the bones of a plan in his heart after thinking of Master Fang's reminders.

"The keeper of this quadrant is that Shuiyue woman. She will set her sights on me if too much light is shone on my talents, and may even suppress me. In addition, the rings here aren't the ordinary ones. I'll have to use some of my trump cards if I try to win furiously like that. That would be most inappropriate."

The five rings were of the five great elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. If Jiang Chen swept all his matches again, then some of his hidden aces would definitely be revealed.

After all, most cultivators weren't able to cultivate in all five elements. Being able to do so was the unique advantage of one with an innate constitution.

Those who weren't born with a constitution and could still cultivate in all five elements were those with astounding fortuitous occurrences and had rewritten their destinies.

Take Jiang Chen for instance, he was able to do so because of the changes wrought by the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, and the reflections of his numerous fortuitous occurrences.

If he could sweep all the rings, what would that mean then? That would mean that he could adapt to all of the rings and had extraordinary potential in all five elements.

“Forget it, although it’s nice to sweep all my matches, there’s no need to continue playing like this. Since these five rings aren’t like ordinary matches, it wouldn’t be realistic to have results like I had in the mystic quadrant. The matches of the earth quadrant aren’t just of those between candidates, but also a battle with the ring itself as well. The ring will drain the candidate just as equally as one’s opponents. Therefore, it’s rather unrealistic to go at it the way I did in the mystic quadrant.”

Jiang Chen decided to use a more conservative rhythm to proceed after running through various considerations.

In any case, he had plenty of time to complete a hundred challenges over the next three months. He’d won so crazily in the mystic quadrant because he’d been provoked by others and had been dismissed by the entire quadrant, provoking his anger as a result.

But now that he’d gotten here and was facing a main examiner, Master Shuiyue, who was eying him up like a tiger looking at prey, Jiang Chen felt that this woman could make trouble for him at any time, so it was better to keep a lower profile... n(Oveℓb1n

Of course, a low profile was one thing, but there was no reason to immediately give up his turn after obtaining one victory.

Jiang Chen decisively chose to continue when the examiner queried him.

He seemed rather unlucky this time as he selected a first level candidate, and one that was ranked quite ahead at that, number 23 out of 500 candidates in the earth quadrant.

“The Purple Sun Sect again.” Jiang Chen also felt odd when he looked at the name in his hand. Was he fated to be rivals with the Purple Sun Sect?

However, he didn’t really mind. Whether it was the Purple Sun Sect or the other sects, he had but a single thought when he set foot into the ring, and that was to defeat his opponent.

The ring he selected this time was a ring of fire.

“Purple Sun Sect, the ring of fire...” A thought flashed through Jiang Chen’s mind as he looked at the examiner overseeing the selection. What a coincidence, I don’t suppose any cheating is happening?

“Humph. Whether he’s cheating or that it’s a coincidence, the Purple Sun Sect disciples are unlucky to bump into me.” Jiang Chen laughed coldly in his heart and walked towards the ring with large steps.

He could play ball with the other three sects like the little fatty from the Myriad Spirit Sect. If everyone was quite polite and friendly, then all could be discussed. However, there was no room for discussion with the Purple Sun Sect.

When Jiang Chen set foot into the ring, his opponent was already standing there with crossed arms.

He was dressed in a fiery robe and seemed to embody the aura of a fiercely burning ball of flame as he stood on his side. His entire demeanor seemed to have seamlessly melded into this ring of fire.

This person's thin face appeared quite sinister, as the violent light in his eyes made one feel that he wasn't a kind sort.

"Secular kid, I've heard of you."

The person spoke coldly as frightening flames shot out from his eyes, seeming to want to shoot into Jiang Chen's eyes. The two balls of flames churned continuously in his eyes, as creepy as ghostly fire.

"Parlor tricks!"

Jiang Chen snorted lightly and shot out a soft hum like lightning, forming an invisible air current and piercing towards this person's hotly burning eyes.

"Hmm?" The person's expression changed as his eyes hastily shut, evading this strong air current blow.

"Don't embarrass yourself in bringing out this level of glamour." Jiang Chen smiled faintly. This kind of glamour was a way of attacking an opponent's consciousness. To put it bluntly, the art of glamour was a way of attacking the heart.

Although Jiang Chen wasn't afraid, he had to admit that if this had been used on a mentally weak practitioner, the twin balls of fire would've likely obliterated their consciousness, turning them into a puppet before the battle had even begun!

However, for Jiang Chen's level of mental strength, this was just a small trick.

As strong as the Golden Eye of Evil had been on the magnetic golden mountain, Jiang Chen had still evaded it. In contrast, this glamour hadn't even a tenth of the Eye's strength. Jiang Chen's slight snort had been enough to shatter it to pieces.

That person had also been startled that his art had been defused. He'd also lost some face thanks to Jiang Chen's mockery.

However, he was quite shrewd as he opened his eyes again and stared at Jiang Chen, saying coldly, "Kid, that was just a warm up. Don't get cocky too early."

"I've heard that you were quite arrogant in the mystic spirit quadrant, particularly against my Purple Sun Sect. You said that you would destroy each Purple Sun Sect disciple that you met. Is this the case?"

The rumors had exaggerated things a bit, but Jiang Chen had indeed done so. All the Purple Sun Sect disciples who'd met him in the ring had ended up with horrific downfalls.

Jiang Chen was patently disinterested in idle prattle, arching an eyebrow, "Are all Purple Sun Sect disciples as long winded as you?"

The person laughed coldly, "Don't try to provoke me. There's no use in that! I'm not Guo Ren or the trash in the mystic quadrant. Remember this, I am Ouyang Jian. Cheng Zhen and Cheng Lan are my younger cousins, and my juniors in the same faction. Today, I'll return to you tenfold what you'd done to them!"

Jiang Chen couldn't help but jeer, "Should I take a nap first? Wake me up when you're done running your mouth!"

Ouyang Jian wasn't actually one who liked to talk, he was actually crafting an atmosphere.

He was similar to many Purple Sun Sect disciples, born with extraordinary affinity for the fire attribute. He enjoyed a tremendous advantage in the ring of fire.

Add to that the glamour that he practiced, he was adept at creating an atmosphere than melded his influence into the surroundings with every word and gesture, forming a controlling force that made his opponent unwittingly follow his rhythm.

However, Jiang Chen paid him no heed at all.

If Jiang Chen had bickered with him and had his emotions aroused, then he would've unwittingly fallen into Ouyang Jian's rhythm.

But, such tricks were quite pointless in Jiang Chen's eyes.

Ouyang Jian's painstakingly crafted atmosphere may be useful on others, but it was a completely futile exercise to Jiang Chen.

On the other hand, Ouyang Jian was naturally inclined to the fire element, and so this ring wasn't a restraint for him at all, but fertile ground that would double the effectiveness of his strength and arts.

However, how would he know that this ring of fire was a similar walk in the park for Jiang Chen.

His so-called advantage was meaningless in front of Jiang Chen!

Chapter 346: Raging Tide of Flames? Too Weak!

The two had already exchanged multiple blows amidst their words.

Ouyang Jian maintained a rock-solid look on the surface, but he was still stunned beyond belief in his heart. Just now he'd attempted to create a certain atmosphere and pull his opponent into his tempo.

