

## Chaotic 591

### Chapter 591: Battle of Two Women

Stunned, Jian Chen stared at Huang Luan. She was standing by the gates and then his eyes swung to You Yue standing right next to him. He felt the complaints inside his head grow so huge that they would take off his head. Not once did he ever think that Huang Luan would take the initiative to find him, especially when his fiancée was right next to him.

One woman was someone he had some feelings for and once had a very close relationship with. The other woman was his fiancée that was known throughout the Gesun Kingdom. Jian Chen didn't even know just how to treat this matter since this was the first time these two women had come into contact.

Ming Dong clearly understood just what sort of trouble Jian Chen was in, but he had no intentions of helping him at all. Instead, he chuckled, "Brother, I have some things to take care of, so I'll be leaving first." Ming Dong hadn't really meant what he said. He turned around just a few steps away to observe Jian Chen, You Yue, and Huang Luan with a smile on his face as if he was taking pleasure in the crisis befalling Jian Chen.

Forcing a smile, Jian Chen asked Huang Luan, "What brings you here?"

Today, Huang Luan was wearing a white-colored robe that accentuated her picture-perfect figure that only the devil could offer. Her figure possessed an allure that could seize the hearts of anyone with just a single motion.

Her clothes were on point with how they had been tied. Not a single part of her robes was messed up. Compared to the clothing she had worn as the golden daughter of her clan, she looked like a heroic woman ready for travel.

The icy-cold demeanor on Huang Luan's face had instantly softened the moment her eyes fell upon Jian Chen. Smiling, she said, "Are you not going to welcome me in?" Her voice leaked a feeling of close friendship.

The forced smile was still on his face when Jian Chen addressed Huang Luan, "Of course I will welcome you in. Please, come in and we can have a chat."

Giving a sweet smile to Jian Chen, she tossed down the reins in her hand and followed him in.

The guards at the gates were members of the Flame Mercenaries, so they immediately rushed in to take the mount away.

Stopping in front of Jian Chen, she eyed his handsome face with a tender-hearted smile. She was just about to say something when, all of a sudden, she realized that there was another beautiful woman standing right next to Jian Chen. Eyeing her with some confusion, she asked, "Jian Chen, who's this?"

"Hello, I am You Yue!" You Yue answered first. There was a smile on her face, but in her heart, there was a sour feeling. The feelings Huang Luan had for Jian Chen were obvious to see. Hence, she was able to infer that the connection between the two was close.

"You Yue? Could you be the grand princess to the Gesun Kingdom?" Huang Luan asked her in shock.

She nodded in response, "Correct, that is I. Might I ask who you are?"

The light in Huang Luan's eyes changed when she regarded You Yue now. There was a darker tint of light that seemed to contain some jealousy just barely hidden in them, "I am Huang Luan, a member of the Huang family."

"Ah, miss Huang Luan, which kingdom are you from? I have heard of the Huang family before, but which clan it is, is something I know not." You Yue smiled softly.

"I'm afraid to disappoint the princess, but my Huang family is affiliated with no kingdom. We live in the mountains and rarely encounter the surrounding kingdoms or any other family that might share our surname." Huang Luan replied.

Sensing the hidden steel to their tones, Jian Chen felt his headache grow bigger and bigger. "Why don't we walk inside first and continue our talks there?" He pressed.

Jian Chen, You Yue, and Huang Lan were all seated around a circular table in a splendid and magnificently decorated room. Huang Luan was excited to see Jian Chen, and talked to him nonstop about the Flame Mercenaries with great curiosity. Whenever she asked another question, Jian Chen answered truthfully without leaving any mystery behind.

Huang Luan's eyes brightened at this moment as if she had remembered something. Looking to Jian Chen, she said, "Jian Chen, I've something to tell you. I've become the student to the patriarch of the Huanggu clan. They're even willing to teach me their Scriptures of the Aqua Sunflower, a Saint Tier Cultivation Method!"

"What? A Saint Tier Cultivation Method?" Jian Chen was astounded. Although cultivation methods weren't as wanted as a battle skill, a Saint Tier one was priceless despite that. Extremely rare and sparse, only the most isolated of hermits would have these cultivation methods.

"It is a cultivation method for those with the water affinity — something I coincidentally possess. Because of this, I learned it and cultivated the cultivation method for a small moment. In just two months, I was able to bring up my power so fast that I went from a First Cycle Earth Saint Master to a Second Cycle Earth Saint Master! It won't be long until I become a Third Cycle Earth Saint Master, and with this rate of progress, becoming a Heaven Saint Master won't even take too many years." Huang Luan's face was filled with unrestrained excitement.

You Yue felt shock grip her heart right by Jian Chen's side. She had not thought that this wildly-dressed Huang Luan would be an Earth Saint Master despite the close similarity in age to her own. Not only that, she too did not expect to hear that she was learning a Saint Tier Cultivation Method, something that was only mentioned in legends.

Not too long later, You Yue managed to restrain her emotions and maintain her calm demeanor. From what she heard, this Huang Luan was definitely someone high in status and was possibly one of those golden daughters belonging to a tremendous family. Not only was her talent at cultivation higher than her own, Huang Luan was already an Earth Saint Master at her age while You Yue wasn't. Lastly, Huang Luan had managed to find a teacher that imparted a Saint Tier Cultivation Method onto her. This meant that she was practically superior in every single aspect, and even with You Yue's status of a princess, she paled in comparison to Huang Luan.