But judging from the other's noncommittal attitude, his efforts had been in vain.

"This country animal does indeed have a few tricks up his sleeve. No wonder Guo Ren had been frightened into forming an internal demon." Ouyang Jian slightly improved his opinion of Jiang Chen. "However, meeting me on this ring of fire means that he can only lament his bad luck!"

Ouyang Jian suddenly glared with both eyes as he shook his arms once. The ring turned into an ocean of flames as countless waves of fire set the surroundings ablaze like a hungering beast from ancient times.

"Kid, you're my prey in this ring of fire, hahaha..." Ouyang Jian made a grasping motion with his right hand and a long broadsword shimmered in and out of existence on his arm, similar to a python entangling itself on his arm.

"That is the Fire Python Sword!" The Purple Sun Sect disciples cried out in surprise beneath the ring.

"Tsk tsk, Ouyang Jian has finally successfully refined the Fire Python Sword. He's just like a fish in water now and will surely claim the limelight in the earth quadrant!"

"When it comes down to it, this secular kid was truly unlucky to come into the hands of Ouyang Jian, and force him to use the Fire Python Sword in the ring of fire."

“Indeed, refining the Fire Python Sword means that his strength will double at the very least. Add to that the advantages the ring of fire confers, I’m afraid that even the top-ranked in the earth quadrant will find it difficult to triumph over Ouyang Jian under such circumstances.”

This wasn’t exaggeration. Every cultivator had different talents.

This ring of fire was an advantage for Ouyang Jian, but torture for cultivators with ordinary potential in the fire attribute.

“Haha, that kid is about to be done for. This is the Raging Tide of Flames that Ouyang Jian has created using the ring of fire. He’s been surrounded by it, and will be cooked to death even if Ouyang Jian doesn’t make another move.”

“This is what happens to those who go against my Purple Sun Sect, die!”

“Damn straight! Kill anyone who besmirches the dignity of my sect!”

“Freaking hell, I’d thought I couldn’t bear the sight of Ouyang Jian before, but this kid doesn’t look that much of an asshole anymore!”

The Purple Sun Sect disciples beneath the stage were all fervent and enthused. They naturally felt great boost to their face when another one of their sect was flaunting his prowess in the ring.

Jiang Chen held his ground, as if meditating. The fiercely burning flames seemed but an illusion in his eyes. No trace of panic or dismay could be found neither on his being or face.

Ouyang Jian’s eyes widened slightly as he sent out a red-hot splendor, calling out, “Kid, you only have the right to be my opponent if you can hold out for fifteen minutes in the face of my Raging Tide of Flames!”

Ouyang Jian formed a hand seal as the Fire Python Sword continued to dance in his hand, directing the seething current around him to gather from all-around and continuously advance on Jiang Chen, encircling him.

The Purple Sun Sect disciples stirred below the elevated ring. They knew that the highlight of the show had arrived!

Once the raging flames surrounded an opponent, then the only thing left from the hellfire would be destruction, unparalleled torture and death!

Ouyang Jian’s expression twisted, all was within his grasp!

The strong flames surged towards Jiang Chen from all directions of the stage. The balls of fire seemed to have their own life of their own as they closed in on their prey like vicious beasts.

Yet Jiang Chen remained as firm as a mountain. The expression on his face didn’t flicker and his lashes didn’t even bat.

“This kid is putting on airs and pretending to be calm. Does he intend to hop out of the circle in the instant that the spirit fires surround him? Huh! Who can jump out once they’ve been surrounded by my

Raging Tide of Flames? The flames are as roaring waves, each interlinking with the next. No matter where he jumps to, he'll be unable to evade the onslaught!"

A victorious smile had almost appeared on Ouyang Jian's face.

"Die, kid!" Ouyang Jian's Fire Python Sword increased its speed, as did the raging flames in the surroundings, churning towards Jiang Chen.

"Are you taking out this level of spirit fire to publicly humiliate yourself?"

Jiang Chen, who'd remained as firm as a mountain up to now, suddenly lifted his eyelids. A radiant light shot forth from them as he lifted his hands slightly, turning his palms outwards and motioned as if he was slamming a door in someone's face.

Something strange happened in this moment.

The fiercely encroaching flames suddenly halted in their path, crashing into an invisible wall as they seemed to suddenly halted on their own.

The encroachment of the raging flames stopped about three meters away from Jiang Chen. Balls of fire had encircled him beyond that distance, but could advance no further.

Looking at the flames, it looked as if there was a force within this three meter radius that made them quake in fear. In fact, the balls of fire actually seemed to slowly be dying down.

"What?"

"What's going on?"

"What's Ouyang Jian doing? Toying with his prey?"

"Finish the battle quickly, don't put on a show."

"Heh heh, I think he wants to slowly torture his prey to death. Don't you think that it's really boring to kill your opponent in one second?"

Although the disciples beneath the ring felt it was a bit odd, they all still felt that this was Ouyang Jian deliberately making things look mystifying and toying with his prey.

However, up on the elevated ring, Ouyang Jian suddenly goggled in shock across the ring.

Indeed, he too had discovered that the Raging Tide of Flames was slowly weakening, as if it had met a terrifying power. These flames infused with spirit power actually advanced no further but began to slow down instead.

Although these flames weren't alive, they did indeed have some sentience, and a primal sort of fear caused these spirit flames unwilling to proceed.

It was as if surging forward another step would cast them into a boundless abyss and have them completely devoured.

Jiang Chen softly produced a long whistle. "Ouyang Jian, is this your so-called Raging Tide of Flames? Too damn weak! Even an old granny would find your flames too weak. Now, break!"

Jiang Chen flourished his sleeves as an enormous power engulfed the surroundings, shaking the very air as it devoured the raging flames around him.

Those overweeningly dominant flames were all extinguished like mere candles!

This scene petrified all the Purple Sun Sect disciples jeering beneath the ring. They had been running their mouths a second before, clamoring about their prowess, as if their enemy was a turtle caught in a jar, dead without a doubt.

But in the next moment, that Raging Tide of Flames they were so proud of and constantly boasting about were extinguished like pitiful candles with a wave of a sleeve.

Was... was this a battle?

This had been too easy? What kind of aura had Ouyang Jian's Raging Tide of Flames possessed? Yet they'd all been suppressed neatly with a wave of one's sleeve?

This kind of power was as if an enormous elephant stepping on a little bunny.

There was saying comparing something "as easy as blowing away a speck of dust". And this was truly all the other had exerted in extinguishing the flames.

The most depressing thing was, Ouyang Jian was most proud of his Raging Tide of Flames and they'd been reduced to being absolutely worthless, that even an old granny would find them insufficient... this was truly a thorough slap to the face!

Ouyang Jian was thrown into disarray.

This scene was beyond his understanding. He'd thought of all sorts of possibilities and had simulated all sorts of situations that might arise.

His opponent using some sort of treasure to withstand the flames for instance, and then stubbornly resisting before his defenses were slowly whittled down and his opponent finally falling in defeat.

Or his opponent having no way to defend themselves and being swallowed whole by the tide and burnt to a crisp.

Or another scenario in which this fellow's speed was surprisingly fast and attempted to jump out of the flames' encirclement, but still had no place to escape before eventually dying an ignoble death beneath the Raging Tide of Flames.

In conclusion, he'd simulated all sorts of possible outcomes, but had never envisioned this one. He'd never even considered the possibility of failure in the ring of fire.

It was because of this that once this scene appeared, Ouyang Jian was completely thrown for a loop. His brain couldn't even react for the moment. He only had one thought, "How is this possible, how is this possible?!"

Reality was harsh.

The Raging Tide of Flames was put out like a light flickering in the breeze. Ouyang Jian's dao heart contracted uncontrollably as a trace of fear flashed through the depths of his eyes.

He'd been absolutely confident before in the ring of fire.

But now, an uncontrollable feeling of fear rose to the fore.

His opponent was too bizarre.

When the most adept and well versed method of a supremely confident person was easily broken by another, that was a fatal blow to their confidence.

"What did you say just now? You said that I only had the right to be your opponent if I could endure 15 minutes of your Raging Tide of Flames?"

Jiang Chen laughed unhurriedly and said softly, "I also want to tell you now that with your little bit of ability, you truly don't have the right to be my opponent."

These words stabbed into Ouyang Jian's dao heart like the most terrifying blade in the world.

Ouyang Jian's body twitched as a violent grimace dawned on his face. He roared furiously, "Kid, you must've used some treasure to cheat! What are you being cocky about? The Raging Tide of Flames was just the appetizer. You can boast only if you live through Sixteen Blows of my Raging Python of Flames!"

He'd transformed into a ball of red light as he spoke, the Fire Python Sword in his hand sweeping through the void and transforming into sword aura that filled the air. Its speed was surprisingly fast as it madly slashed down at Jiang Chen.

The Sixteen Blows of the Raging Python of Flames was a berserk sword technique. It could be said that it was a strong sword technique tailored for Ouyang Jian.

Its speed was astoundingly fast and the sword aura madly violent. When accompanied with fire techniques, its power was shocking when deployed and the wielder could often prevail, even from a weak position, and deploy boundless fighting strength.

"The fire veils fill the skies as the sword dances like a mad python. So fast, so strong!"

"It looks like Ouyang Jian has been thoroughly enraged!"

"Yeah, he's brought out his speciality. Add to that the Fire Python Sword, a spirit weapon refined six times over, this kid looks like he's dead without a doubt because he pissed off Ouyang Jian!"

"That makes sense. This fellow just broke through Ouyang Jian's Raging Tide of Flames. He must've had some treasure that helped him cheat, and it wasn't his true strength at all. Let's see how he cheats beneath the Sixteen Blows and the berserk sword aura!"

Ultimately, the Purple Sun Sect disciples were still unwilling to accept what had happened. They didn't feel that this ordinary brat had truly suppressed the Raging Tide of Flames based on his own abilities.

Chapter 347: A Stab That Turns the Complex, Simple

Ouyang Jian's cultivation level was also at fourth level spirit realm.

But in terms of martial dao realm and vision, his fourth level spirit realm was completely different from Jiang Chen's.

The speed of his Sixteen Blows of the Raging Python of Flames was indeed astounding, and the momentum of his sword quite overwhelming.

But for Jiang Chen, what he feared the least was the kind of physical attack that emphasized speed and momentum.

Speed?

To an ordinary cultivator of the fourth level, this strike was indeed fast. But to Jiang Chen, this speed was only ordinary.

Ferocious?

The momentum of a wild python was a bit ferocious to an ordinary cultivator, but to Jiang Chen, this kind of momentum was no different from randomly barging about.

At the heart of it all, this level of this technique was nothing compared to Jiang Chen's level of knowledge.

Jiang Chen didn't even want to bring out his nameless saber. Instead, he took out a feather from the Fire Raven King's tail.

Light suddenly exploded in his eyes as the tail feather suddenly shot out, as if an agreement had been reached.

Ding.

A crisp collision rang out.

Jiang Chen had used this tail feather to stab directly at the other's Fire Python Sword, despite the tens of thousands of sword shadows.

This seemingly careless stab had seemed simple, but it'd actually broken through all of the other's complex sword movements with one move, making straight for the heart of the attack.

Even Master Shuiyue, who'd been wearing a distant expression up until now, frowned slightly at this move.

One's true level of skill was revealed when one made a move.

In Master Shuiyue's eyes, whether it'd been Ouyang Jian or the secular genius, they'd all been showing off and deploying overly flowery moves in previous battles, with no fatal blows that spoke to the heart of martial dao.

However, Jiang Chen's ordinary stab had caught Master Shuiyue's attentions.

This stab that had reduced the complex to the simple had absolutely grasped the true meaning of martial dao. There were no theatrics, and no flashy poses that looked cool.

There was only this one stab that had completely destroyed all the illusions arising from the Raging Python of Flames, and had directly pierced the core of Ouyang Jian's stroke.

This stab was composed of absolute essence!

Countless sparks flew from the Flaming Python Sword as it connected with the feather. Ouyang Jian felt a surge of pressure pushing rapidly down on him.

He couldn't help but back up multiple steps in succession before finally managing to find his footing.

When he looked again at the Flaming Python Sword, he noticed with horror that a chip had appeared on its edge where the weapons had just clashed. The spirit weapon that he was so proud of, one that had been refined six times over, had seen such a horrifying wound form on it!

"This sounds like it was the trump card you were relying the most on? That's all it amounted to." Jiang Chen chuckled. "I've already taken the blow from your so-called Raging Python of Flames. Now, you take one of mine!"

Jiang Chen raised his arm as he spoke as a strange rhythm, a marvelous tempo, suddenly made the surroundings move to a bizarre beat.

Suddenly—

Jiang Chen's body dashed forward as a bolt of lightning flashed through the air.

Ouyang Jian had discovered that the other's strange weapon had already stabbed to his face.

"Ah!" Ouyang Jian hurriedly raised his sword and barely managed to defend himself.

Ding, ding, ding...

Crisp sounds of collision rang out ten times in a row.

Ouyang Jian's Flaming Python Sword broke apart at every inch and fell to the ground piece by piece.

"Just about time now, hmm?" Jiang Chen whistled cleanly as he sent his arm forward, stabbing the Fire Raven King's tail feather directly between Ouyang Jian's eyebrows.

Ouyang Jian had no place to retreat to; all avenues of retreat had been blocked off. The only thing he could do was shut his eyes and wait for death.

Suddenly, a piece of snow white silk suddenly shot out connected with the tail feather in Jiang Chen's hands with a flash of brilliant light.

Jiang Chen felt his arm go numb and his blood churn. The tail feather in his hand was knocked askew and didn't connect with Ouyang Jian.

"That's enough!" A cold, dignified, and dispassionate voice resounded.

Ouyang Jian had snatched his life from the jaws of death, and cold sweat had broken out all over his body. When he heard the voice, he knew that it was Master Shuiyue who'd made a move to save him.

Jiang Chen knew that an expert had interfered when his strike failed. He snorted lightly and quickly adjusted his stance, looking at Master Shuiyue and asking frostily, "What does the master mean by this?"

Master Shuiyue responded noncommittal, "You've won. Why show no mercy?"

"I only ask, are the examiners allowed to interfere?" Jiang Chen asked faintly.

Jiang Chen seemed calm, but he was seething with rage inside. *Why show no mercy since I'd won? How fake are these words? Would this old woman say this if Ouyang Jian had won?*

However, Jiang Chen knew that the Purple Sun Sect had always been a domineering sort. It was pointless to reason with them.