Jian Chen noted the change in You Yue's demeanor with some concern. He immediately broke off the conversation, and called for someone to prepare Huang Luan and room. He then dismissed everyone.

Even after leaving the room, You Yue felt extremely depressed. Walking by herself to her own room, she sat on top of the bed and stared despondently at the wall across from her.

The doors to her room slowly opened to reveal Jian Chen gently making his way into the room. Jian Chen felt his heart clench when he saw how You Yue was faring.

Closing the doors behind him, Jian Chen walked over to You Yue and sat down beside her. Studying her face with great concern, Jian Chen was about to say something, but then he realized he had no idea just what words he could possibly use to comfort her.

He sighed. Jian Chen was not someone who understood how to speak with flowery speech, and in a situation like this, he was utterly powerless.

There was a gleam to her eyes when You Yue turned to look at Jian Chen with a miserable expression, but it was because of the reflection of the light on the layer of water that was welling up in her eyes. At last, two teardrops formed just enough to flow down her beautiful face before they splashed on the ground.

Jian Chen panicked at the sight of her teardrops, but before he could speak, You Yue beat him to the punch. "Jian Chen, tell me. Were your words before about you having no time for women a lie? You were unwilling to wed me before, was it because there was already another woman in your heart, a woman who is far superior than I am?"

She was heartbroken, and her voice was threatening to break into a sob. In all honesty, her heart felt nothing but love for Jian Chen, and that's why she found it heartbreaking to be in such a situation. When Huang Luan showed up today, the deep feelings she felt for Jian Chen were completely obvious, visible even to the naked eye. Combined with the fact that she was superior in every way to You Yue, the princess felt this other woman's presence as a tremendous threat that could steal away the man she loved.

Pulling at You Yue's hands, Jian Chen clutched them with great intimacy as he softly said, "You Yue, it isn't what you think it is. The reason why I wasn't in a hurry to wed you was because I wasn't ready to settle down. I have not yet resolved the problems that weigh on my shoulders, and if I don't resolve them before I start a family, then it will only bring everyone harm."

"I won't hear this! I don't want to hear these lies; just how many times have you said these words?" You Yue began to cry.

At a loss for words, Jian Chen looked at You Yue. From the very start of their relationship, You Yue had given him the feeling of someone that was always calm, but this was the very first time he had ever seen You Yue cry her heart out. This was something he felt a great deal of pain over.

He sighed once more. He had to be honest with You Yue, else he would only hurt her more.

"You Yue, although it may seem as if I am invincible on the surface as a Heaven Saint Master and an Imperial Protector of one of the Eight Great Powers on the continent, my life is not as relaxed as you

think it might be. I have many, many enemies that pose a threat to me still.” Jian Chen suddenly spoke before segueing into the hidden story of his life to her.

You Yue paused temporarily in her tears to fixate her eyes on him.

“In my years roaming the Tian Yuan Continent, I offended many families, and although some of them were killed off, there are still plenty of hidden factions that I have no way of fighting against. Among those families are the Shi family and the Jiede clan. These two factions are hermit clans on the continent with a vast amount of strength due to the fact that they have Saint Rulers ruling over them. Only death would absolve the grudges between those factions and me. If I am alive, they will not rest, and if they are not dead, I will never be safe. It is likely that those two clans have been searching for me ever since, and even if there is a long distance between the two of us, it is only a matter of time before they arrive here. The very moment they find out my identity, being the Imperial Protector of the Qinhuang Kingdom won’t be nearly enough to help me. Thus, I must improve my strength as much as I can. If I do not, then when the Saint Rulers come for me, I will die a pauper’s death along with the family I have.”

Aside from those two, there is still the Sect of Dragon and Tiger from the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom. They are a powerful sect to contend with, and their patriarch is a Saint Ruler that heavily desires a treasure of mine. Me being an Imperial Protector of the Qinhuang Kingdom has beaten them back temporarily, but they will not stop at that. It remains to be seen just what sort of tricks the Saint Ruler might come up with to harm me.”

Staring solemnly at You Yue, he continued, “You Yue, do you understand the overwhelming pressure that weighs upon my shoulders now? The enemies I’ve made are people of the Saint Ruler realm. As I am now, I stand no chance against them. Even escape is an impossibility. With how the odds are stacked, I have no idea just how much time I have left to live.”

#### Chapter 592: Ancestor of the Huanggu Clan

In order to cure the wound in You Yue’s heart, Jian Chen had no other choice but to explain everything he had hidden from the world — even his parents had never heard this information. Jian Chen knew that if he hiding his secrets like this would only serve to confirm the worries in You Yue’s heart, dealing another blow to it. That was something Jian Chen wanted to avoid.

You Yue had completely stopped her tears as she listened to Jian Chen speak. The two glistening eyes on her beautiful face stared at Jian Chen in silence. She finally understood, this very moment, the tremendous amount of pressure Jian Chen had always talked about and just what great dangers were waiting ahead of him.