This sect subscribed to the belief that strength was king. They only acknowledged power and strength. Therefore, Jiang Chen hadn't the slightest desire to reason with them.

To do so for someone who didn't accept logic at all was to preach to deaf ears, like playing a lute to a cow.

There was only one way to handle people like her, and that was to use a strength even more powerful than hers to beat, trample, and crush her until she submitted.

Although Jiang Chen was completely enraged, he also knew that there was no benefit to be gained in erupting in open hostilities with this old woman now. Therefore, even though his anger soared to the high heavens, he still didn't curse loudly in open hostility.

Master Shuiyue said calmly, "As long as it doesn't interfere with the win or loss, an examiner naturally has the authority to handle some unexpected incidents. Whyever not?"

She had spoken so shamelessly, so what else could Jiang Chen say?

He thought viciously, *this old woman is much stronger than me at the moment; there's temporarily no need to cast aside all considerations of face.*

He snorted coldly and moved to the side, looking at Ouyang Jian with mockery, "Relying on the seniors of your sect to protect you, this is all you'll ever amount to in this life."

Ouyang Jian had nothing to say to this, and was beside himself with shame.

Jiang Chen naturally couldn't continue his challenges after bumping into something like this. He smiled coldly and flicked a glance at Master Shuiyue. He then glided down from the ring with a flip of his body, akin to a soaring eagle.

Master Shuiyue was enraged at heart as well. As an elder in the Purple Sun Sect, her position was high and authority immense. Now that she was the keeper of the earth quadrant, no one dared naysay her when she spoke.

All of the earth quadrant candidates acted like a mouse seeing a cat whenever they saw her.

However, this secular disciple had not only dared talk back to her, but that look in his eyes and that tone was completing dismissing her, a sect heavyweight!

Whether it was from the perspective of her power and influence, or from the perspective of her own looks and demeanor, Master Shuiyue was completely unable to accept being dismissed like this.

Jiang Chen alighted from the elevated ring and sat down cross legged in a patch of open ground with an indifferent expression.

He was the only secular disciple in the earth quadrant and as a result, stood out quite a bit.

Although he was a bit lonely without companions, he didn't mind it that much.

However, with the momentum he'd displayed in destroying Ouyang Jian just now, no one dared overlook his existence in the earth quadrant now.

Although Jiang Chen was resting with his eyes closed, he could still feel the looks of judgement being levied upon him from all sides. He knew that his show of strength in that battle just now had likely aroused much interest.

This wasn't a bad thing, but wasn't a good thing either.

Jiang Chen didn't pay it much heed. His strength would've been revealed sooner or later as the challenges went on. As long as his trump cards were enough, he feared nothing.

Thus, he had voluntarily given up further challenges. In this way, his score for the day was set at two successive victories.

"Brother, not a bad showing."

Laughter came from behind Jiang Chen. A young man with all sorts of strange shapes drawn over his face walked up, greeting Jiang Chen with a kind tone.

Jiang Chen knew this person. He seemed to remember that the newcomer was from the Myriad Spirit Sect and was called Liu Wencai.

This person had been the seventh seed in the mystic quadrant and had once invited Jiang Chen to have a drink with him, but Jiang Chen had declined at that time.

Jiang Chen had a decent impression of this person. As the seventh seed, he hadn't been afraid when faced with first seed Guo Ren.

This bit of backbone had made Jiang Chen think higher of him.

This fellow had ended up ranking at number eight in the mystic quadrant Hundred Challenges, entering the earth quadrant with Jiang Chen. However, his identity was more ordinary in the earth quadrant.

He'd had a few hangers-on no matter where he had gone in the mystic quadrant. Now that he was in the earth quadrant, he was devoid of anyone by his side.

The earth quadrant was filled with preliminary first tier geniuses. They naturally wouldn't be Liu Wencai's followers.

Jiang Chen lightly raised his eyelid and asked faintly, "You want to invite me to have a drink again?"

Liu Wencai chuckled, "Things are regulated too strictly around here, I wouldn't dare ask you for a drink. Everyone knows that Master Shuiyue isn't someone to be trifled with. I don't want to run afoul of her."

Jiang Chen declined to comment and nodded carelessly.

“You were too cool just now when you trampled Ouyang Jian.” An excited light flashed through Liu Wencai’s eyes. “I underestimated you before. It looks like you’re still a fish in water in the earth quadrant.”

He seemed to then think of his own fate as he sighed lightly, “Not like me, I’m probably just going for a walk here. It’s likely that I’m going back to the mystic quadrant after this cycle.”

There was a large assembly of talents in the earth quadrant, with experts as common as the clouds. Liu Wencai had also discovered over these two days that even a seeded candidate like him ran into walls wherever he went in this quadrant. His own peers were indifferent to him.

This kind of feeling of defeat made him feel a great psychological drop from his expectations. He had a feeling of having nowhere to vent his feelings!

It was precisely this feeling of a setback and subsequent loneliness that made him feel close to Jiang Chen when he saw the latter displaying his prowess.

He didn’t have his own circle in the earth quadrant. His peers in the Myriad Spirit Sect hadn’t accepted him either because their friendships were ordinary. So when he saw Jiang Chen, someone he was somewhat familiar with, crush Ouyang Jian, he also felt a shared sense of glory.

This was because he felt that everyone had risen from the spirit quadrant, so he genuinely felt happy for and proud of Jiang Chen.

In addition, the loneliness in his heart made him want to find someone that he could pour out his sorrows to, someone who he could chat to or even form a clique with.

Except, with his understanding of Jiang Chen before, this secular genius wasn’t the sort who would get along with anyone, so he’d gathered quite a bit of courage to approach Jiang Chen.

This mentality was completely different to how he was in the mystic quadrant. He’d been a seeded opponent in the mystic quadrant, full of confidence.

He’d received no end of a cold treatment wherever he went after arriving here for two days. This made some small cracks appear in his confidence.

Chapter 348: Receiving Pointers from Jiang Chen

Jiang Chen raised his head with surprise. In his memories, Liu Wencai had a very dashing and confident personality. Why did he have a bit of a self pitying tone today?

When he saw Jiang Chen look at him, Liu Wencai smiled ruefully, “Brother Boulder, I finally understand why you secular disciples are always filled with a sort of anger, and why you guys are always filled to the brim with such enormous motivation. Being ostracized and dismissed by everyone is truly a great motivator.”

There was a bit of anger present in his tone.

It was obviously that his various circumstances since entering the earth quadrant had slightly changed his mentality.

Jiang Chen nodded with a faint smile. "Brother Wencai is a sect disciple, why do you voice words filled with such anger?"

Liu Wencai sighed, "Brother Boulder, I'm not a true sect disciple when it comes down to it. My identity as a sect disciple is quite hollow. I was born in an ordinary hunter's family and great changes happened in my family when I was still in my swaddling clothes. One of the executives of the Myriad Spirit Sect happened to save me. It can be said that he was my savior, and my only family elder in the sect. However, good people don't live long lives, and he unfortunately died in the midst of action during a sect mission. From that point on, I was also called an unlucky orphan star and I was left forlorn with no protector. If it wasn't for the fact that I work particularly hard to live in the cracks of the sect, I probably wouldn't have even been able to stay in the sect, much less participate in the selection."

Liu Wencai had been feeling sad and gloomy. He never had a friend that he could truly talk to.

He himself found things a bit odd at this moment, why was he pouring his heart out to a secular disciple? He scratched his head after speaking and said with some embarrassment, "Brother Boulder, I've rather polluted your ears after blathering on for so long. It's odd, I'm not the sort of person who likes to chatter on and on, but I somehow feel an intimate sense of friendship whenever I see you. Will you think I'm kissing up to you when I say these words, or that I'm putting on airs? Heh heh."

Liu Wencai laughed a bit self deprecatingly. He really didn't want to kiss up to anyone. He'd come looking for Jiang Chen this time truly because he felt a natural sense of friendship.

He also felt quite gleeful when he saw Jiang Chen trample on the sect disciples. Although Liu Wencai was a sect disciple, he had the thoughts of a secular disciple in his bones.

He had a tough time of things because he wasn't a lineal disciple in the sect. Every step he'd taken had been quite difficult.

If it hadn't been for his own good showing and obtaining the chance to participate in the great selection due to his undying efforts, he would've been buried in the bottom ranks of the sect sooner or later, forever unable to change his circumstances.

Jiang Chen's gaze was remote as he pointed at the empty space beside him, "Sit."

He hadn't been predisposed against Liu Wencai to begin with. Now that he'd heard his words and observed his person, he was a fellow of true feelings.

Jiang Chen also felt naturally inclined to strike up a friendship with people like him.

He picked up a branch and drew some circles on the ground. He drew another bigger circle outside of the circles.

"These four circles are like the four great sects, and the larger circle is like the sixteen kingdom alliance. No matter whether if we're in the larger circle or the smaller ones, all we can see is one limited circle. If we jump out of the little and big circle, you'll discover just how vast the outside world is. It's unlimited and boundless. For us, the sects are just a stepping stone on our path to pursuing the boundless grand dao. There's no need to allow these things to disturb our dao heart."

A look of contemplation appeared in Liu Wencai's eyes as he lost himself in thought, staring at the small and big circles, seeming to muse over Jiang Chen's words.

Jiang Chen drew a slash with his branch and broke out of the circles.

"For us, we must press forward with indomitable will and break through these thousands of obstacles to obtain the grand dao. If we cannot break free of these restrictions and fetters, then all will vanish in the blink of an eye without a trace like the floating clouds."

Jiang Chen smiled and he brushed the branch over the ground, erasing all the circles and lines in an instant.

Whether it was the sixteen kingdom alliance or the four great sects, they were all just a small bit of land in the end. If there was anything great that would happen, they would disappear in a flash like the drawings on the ground.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen talking recklessly, it was that he'd recognized how frail the sixteen kingdom alliance was when he'd chatted with Ye Chonglou last time.

The sixteen kingdom alliance was teetering on the edge of elimination in the Myriad Domain, and it was highly likely to be exiled as a desolate wildland. This proved that the sixteen kingdom alliance was in a precarious position indeed.

Liu Wencai thought deeply and he suddenly seemed to understand something. He cast a look of gratitude at Jiang Chen, "Thank you, Brother Boulder, for your golden counsel. Your words just now were like a sledgehammer to my head. Indeed, what need do we have to talk about birth and background? If one is a true genius, all the powers beneath the heavens will be unable to stop his rise. If one is mediocre, then all the powers beneath the heavens will be unable to raise him up."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily and he nodded slightly without saying anything.

Liu Wencai was happy to see Jiang Chen accept his understanding. He no longer felt that ill at ease feeling that he had before he sat beside Jiang Chen.

He absentmindedly felt that this secular genius was a bright lamp, providing guidance when he'd lost his way and leading him out of the wrong path in an instant.

"Brother Boulder must be a genius. he was born in the ordinary world and he dominated multiple sect geniuses. He is sure to transform into a dragon when he encounters the winds and clouds in the future. It's divine fortune that I am able to speak with such a character. I have leveraged Brother Boulder's strength to lead me out of woods. I should associate with Brother Boulder more in the future and befriend him, respect him as an elder brother, and continue to improve myself."

Liu Wencai was greatly agitated. He felt that being with Jiang Chen and only exchanging a few words with him had resulted in great gains.

Brother Boulder's level and the height of his existence was far beyond the level of the ordinary world, and it'd even surpassed the world of knowledge of the sect disciples.

Liu Wencai's thoughts moved quickly as his thinking was quite nimble. Otherwise, how could he, a hunter's son, have found his footing in a sect with numerous geniuses?

He had reaffirmed his own judgement at this moment in thinking that Brother Boulder was an unparalleled genius. His potential, talents, and realm were higher than even those of the preeminent geniuses in the sects.

This kind of person was destined to soar to the heavens sooner or later!

“Number 498, Liu Wencai of the Myriad Spirit Sect, come up for your challenge!”

Liu Wencai’s name was selected at this moment.

Liu Wencai had recovered his previous ease and calm at this point. He bowed slightly to Jiang Chen, “Many thanks to Brother Boulder’s pointers to lead me away from the morass of my heart. Whether I win or lose in these Hundred Challenges, I will bring my full strength to bear!”

He strode forward with vigorous steps and ran for the elevated ring.

A cultivator who’d just resolved something that’d been troubling him, would release an astounding amount of power.

Liu Wencai selected a fourth level disciple of the Flowing Wind Sect as soon as he entered the ring and he beat his opponent into the ground in thirty moves.

This move surprised his peers from the Myriad Spirit Sect, not to mention greatly astounding the examiners.

Liu Wencai’s peers had ostracized him before because he wasn’t a lineal disciple. His level hadn’t been enough to enter their circle. But looking at things now, this character who had no grandparents to dote on him or any uncles to love him in the sect was harboring a great strength!

Even Liu Wencai himself hadn’t thought that he would win, and win so crazily! no17e)lb/In

He’d entered the earth quadrant as the eighth ranked candidate in the mystic quadrant. In the eyes of the outside world, this was his limit. He was sure to be amongst the bottom in the earth quadrant and he was a hot candidate for demotion.

In actuality, Liu Wencai had been subjected to jeers and mockery everywhere he’d gone over the last two days. No one had been willing to accept him because they all felt that there was no need to welcome a character destined to be eliminated.

His confidence had taken a certain level of beating as a result.

Jiang Chen’s words prior to this battle had rang in his heart like the morning bell. Helping him think through his obstacle in a moment and dissipating all the shackles in his heart.

Achieving his first victory in the earth quadrant didn’t get to Liu Wencai’s head. He calmly decided to give up his next chance, leaving the ring with the score of his first victory.

He knew that he wasn’t a genius to win several times in a row. He temporarily didn’t have the ability to triumph over several strong enemies in a row.

Liu Wencai was beside himself with joy after returning to Jiang Chen’s side.

“Congratulations.” Jiang Chen said.

“So explosive battle strength can be deployed after the shackles of the heart are lifted. It looks like a cultivator’s opponents aren’t just others, but himself as well.” Liu Wencai sighed.

Jiang Chen was also truly happy for his sudden comprehension.

It was rare to find a sect disciple as genuine as him.

Everyone seemed to have kept back some of their strength on the first day of the matches. No one seemed to want to exert themselves to the utmost all at once.