A Saint Ruler was an unfathomable entity in the eyes of You Yue. They were people that belonged to the legends of old. Only a few people on the continent were able to come face to face with them.

Jian Chen on the other hand, had managed to not only make enemies with a single Saint Ruler, but possibly two or even three of them! The fear You Yue felt in her heart was outweighed by the deep worries she had for Jian Chen.

He clenched his hands tightly over You Yue’s. It was a first for him to really realize just how smooth and tender her jade-like palms felt to the touch. The sensation was very soft indeed, but Jian Chen didn’t pay too much attention to the details. Instead he stared back at You Yue with a stern expression. “You Yue, I

have not told even my parents of this, so I hope you will safeguard these secrets of mine. Do not let my mother know at all costs. A Saint Ruler is far too strong for the Changyang clan to weather as it stands now, I don't want the clan to worry for me."

Dazed, You Yue continued to stare at Jian Chen. The grief and sorrow she had felt before had completely disappeared, but now, worry and concern had replaced it.

"I-I'm sorry, Jian Chen. I didn't know... about just how large this scale was." You Yue lamented.

Giving a small smile, Jian Chen shook his head, "You Yue, it is fine as long as you understand. The hatred between those two families and me is irreconcilable. Without that matter resolved, I really do not wish to waste time trying to start a family of my own."

You Yue was placated for now. She was now feeling better than when she had first entered the room, allowing Jian Chen to return to his own room in peace. However, as soon as Jian Chen walked into his drawing room, his entire figure grew rigid and a sharp light glinted in his eyes as if it was reflecting the light of a sword being drawn.

Seated in the room was a blue-robed elder with his back facing Jian Chen. Seated by the table, he drank a single cup of tea with only his own company to converse with.

This man had long, black hair that went down his back without a messy spot to be seen. At a glance, he appeared to be just a regular person with no outstanding traits.

However, this seemingly unimportant person made Jian Chen stare at him seriously as if prepared to take action at any moment against an enemy. This person was practically undetectable to even Jian Chen, and if it were not for his own eyes seeing the man, Jian Chen would have overlooked the man entirely.

The only ones capable of managing such a feat were hermits of the Saint Ruler level.

Having a Saint Ruler suddenly appear in his very own room was something that made Jian Chen nervous.

"Who are you?" Jian Chen questioned as he shifted his right hand behind his back to clench the jade piece in his hand. Since he could not fight against a Saint Ruler, then his only option was to ask for the assistance of the Huang patriarch.

"Haha, little brother, do not be nervous. This old man came for an impromptu visit. If I disturbed you, then please forgive me." An elderly voice came from the mouth of the blue-robed man. Yet, he remained seated at the table with his back still facing Jian Chen.

Sensing no hostile aura around the man, Jian Chen eased up slightly while staring at the back of the man, "Senior, who might you be?"

"If you wish to know even that, then I'll tell you this. That girl Huang Luan has already told you about her having a teacher. That is me, I am her teacher." The man replied.

Jian Chen was astonished, and the look in his eyes reflected that astonishment. "Could you be the patriarch of the Huanggu clan?"

"Correct, that is I!"

With his identity confirmed, Jian Chen let out a mental sigh of relief. Although a Saint Ruler was undoubtedly a tremendous source of pressure to him, at least this one was no enemy to him.

“Little brother, come sit and let us talk.” The man suggested.

Easing back into the calm and easygoing nature of his, Jian Chen strode to the seat on the other side of the man and sat down. Straight away, Jian Chen could see the man’s face. It was a very ordinary-looking face that was filled with wrinkles due to age. The only difference was that a single blue seal sat in the middle of his forehead, but it was hard to make out the picture in full clarity because of the wrinkles.

The elder leveled a meaningful glance at Jian Chen, “Little brother, should I be calling you the Imperial Protector of the Qinhuang Kingdom or the fourth master of the Changyang clan? Or perhaps — Jian Chen!?”

“Senior, please just call me Jian Chen.” He smiled.

The old man nodded his head just slightly, “Then I shall do so. Jian Chen, I am not one that enjoys beating around the bush, so I shall get to the point.”

He paused for a brief moment to take in a breath of air, “Jian Chen, I came here specifically because of Huang Luan, so the matter we will be discussing will relate to Huang Luan herself.”

Jian Chen could feel his heart sink, “Could this be about the betrothment between your Huanggu clan and the Huang family?”

Shaking his head, the elder replied, “That matter has already been settled and dealt with. I won’t even bother to try and harangue the matter any longer. Instead, I came here today to talk about her future.”

“Senior, what might you mean by that?” Jian Chen asked, mystified at what the elderly figure was getting at.

Humming, the elder thought for a moment, trying to find the best way to describe his thoughts, “Huang Luan has a very particular body that comes once a thousand years on the continent. If she were to train with a water affinity cultivation method, her growth would be exponential. For that reason, I bequeathed the Saint Tier Cultivation Method to her so that she could learn twice the amount for half the effort. Becoming a Saint Ruler wouldn’t be difficult for her at all, but there is a single taboo she must not commit. Until she becomes a Sixth Cycle Heaven Saint Master, she must remain pure at all costs. Otherwise, the effects she will receive will be irrevocably disastrous for her.” The elder spoke with an increasingly grim voice.