Therefore, the most anyone did in the entire day was three successive victories.

The mystic quadrant phenomenon of commonly seeing five or six wins in a row, or even 25 straight wins, like Jiang Chen’s mad tide, was never seen again.

Jiang Chen was selected later on as well, by a Flowing Wind Sect disciple in the ring of gravity. He departed from his style in the mystic quadrant and he purposefully concealed his strength, waiting until time was almost up to win in a manner that made him appear like he’d barely pulled it off.

However, he’d done it so flawlessly that anyone watching would’ve felt that he’d been unable to deploy his talents in the ring of gravity, and that the gravity had limited his performance.

In this regard, some of the first level candidates of the earth quadrant were at ease.

“Perhaps this secular genius really does possess the fire attribute like Ouyang Jian. That’s why he lost so badly.”

“True gold isn’t afraid of the trials of fire. This secular disciple is just from the mundane world alright. His true form is revealed upon meeting a true test. It looks like he can deploy only a third of his strength in the area of gravity. Heh, we have no need to fear battle strength like his.”

Jiang Chen’s trampling of Ouyang Jian earlier had made all the first seed candidates in the earth quadrant view Jiang Chen as a major enemy.

They all breathed a sigh of relief when they saw Jiang Chen’s ‘bedraggled performance’ in the ring. If he was only amazing in the ring of fire, then this genius wasn’t a well rounded one.

Who would be afraid of him when not in the ring of fire?

Chapter 349: Master Shuiyue’s Resentment

The first day of the Hundred Challenges had ended. There were at least ten who had achieved successive wins, but the best out of them had only obtained three in a row. Most were like Jiang Chen, having reached two wins in a row.

Jiang Chen had voluntarily stopped, which left his scores slightly unimpressive at the moment, but also placed him solidly in the top ten.

He’d adjusted his strategy and even purposefully reined in his strength in the afternoon match, leaving many red herrings in the ring of gravity.

But even so, he'd been unable to shake off Master Shuiyue's attentions.

Master Shuiyue usually had nothing to do with secular disciples, but she'd formed some prejudices against the mystic quadrant champion after hearing of Guo Ren's matter.

This fellow's enmity towards the Purple Sun Sect had been apparent in the ring of fire today. Although Ouyang Jian wasn't one of her disciples, she didn't want to see a Purple Sun Sect disciple being killed by someone else in the ring, so she'd interfered despite her identity as the keeper of this quadrant.

Master Shuiyue's personality had always been domineering, and she was renowned amongst the four sects as someone without the slightest hint of womanly virtues.

Her name was that of someone who'd cast off all earthly shackles, but her temper was more fiery than any ordinary person's. Her arrogance had been further reinforced now that she'd accepted a genius disciple with an innate constitution.

Jiang Chen had been born of the ordinary world and had dared publicly question her authority in the ring. Although his tone hadn't been to the point of being openly hostile, it was already an enormous transgression in Master Shuiyue's eyes.

She called up the images of today's matches after returning to the examiners' area.

Master Shuiyue felt that there was something amiss in the match between Jiang Chen and Ouyang Jian. She'd be watching on the sidelines, but hadn't been part of the action and thus had no idea what'd actually happened in the ring.

However, even after watching the playback in the pricey recording gems, Master Shuiyue still came up empty handed.

"Ouyang Jian isn't a mediocre talent. His ranking as first level and number 23 of all candidates in the earth quadrant are well deserved, thanks to his talents and cultivation. What does he rely on? He leverages his talents of fire and that Raging Tide of Flames, and Sixteen Blows of the Raging Python of Flames. However, his two trump cards seemed to have been useless against this secular swine?"

Master Shuiyue studied the images. She wanted to know, just what had happened?

Why had the Raging Tide of Flames ceased to continue when they'd reached three meters from the secular candidate? Why had all the angry flames suddenly disappeared when the fellow flourished his sleeve?

It wasn't that Master Shuiyue was unable to do the same.

She had a natural affinity for water and she could enclose a thousand li in ice with one move. She could easily destroy Ouyang Jian's Raging Flame of Tides.

But, what level was she at? She was a boss in the sky spirit realm, and only a step away from the peak of the sky spirit realm and one of the nine heavyweights of the Purple Sun Sect.

It was easy for her strength to destroy Ouyang Jian.

But could a secular candidate be mentioned in the same breath as her?

Master Shuiyue looked at the images a few more times, and a look of deep contemplation appeared on her still lovely face. "This secular swine is arrogant and intractable, and possesses great enmity towards my Purple Sun Sect. If we cannot subdue him, we absolutely cannot allow the other sects to have him. Otherwise, he'll become a great scourge for our sect in the future."

Master Shuiyue was a decisive person. Many ways to resolve the situation had already appeared in her mind when she examined the problem.

However, she still decided to first obtain forefather Sunchaser's thoughts.

According to the rules, the four forefathers weren't allowed within the four quadrants. Therefore, Sunchaser and the others weren't located in the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

Elsewhere, Sunchaser suddenly snatched out with his hand. A message glyph landed in his palm.

It sparkled like a firefly for a moment as Master Shuiyue's features appeared in his hand.

"Forefather, a secular genius has appeared in the earth quadrant. He's the champion of the first selection. This person has bad relations with our Purple Sun Sect, please advise on our course of action."

This glyph was quite marvelous. It disappeared when Sunchaser closed his hand.

"That freak genius with the boulder's heart again?" Sunchaser murmured to himself. "Although the other three old freaks say that the disappearance of the magnetic golden mountain has absolutely nothing to do with him, why does my intuition keep telling me that the mountain's disappearance has much to do with him?"

"I was anxious that day and asked him a few questions. It looks like although he submitted on the surface, he still held a grudge. Otherwise, why else would he still act with such enmity against my Purple Sun Sect disciples?"

To be honest, Sunchaser had held some expectations for the champion of the first selection.

After all, his results had indeed been stunning. Even if the best amongst the four sects had participated, they might not have gotten the same results either.

However, admiration was one thing, it didn't mean that Sunchaser would unconditionally cater to a mere secular disciple.

"Contending with my sect? Interesting." A vicious streak flashed through Sunchaser's face. "A secular disciple lacks shrewdness in the end and can't hide their thoughts. How easy would it be to emerge from the masses in this selection? Progress will be difficult after offending my Purple Sun Sect. Mm. Let's roughen him up a bit. If he really is a worthy talent, I naturally have my methods to lure him into my Purple Sun Sect. If he's just an overweeningly arrogant character and makes it out of the earth quadrant, there will naturally be countless geniuses who will kill him in the sky quadrant."

When Sunchaser's thoughts traveled here, he made some gestures with his fingers and sent out a message floating through the air in the direction of the earth spirit quadrant.

A spot of light landed in Master Shuiyue's hands.

“Allow him free rein for now, there’s no need to suppress him. Recruit him if he can be tamed. If not, there are countless geniuses in the sky quadrant who will take care of him. You are an examiner, there’s not need to overly interfere.”

There was a tone of warning in Sunchaser’s message. It was obvious that he knew of Shuiyue’s temperament and knew that she often acted on emotions and easily destroyed plans. If she incited public anger and was censured by the other three sects, she would lose a great deal of face if she was unceremoniously switched out.

Light danced in Master Shuiyue’s eyes when she received forefather Sunchaser’s decree. She finally sighed a deep sigh.