Jian Chen had been listening on with the utmost seriousness, but when he heard what the patriarch said, he could not help but blush a little. Giving an embarrassed smile, he said, “Senior, you may rest assured. The relationship between Huang Luan and I is nowhere near such a situation.”

“That is good then.” The man nodded his head in satisfaction. “Jian Chen, you should know that for the sake of Huang Luang’s future, you must uphold her purity.”

“This junior understands!” Jian Chen scratched his nose in embarrassment. He couldn’t help but ask himself, was he really a person that wanted nothing but lust?

With that said and done, the patriarch stood up from his stool, "This old man has said all that he wanted to say, until we meet again then!" The next moment, the patriarch disappeared from the room without a trace.

Looking left and then right, Jian Chen could see that the windows and doors to the room were still tightly shut. There was virtually no way to escape from this sealed space, and no crack or crevice to be seen. With those factors to be considered, Jian Chen had to truly wonder how the patriarch had left.

"A Saint Ruler is truly powerful. The powers they possess are far beyond what I can imagine." Jian Chen muttered with a twinge of jealousy.

"So Huang Luan's talent stems from her body itself. No wonder she was able to become an Earth Saint Master at such a young age..."

Several kilometers away, the patriarch of the Huanggu clan materialized out of thin air as if he had been a mirage. No longer teleporting here and there, the elder chose to instead fly the rest of the way at incredible speed.

"Now that I've told him that, he will most likely not see Huang Luan as a wife for now, leaving her body completely intact. Though, even if he wishes to do something unbecoming to her, the restriction I've placed on her will not let him get away." The elder smiled darkly as if he was plotting something.

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In the blink of an eye, a year passed. In that year, the Flame Mercenaries had grown spectacularly and without ever stopping. The stronger factions of the several surrounding kingdoms had been completely annexed, including the factions from the Qiangang Kingdom, the Qianlong Kingdom, the Andreas Kingdom, the Pingyang Kingdom, and even some of the other kingdoms that had once nursed a grudge with the Gesun Kingdom. This made the Flame Mercenaries into a hegemon to be feared. Their members had exploded to over a hundred thousand with over five hundred Earth Saint Masters. Even several Heaven Saint Masters had been coerced into it, making the comparison to the past a very shocking one.

The Flame Mercenaries explosive growth made them a household name that everyone knew about. Practically every mercenary or mercenary group would talk about the Flame Mercenaries with either eyes of envy or admiration.

The Flame Mercenaries had exploded in power so fast that the scale today could practically be considered a miracle made in real life.

Within a desolate piece of land, a group of people riding on mounts could be seen resting. Buildings could be seen all around them, and not too far away, several hundred fumes of fire spiraled into the air. Mercenaries sat around each of the fires in groups of threes or fours as they talked to one another over a piece of magical beast meat.

Hoisted overhead was an emblem of a ball of fire; this was the emblem of the Flame Mercenaries.

Seated at the very center of all the banners and tents was Jian Chen and the others who were currently discussing matters.

“Jian Chen, as of today, the Flame Mercenaries have reached a very definite scale of over a hundred thousand members. The time is ripe for us to create a city of our own.” Dugu Feng spoke.

#### Chapter 593: A Vein of Tungsten Alloy

Jian Chen had to think about Dugu Feng’s proposal for a brief moment. He knew that there were plenty of mercenary groups that managed to construct their own cities after gaining enough power. It was only when a mercenary group founded their own city that they had the right to say they were someone important on the Tian Yuan Continent.

Mercenary groups that owned a city were extremely strong, and the Flame Mercenaries paled in comparison to the majority of mercenary groups in power.

Although they had well over a hundred thousand members, the amount of people that were strong enough to assume responsibility over any single jurisdiction were far too few. Aside from Jian Chen, there were only three other Heaven Saint Masters. If they were to try to construct a city like this, it would be insanely difficult to maintain their power. They would end up as the losers if their city was besieged.

Not only was it a common for kingdoms to fight with another for power, mercenaries would often times move into cities and attempt to seize power almost as often.

With those factors in mind, Jian Chen finally made up his mind and said, “Our Flame Mercenaries might be strong in our area, but our strength is still limited to just this small area. We are not quite yet strong enough to attempt to build a city, so we should hold off for now.”

“I agree. Our group, the Flame Mercenaries, is quite strong, but there is still a huge threat of internal danger. Therefore, we should refocus our efforts in trying to resolve the matters with all of the members. We must ensure that the relationship between each and every mercenary is as tight as a twine of rope. Otherwise, the Flame Mercenaries that we built up with will crumble at the base and collapse sooner or later.” You Yue added her insight.

“Is that so? Then why don’t we spend the next period of time listening to you when dealing with internal matters. You Yue, Bi Lian, I’ll leave this to you to handle. If there is anything you need from me, go ahead and ask.” Jian Chen replied. In this short moment of time, the Flame Mercenaries had been left up to You Yue and Bi Lian to administrate. After being tested for an entire year, Jian Chen had seen more than enough to be convinced that the two of them were talented in this aspect.