“The forefather’s decree cannot be ignored. Can it be that I must watch this kid strut around in front of me over the next three months?”

Master Shuiyue didn’t dare go against forefather Sunchaser’s decree, but in the depths of her heart, she still didn’t wish to accept a secular disciple preening in front of her.

Even though Jiang Chen’s behavior was far from arrogant, the prejudiced Master Shuiyue still found him swollen with arrogance and was irritated by the very sight of him.

“When did such an abnormal factor arise in the secular disciples’ sixteen kingdoms? This child gives me an instinctive feeling of rejection and disgust. With my level of cultivation, I wouldn’t randomly form these thoughts. Can it be that his identity truly is suspicious?”

The thought that made Master Shuiyue the most uneasy flashed through her mind again.

“Jiang Chen was the one with the greatest reputation amongst the sixteen kingdom secular disciples before the great selection. Can he truly be Jiang Chen?”

Master Shuiyue had always had this speculation that hadn’t been able to be verified.

“If it really is Jiang Chen, then I am confident I can convince the forefather to change his strategy. However, this evidence will be difficult to obtain. The forefather obviously still has hopes to tame this child. But if it really Jiang Chen, he’s destined to be at odds with our sect. Mm, if I can find evidence that he is Jiang Chen, I will surely be able to make the forefather retract his thoughts...”

A hint of a cold smile eked out from the corners of Master Shuiyue’s lips. “Jiang Chen! Freak genius of the boulder’s heart! You better not be the same person. If you are, the four areas of the selection are destined to become your resting place.”

Master Shuiyue recalled the news that Chu Xinghan had brought back to the sect that day.

The second ranked disciple beneath her, Chu Xinghan, had brought back Long Juxue from the Second Passing in the Eastern Kingdom, and had also brought back the news that a mysterious man had saved Jiang Chen.

The mysterious man had also said clearly that if the Purple Sun Sect sent more people after Jiang Chen, he would personally demand an explanation from the sect. He’d also said that Jiang Chen and Long Juxue should settle their grievances themselves.

This problem had always been disturbing Master Shuiyue. This was also the reason why she hadn't sent her disciples to pursue and kill Jiang Chen.

It wasn't that she'd been scared by that threat, but that she felt that with Long Juxue's talents, it'd be as easy as killing a dog to get rid of Jiang Chen when she grew into her own.

Therefore, she'd thought that there was nothing bad about letting Long Juxue handle the matter herself.

"Even Chu Xinghan had felt that this mysterious man was fathomless. His cultivation level is surely not less than mine. Jiang Chen then went to the Skylaurel Kingdom and stirred up quite a ruckus there. In this regard, the person who threatened Chu Xinghan might've been Ye Chonglou, spirit king protector of the Skylaurel Kingdom!"

Some traces of fear appeared on Master Shuiyue's face when she thought of Ye Chonglou's name.

As arrogant as she was, Master Shuiyue knew that there was still a gap between her strength and Ye Chonglou's.

She'd just set foot into the ninth level spirit realm and touched the peak of the sky spirit realm. There were still many who could defeat her at this level. ~~none~~/lb/1n

However, although Ye Chonglou was also the peak of the sky spirit realm, he was the publicly acclaimed "spirit king".

Ordinarily speaking, there were none within the same realm who could defeat those awarded with this title, or even come close to their level of cultivation.

Therefore, although a spirit king was the peak of the sky spirit realm and hadn't set foot into the origin realm, he was someone that no ordinary peak of the sky spirit realm could measure up to. A spirit king was an invincible existence and one that could vaguely feel the doorframe to the origin realm. One was only a half step away from the next realm.

As cocky as Master Shuiyue was, she too felt a headache when thinking of Ye Chonglou and wasn't willing to offend him.

"In my opinion, the person who threatened Chu Xinghan was likely Ye Chonglou. If he was the one, he does actually have the right to say such words. Humph. The great selection is an event being held by all four sects. What can he do? Blades are without eyes, and blows without mercy in the selection. No one can find fault if a secular disciple loses his life. Even if he wants to start something after the selection, can he be more domineering than forefather Sunchaser?"

As strong as a spirit king was, that was still within the radius of the spirit realm.

In the eyes of the four origin realm forefathers, a spirit king was just a spirit realm cultivator, in the end a completely different level from them.

Master Shuiyue's mind was full of random thoughts. She intuitively felt that the freak genius of the boulder's heart was possibly Jiang Chen.

But she had no way of convincing the forefather without tangible evidence.

Chapter 350: A Targeted Scheme

Master Shuiyue's heart was full of contradictions now. She suspected the freak genius of the boulder's heart was Jiang Chen, but also didn't want to accept this.

This was because she felt that an ant akin to Jiang Chen was unworthy of such strong potential.

The Eastern Kingdom had given birth to one Long Juxue. How could it have given birth to another incredible genius?

That was an insult to her vision.

If the freak genius of the boulder's heart was indeed Jiang Chen, why had she only selected Long Juxue and not detected the existence of Jiang Chen in the Eastern Kingdom?

This was a blot upon her record for her.

Therefore, she was quite conflicted right now. It was very difficult for her to accept the truth that Jiang Chen was the freak genius of the boulder's heart and had such high potential.

However, she also desperately needed an excuse now to suppress this freak genius who'd offended her so.

"According to the intelligence brought back by Chu Xinghan, Jiang Chen used his talents in training beasts to coordinate the million strong Swordbird Army and defeated the Long family at the Second Crossing. Taming beasts is but an unorthodox back door solution. What does this say about someone who is enthusiastic about an unorthodox way? This means his martial dao potential is absolutely not that strong. In addition, according to the various intelligence reports from the Skylaurel Kingdom, Jiang Chen's never displayed any astounding battle strength. He'd either depended on Ye Chonglou's protection each time or the mob bullying from the Swordbird Army. What else does he have apart from this?"

It was an odd thing. For an expert at Master Shuiyue's level, there was actually no need to be that bothered by a young cultivator.

However, when she'd seen the other three sects fight over him in the legacy territory, her heart had felt as uncomfortable as if she'd eaten a fly.

Her thoughts had been, *even if an ordinary brat is a bit talented, was it necessary to fight over him publicly like this?*

Everyone knew that this fellow was rivals with Long Juxue. To openly fight over him like this was an obvious slap to her face.

And now that she suspected Jiang Chen was the freak genius of the boulder's heart, not only was she infuriated, she was also a tad bit worried.

If this was the case, then the momentum behind this secular brat's rise was simply too scary.

His scores in the first selection had been heaven-defying.

Just by the feats displayed on that assessment, they had revealed a level of improvement that was almost on par with Long Juxue, if not already on the same level as her.

However, Long Juxue had had the attentions of ten thousands focused onto her alone these past years, and had claimed the advantage of sect resources.

Jiang Chen had been following and crawling around in the ordinary world all this time, and the level of resources he'd had was on another level entirely.

In this kind of contrasting situation, for two who had started off at similar levels, if Jiang Chen had been able to keep up the same rate of improvement as Long Juxue, then this kid was truly worthy of note. It could even be said that he was truly a latent threat for Long Juxue!

She once again summoned her four disciples for a lecture.

"Honored master, your disciples greet you." The four disciples approached to make their greetings.