Bi Lian’s cultivation talent was not unique. She hadn’t even managed to form her Saint Weapon yet, but her keen wit and intelligence was unbelievably sharp. It was better honed than You Yue’s intelligence in several aspects. It was almost as if she was born to be a superior administrator.

“A report for the captain, we’ve received a letter to give to you!” At that moment, a single voice called out from outside.

“Hand it over!”

“Yes!” The flaps of the tent blew open as the white-robed Ha Ni came walking in. In his hand was a snow-white Lightning Bird.



Taking the Lightning Bird from Ha Ni into his own hands, he untied the letter around its leg. He then unfurled it to read.

“Important! Return to Changyang Manor!”

Only a meager few words had been scrawled on the letter, causing Jian Chen’s expression to become very grim.

Taking note of the sudden change in expression, everyone nervously tensed up. It was You Yue that finally asked out of concern, “Jian Chen, what happened?”

Jian Chen studied the letter once more to verify that it wasn’t a fake message. Then, slowly tearing it into several pieces, he explained, “A letter came from back home telling me to return to the Changyang Clan. We’ll have the mercenaries stay here for now and wait for my return. If something urgent happens, notify me by the twin jade stones.”

Bidding farewell to You Yue and the others, Jian Chen went and found the other three Heaven Saint Masters to give them their instructions. Afterward, he flew with great speed through the air back to Changyang Manor.

By the time he arrived, it was already nightfall. As he began to descend to the ground, the Chang Wuji immediately made himself known. He was able to pinpoint him the moment he touched solid ground.

“Fourth master, you’ve returned rather quickly I see.” Chang Wuji smiled.

Jian Chen let out a secret sigh of relief when he saw the relaxed face of Chang Wuji. From the very start of his rush back home, he had been worried that something had happened to the family.

“Chang Wuji, what has happened for you to ask me to come home at once?” Jian Chen asked.

“I do not know the details, but men from the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom came with a very important message to tell you. They said it was a matter that couldn’t be delayed. Your father sent a message for you to return right away.” The elder explained the best he could.

“Heavenly Eagle Kingdom? Did that kingdom not cease to exist?” Jian Chen tilted his head in confusion.

Unable to stop himself from chuckling, Chang Wuji smiled at Jian Chen, “Perhaps I should have phrased it differently. The seven heads of the territories that once belonged to the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom came here with an important message for you. Fourth master, they are currently in the discussion hall. We should head on over.”

Shortly after that, Jian Chen and Chang Wuji entered the manor and headed straight for the main halls. On the way, plenty of guards saluted him while the maids and servants bowed down with the most respect they could muster.

It did not take long for Jian Chen to enter the halls themselves. He noticed that plenty of people were already gathered here. Most noticeable was his father and mother, the other important elders of the Changyang clan, and a sturdy-looking middle-aged man who was currently in deep discussion with someone else.

The arrival of Jian Chen was apparent to everyone. They lined up shoulder to shoulder and bowed to cordially greet Jian Chen. At this moment, everyone in the halls was filled with respect for him.

The middle-aged man that had been discussing stuff with everyone else came forward to bow and greet Jian Chen personally, "Captain of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries, Tynes, pays his respects to the Imperial Protector!"

After the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom dissolved, it had been split into seven partitions. The Bloodmoon Mercenaries had subsequently become the overseers of one of those seven partitions.

Regaling the man, Jian Chen said, "Tynes, what important matter was it that you needed to inform me of? What can you tell me about it?"

Looking around the hall, Tynes hesitated to speak, "Imperial Protector, this is a matter of utmost secrecy, so..."

Understanding his intentions, Jian Chen replied, "If that is so, then we shall speak in my own residence."

"Yes, Imperial Protector!"

Looking to his father, Changyang Ba and his mother, Bi Yuntian, Jian Chen said, "Father, mother, your son has matters to take care of. I will be leaving first."

"Xiang'er, captain Tynes has trekked countless of kilometers to run to the Changyang clan. If it is a serious issue, you needn't worry about your parents, go and take care of what you need to do!" Changyang Ba laughed.

"Xiang'er, time is of the essence, go and do what you must." Bi Yuntian softly replied. A son that was as outstanding yet filial as Jian Chen was a son that she felt an exorbitant amount of pride in.

Exchanging several more words of greeting to the other members in the hall, Jian Chen led Tynes back to his own building.

"Tynes, what important matter do you have to tell me? Has the Sect of Dragon and Tiger decided to mobilize against you?" Jian Chen inquired with a solemn expression.

Tynes shook his head and looked carefully around the place. Then, speaking into Jian Chen's ear, he whispered, "Imperial Protector, we have discovered a tremendous deposit of tungsten alloy."

"What? A tremendous deposit of tungsten alloy?" A spark glinted in Jian Chen's eyes as he murmured to himself. Tungsten alloys were extremely sparse on the continent and worth several times their weight in purple coins. A single kilogram was already worth ten kilograms worth of purple coins.

"Yes, Imperial Protector, our Bloodmoon Mercenaries came across this vein in one of the mountains by pure accident. After further investigations, we've found an even larger vein. Based off a shallow investigation, we concluded that the purity of the ore is at least eighty-five-percent." Tynes' voice quavered.

Jian Chen felt a gasp escape his lips, and his heart began to beat even faster. A purity rate of eighty-five-percent meant that out of a hundred ores, eighty-five of them could be smelted into tungsten alloy.

“How many people know about this place?” Jian Chen suddenly asked.

“I’ve killed off all those that knew this knowledge outside my group, meaning there’s only fifty or so people that do. They are all confidences of mine, and I am sure that they will safeguard the secret of this vein as strictly as I.” Tynes replied seriously.

A sigh of relief escaped Jian Chen’s mind. A vein of tungsten alloy was practically an immeasurable source of wealth since a single kilogram of tungsten alloy was worth ten times its weight in purple coins. If news of this got out, then there would definitely be bloodshed over it.

“Imperial Protector. This vein of tungsten alloy is extremely precious and tempting for any faction to give up. If news of this were to leak out, then we would have no power to protect it. Imperial Protector, how do you propose we handle this situation, should we have the Qinhuang Kingdom oversee it?”

After a careful moment of consideration, Jian Chen replied, “If news of the vein has not been leaked out, then let it remain a secret in the meanwhile. Tynes, hurry back and see over it yourself for now. Have the other seven factions join with you to protect it in secret and extract it in secret. Remember, the less people that know about this, the better. News of this cannot be divulged at any costs, I’ll figure out what to do after.”

“Yes, Imperial Protector.” Tynes bowed and cupped his hands in salute.

“There’s no time to waste, hurry back over.”

#### Chapter 594: Hurrying Off to the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom

Tynes left for the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom straight away. With how precious the tungsten alloy was, he couldn’t possibly dare try and be negligent over a plethora of wealth like that. There were no Heaven Saint Masters safeguarding it, so Jian Chen felt some discomfort at this matter. He was afraid that the news would be leaked.

Pacing around the middle of his room with his hands clasped behind his back, Jian Chen’s mind raced with ideas about how to deal with the tungsten alloy vein. Unknowingly, the small tiger cub had leaped onto his shoulder and stared at him. Its originally bright eyes had already grown dim as if it was growing listless.

“It appears I must bring the Flame Mercenaries over to the territory of the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom.” Jian Chen concluded.

After thinking to himself for another hour, Jian Chen left his room to call his mother for a meal before leaving the Changyang clan.

All sorts of dishes were placed in a beautiful arrangement on top of the table as Jian Chen, Changyang Ba, Bi Yuntian, and the other three wives of his father sat together and talked. The fact that Jian Chen was the captain of the Flame Mercenaries had already been revealed to his aunts, but it was still a very puzzling thing to think about how he was also the Imperial Protector of both the Qinhuang and Gesun Kingdom.

After a brief interrogation by his aunts, Jian Chen explained everything without losing his temper. There were no secrets in regards to the Flame Mercenaries to his mother after all.

“Xiang’er, you’ve done the right thing. If Kendall saved you, then you must fulfill the promise you gave for it to be a fair trade.” Changyang Ba approved.

“Xiang’er, in your times of travel outside, have you come across any news of your sister?” Bi Yuntian suddenly blurted out.

Jian Chen could only shake his head with regret. He sighed. “Aunty, your child has searched without end, but nothing of importance has come up.”

Yu Fengyan’s face became more sorrowful at his words, “Wretched girl, who knows what far away place she has run off to. Why hasn’t she even sent a letter back home? Even now, I have naught one letter from her and naught even a clue on where my Mingyue has gone... what if she...” Halfway through her words, Yu Fengyan could no longer stop herself from descending into a fit of sobs. Her own daughter had left the clan one day without warning or trace, causing her to feel extremely anxious and scared for the well-being of her daughter.

The table grew quiet after that. Each person seated there had a grim look on their face; every person at this table, besides Jian Chen, were either aunts or a parent to Changyang Mingyue, and had seen her grow since birth. So her disappearance had been extremely worrisome to them all. Jian Chen had disappeared once, but he had been of a different situation and had come back.

“Second aunt, please be at peace. Second sister has always been a lucky person; she won’t come across any trouble. Look at me, I left the Gesun Kingdom for several years by myself without anything harmful coming my way.” Jian Chen consoled her, but to no avail. Yu Fengyan and the others simply did not think that Changyang Mingyue had the same capabilities as Jian Chen.

A single woman traveling the continent by herself was a feat that was several times more dangerous than for a male. All sorts of unsavory mercenaries and bandits roamed the continent, it would not be uncommon for them to act upon their lust for women.

“Ai, our daughter has grown up with a rebellious nature. We are to blame for that. If we did not try to force her into an arranged marriage, she would not have left home.” Changyang Ba sighed bitterly with regret.

“Father, second aunt, please rest assured. I will definitely have my men scour the continent to find second sister.” Jian Chen resolutely pledged. When he was young, Changyang Mingyue had been very caring to him, and he had left the Changyang Manor with a very favorable impression of her. The disappearance of Changyang Mingyue had left him feeling very melancholic

“Forget it. There’s no point in talking about this matter for now. We’ve gone over it more than enough with nothing to show for our efforts.” Changyang Ba sighed before turning to Jian Chen, “Xiang’er, your father still has something that I hope you’ll agree to.”