Master Shuiyue said faintly, "Did any of you watch the battle between that secular genius and Ouyang Jian today?" ~~no~~ve(L&)1n

Of the four disciples, two of them hadn't been in a match at that time and had seen it with their own eyes, whereas the other two had been undertaking their challenges in other rings and hadn't seen it.

"Take a look again." Master Shuiyue conjured forth the images again.

The four disciples focused their attentions on the reenactment of the match. Master Shuiyue played it for them again when it was over, watching it three times in a row.

"Hai Tian, you are currently my strongest disciple in the earth quadrant. What do you think of this candidate? I had all of you keep an eye on him previously, but although you fearfully agreed with your words, you were dismissive in your hearts. I only ask you one question now. How would you fight him if you met in the ring?"

The four disciples were all privately astonished and had nothing to say.

Hai Tian thought silently for a moment and sighed, "That secular genius must have had quite a fortuitous encounter in the area of fire. Perhaps it's a treasure that defends him, or he may have other methods. Your disciple may be able to use the 'Thousand Li Locked in Ice' passed down from the honored master to contain the flames and weaken him this way. My chance of victory would be about fifty-fifty."

Hai Tian was the strongest of the four. If he was only at fifty-fifty probability, then the others would be even less.

"Honored master, there were many accidents in his match with Ouyang Jian. When he was next challenged in the ring of gravity, his performance was much more ordinary. With our cultivation levels, we should have more than fifty percent chance of winning as long as we don't meet him in the ring of fire. If we meet him in the ring of ice, he will be dead without a doubt and have no hope of winning at all!" Another disciple who was younger and had exceedingly long earlobes spoke confidently.

Hai Tian also nodded, "Honored master, if we meet him in the ring of ice, I believe that I and the other three junior brothers will have exceedingly high chances of winning."

Master Shuiyue was silent for a moment and then shook her head lightly. "Don't underestimate him. He once displayed talents for fire and water in the first selection. If he is thus accomplished in the ring of fire, can you guarantee that he doesn't have some fallbacks in the ring of ice?"

"Honored master, in my eyes, he seems to have used some sort of fire attribute treasure to cheat in his match with Ouyang Jian. It wasn't that he had a high cultivation level. He has a great treasure against fire, but certainly he won't have one for water? If so, this kid truly defies the heavens."

"Junior brother Yan is right." Hai Tian smiled. "Honored master, if he really did have such fortuitous occurrences, that makes him superior to even us sect disciples. I don't think this is likely."

Master Shuiyue also found this a bit unbelievable, but up until now, this secular genius' performance had been absolutely incredible.

"You cannot view this person with normal eyes." Master Shuiyue's tone was very grave.

"Don't worry honored master. Senior brother Hai Tian ranks within the top five of the first level candidates and is absolutely on a different level from Ouyang Jian. That kid will be a cricket after the end of autumn, unable to bounce around for long if he runs into senior brother Hai Tian!"

Hai Tian smiled demurely and said reassuringly, "Honored master, if your disciple meets this fellow, I will certainly teach this arrogant fellow a lesson. That a mere secular disciple has dared challenge the honored master is truly evil!"

"Indeed, when us brothers bump into him, we will absolutely vent our honored master's ill feelings."

Master Shuiyue also spread out her hands, "The forefather has sent word not to suppress him. However, I am speculating that this fellow is the rival of your junior sister Long Juxue from the ordinary world. If he really is that swine Jiang Chen, then he is fated to be unable to coexist with my Purple Sun Sect. If we temporarily don't suppress him according to the forefather's will, it will be even more difficult to move against him when he comes into his own."

"Then the honored master's intentions are...?" Hai Tian asked probingly.

"Hai Tian, He Yan." Master Shuiyue said, "You rank third and fourth, respectively, amongst all the ten greatest disciples beneath me. It is said that a country nurtures its soldiers for a thousand days, all for one day's battle. Now, I want to send you two to test this fellow. Do you dare try?"

"Your disciples are willing to shoulder the honored master's burdens." The two disciples she had called upon replied.

The other two also said voluntarily, "We are also willing to shoulder the honored master's burdens."

Master Shuiyue waved a hand dismissively, "This matter is of great importance. Let your third and fourth senior brothers go for greater assurance in completing this task. Since this is the case, I'll arrange things tomorrow. Number four, I'll arrange for you to select this freak genius first. Which ring do you think you will have the most confidence in?"

“Honored master, your disciple is willing to meet him in the ring of ice.” The Shuiyue faction had particular affinity for water.

Master Shuiyue then looked at Hai Tian. “What about you, number three?”

Hai Tian thought for a moment, “Since honored master will be sending junior brother He to meet him in the ring of ice, then there is no meaning for your disciple to choose the ring of ice again.”

Master Shuiyue nodded, quite satisfied with Hai Tian’s comprehension.

“Number three, it seems like you understand my meaning. Since that secular brat has no particular disadvantages in the area of water, he will certainly be worse off fighting number four in the ring of ice. If he also has a heaven-defying performance in the area of water, then there’s no meaning in you picking the ring of ice again.”

Master Shuiyue’s considerations were quite all-encompassing.

“Perhaps junior brother He will handle that kid without even needing me to put in an appearance.” Hai Tian laughed heartily and said, “If your disciple does need to fight, then I choose the ring of spirit devouring.”

The ring of spirit devouring was the ring that mapped to the metal attribute.

There were all sorts of external powers in this ring that would sap a candidate’s reserves of spirit power, making them run through their energy more quickly.

Of the five rings, this was the ring that candidates wanted to face the least.

As for Hai Tian, he’d had some special occurrences that allowed him special methods that others wouldn’t have for the metal attribute.

Therefore, his advantage in the ring of spirit devouring should be no less than his advantage in the ring of ice.

Master Shuiyue nodded, “Number three, number four, remember, this is only a battle to feel out his identity. Don’t kill him for now, or I won’t be able to explain myself to the forefather. If you have the ability to, use a more clandestine method to break open his mask so that his true features are revealed. That would be a true accomplishment.”

This was Master Shuiyue’s true goal. What she wanted to do the most was to uncover the true identity of this freak genius.

According to the rules, secular candidates couldn’t reveal their identities until the final battle, lest it give rise to improper recruitment actions from the four sects.

But if one’s mask was accidentally broken in a match, that was another story entirely.

Hai Tian had high levels of comprehension and knew that his honored master wanted to know this freak genius’ identity, and that she particularly wanted to confirm if he was their junior sister Long Juxue’s rival, Jiang Chen.

She would be able to form a strategy only after this question was answered.

Hai Tian immediately understood the greater meaning behind this match, and a confident look made its way onto his face. "Honored master, your disciple will go back and think of a plan. I'm not idly boasting, but I truly have seventy to eighty percent confidence if we are to compete in the ring of spirit devouring."

"Don't worry about the ring. As the keeper, I still have this little bit of authority."

Although examiners couldn't cheat, if she went about her business privately and with no witnesses, who would be the wiser? The keeper's authority wasn't something that the other examiners could measure up to. This kind of cheat would be easy to accomplish!

"Alright, go back and make your preparations. Meet tomorrow's matches at your best condition possible. Particularly Hai Tian, remember that I will put everything in place for you."

Master Shuiyue waved her plain hand and indicated their dismissal.