“You and your third aunt, Ling Long, have harbored some ill will with one another, that I know. Your third aunt has a small level of tolerance for matters like these due to experiences she has had in the past. Her making life difficult for you was a result of these experiences, but even now, she and your third brother have felt remorse for their actions. They have not been eating with the rest of the family because of their guilt. So, your father wishes that you will understand and forgive your third aunt.”

Changyang Ba spoke. There was a slight pleading tone to his words. A sound that was exceedingly rare, especially to a child as the head of a family.

Jian Chen was more than willing to agree to his father's request. He did not feel completely disgusted by the actions of his third aunt. They were by rights family, and Jian Chen was disinclined to ruin a perfectly warm and receiving household with an opinion he didn't hold.

The fact that he was willing to let bygones be bygones pleased Jian Chen's father to no end.

Afterward, Jian Chen took out a small portion of the hundred grass wine given to him by the Ape King. Pouring the cups evenly, he distributed them all to the people around the table. As soon as each person took a sip, they could feel their inner strength explode with newfound power. Just three months ago, Changyang Ba had managed to become a Second Cycle Earth Saint Master. He now stepped into the Third Cycle with the assistance of the wine!

Baiyu Shuang and Ling Long both felt themselves jumping to the Advanced Saint Master level, and even Bi Yuntian, who had never materialized her Saint Weapon, felt the benefits come flowing in her. She had been a Third Class Radiant Saint Master before, but a single sip was more than enough to eclipse all of her hard work before to propel her into the Fourth Class.

Chang Wuji had been invited to take a sip as well. For a Heaven Saint Master like him, a sip of the hundred grass wine was only enough to increase his inner Saint Force by a small increment. The small increase had not been enough to reach a breakthrough like Khafir, the headmaster of Kargath Academy, had.

With the wine drunk and the food eaten, Jian Chen followed his parents back to visit his eldest brother, Changyang Hu. Changyang Hu was confined to the bed without even the most basic of motor abilities since he had lost his limbs. He couldn't eat or change his clothes without help. A life that was robbed of any freedom of movement was a life that words could hardly begin to describe the cruelty of.

The sight of his own older brother in such a wretched state caused Jian Chen's heart to ache. He wanted nothing more than to find a way to become a Seventh Class Radiant Saint Master, so he could find some sort method to restore the decapitated limbs of Changyang Hu.

On the morning of the second day, Jian Chen visited Lore city to find Sans and Kendall's wife. The mother and son had been able to open a rather big inn on one of the more flourishing streets because of the staunch support of the Changyang clan. Business was booming and the patrons flowed in and out like an endless stream of water. With the name of the Changyang clan waved over them, their inn had soon enough become one of the safest inns in the city. No incidents ever took place within their building, meaning that mercenaries and merchants alike could gather here in peace.

Farewells were given to the two before Jian Chen flew out of Lore City. He was back in the air headed toward the desolate lands where the Flame Mercenaries were. Once there, Jian Chen called for an impromptu meeting with the men.

"Jian Chen, what is the matter for you to rush us like this?" As soon as they were gathered within the tent, Ming Dong immediately found his voice to speak up.

Seated at his own chair up front, Jian Chen looked at the group with a grim expression. "Pass on my orders. We will pack up camp and head straight for the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom without rest."

The entire group was stunned by this order, and it was You Yue who asked a question first, "Even through the night? Jian Chen, what is the matter?"

"Yes, even through the night." Jian Chen nodded his head. "Go and spread the news to everyone. I will be leaving first."

"Jian Chen, why has the situation become all frantic-like? Has some sort of accident come up or something?" Ming Dong cried out.

"Allow me to keep this a secret for now. I'll tell you about it when we arrive at our destination. Disperse and make the preparations. I'll be leaving first." As soon as he finished speaking, Jian Chen exited the tent and flew off toward the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom with haste.

Two days later, Jian Chen arrived within the territory of the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom. Hurrying to recall a mental map of the seven partitioned territories, Jian Chen then flew off to the Bloodmoon Mercenaries land.

As the dominating power in one of the seven areas, the location of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries was found relatively quickly once Jian Chen asked around. Jian Chen had made the rest of the trip in no time at all.

The headquarters of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries was situated within a revised castle. It did not hide the flying figure of Jian Chen from anyone's sight. With the fact that Jian Chen had not bothered to make his traveling discreet, the captain of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries was quickly notified of his arrival. He swiftly moved to welcome him, "A thousand welcomes for the Imperial Protector!"

"What is the current situation? Has news of the tungsten alloy remained a secret?" Jian Chen whispered.

"Here is my report. Everything has been taken care of, and the secret has remained a secret. Aside from a few reliable brothers-in-arms, not a single outsider knows of it. Even the men of the other six factions remain unaware of this secret." Tynes spoke.

Nodding his head in satisfaction, Jian Chen replied, "Good, you've done well. For your services today, I will reward you nicely in time."

"For the honor of the Qinhuang Kingdom and the Imperial Protector, it is the honor of mine to serve." Tynes solemnly replied.

Jian Chen laughed, "Well, where is the location of the mine? Take me there."

"Yes!"

#### Chapter 595: Return to Mercenary City (One)

The distance between the vein of tungsten alloy and the Bloodmoon Mercenaries had not been too far apart at about fifty kilometers behind the castle. This location however, had been surrounded by

another hundred kilometers of forests that was vile in both environment and the wildlife alike. Poisonous creatures, swamps, and dangerous beasts all cohabited this one single place.

But the location to the vein of tungsten alloy was indeed here. At the very center of this forest was a single cave that could only be seen and entered by through a ravine.

Evening in this place was a place with little to no visibility thanks to the fact that the sun would drop far beneath the horizon and bask the entire forest with darkness.

The darkness had been pierced however by a single orb of azure and yellow. It had been Jian Chen and Tynes who were traveling to the entrance of the ravine with Jian Chen's flying abilities.

The arrival of the two figures had immediately alerted the figures hidden in the forest down below. At the sight of Tynes, they had all moved to salute the two, "Captain!"

Tynes had turned back to look at Jian Chen, "Imperial Protector, these are all men of the Earth Saint Master level and are men worthy of my trust to protect the secret of this mine."

"Satisfactory work." Jian Chen smiled to each and every single one of the men there.

Laughing, Tynes spoke to his men next, "Scatter yourselves and hide once more. But keep a watch out for anyone else that approaches. Kill them on sight!"

"Yes!" Each person saluted in response before transforming back into the shadows and out of sight to blend in with the surrounding of the ravine.

"Imperial Protector, the vein of tungsten alloy was completely discovered by accident in this ravine." Tynes pointed out.

"Come, show me the way."

Jian Chen and Tynes quickly descended down into the rather shallow and narrow ravine. It was more of a gully rather than ravine due to the fact that there had been grass growing here and there in large quantities.

Surveying the grass from above, Jian Chen slowly closed his eyes and allowed his presence to expand into the surrounding fifty kilometers and penetrating any solid wall that might obstruct his way.

Under the strong detection abilities of his presence, Jian Chen had been able to see through the boulders and walls as if they weren't even there. But, when his presence snaked into the area below, Jian Chen couldn't help but let out a sigh from his lips.

This place was practically a giant mountain of tungsten alloy with a purity that matched perfectly with Tynes' description. The tremendous quantity of the tungsten alloy had been enough to leave even Jian Chen tongue tied, and with his presence, he had been able to dig five meters deep into the ground to probe out the area even more. It had been to his even bigger shock that there was even more tungsten alloy that what was initially measured--the extent in which the vein extended to was more than enough to leave any man utterly inconsolable even.

Now knowing the situation behind the hidden caveside, Jian Chen could finally let out a breath in relief. Before, his heart had been pacing wildly from what he was witnessing, but now, he was already back to his original state of mind.

And now that his emotions had been completely quelled, Jian Chen began to extend outwards with his presence once more. Deeper and deeper, his presence had started to investigate just how deep this hidden vein of tungsten alloy had gone.

With the vast speed of his presence extending into the ground, Jian Chen had soon enough reached roughly ten kilometers deep into the ground. Thanks to his skill with spreading his presence, Jian Chen could conclude that this had been a very pure vein all in all. The deeper he looked, the purer the vein was. And now that he was ten kilometers deep, Jian Chen could see that the purity of this vein was at least ninety percent or perhaps even close to a hundred. In other words, this was no longer a mine of tungsten alloy but a subterranean area completely made of tungsten alloy.

Faced with such a discovery, Jian Chen had been hardpressed to quell his emotions this time. It had been with such excitement that his entire body began to shake, but he did not stop his investigation and continued onwards.

Eleven kilometers....

Twelve kilometers....

Thirteen kilometers....

Fourteen kilometers....

Soon enough, Jian Chen had reached his limits to with he could extend to with his presence at fifteen kilometers. But at that point, Jian Chen's expression had took on a startled change.

Just slightly beneath the fifteenth kilometer point, Jian Chen could just barely detect an abnormally strong surge of energy with his presence. It was almost as if there had been a barrier preventing him from detecting anything else underneath the protective layering. Even the immensity of the barrier itself was an unknown variable to him.

"What is that?" Jian Chen murmured to himself. This sudden oddity had been far outside Jian Chen's expectations. It had been unfortunate that his presence was not enough to go beyond this fifteen kilometer stop point as he had no other way to investigate what this strange energy was.

The next step had been to investigate the surrounding area with his presence before finally withdrawing it. It had been with furrowed eyebrows that he stared down below at the ground as he tried to think. This occurrence had brought a great deal of curiosity onto him and completely overshadowed the joy he felt from the discovery of far down the tungsten alloy went.

"If only my presence was strong enough. As things stand now, it's futile to try and see what lies beyond that barrier; but I can at the very least explore it in the future." Jian Chen thought to himself.

Right by Jian Chen's side, Tynes had noticed the puzzled look on Jian Chen's face and asked out in concern, "Imperial Protector, what is the matter?"



“Tynes, what is the history behind this valley, is there perhaps any legends about this place?” Jian Chen asked.

“I have heard no such thing before.” Tynes shook his head after wracking his mind for any pertinent information.

Letting out a sigh in defeat, Jian Chen looked around the entire valley with his presence. For about twenty meters beyond this area, the tungsten alloy had already deteriorated into a purity rate of fifty percent. And by fifty meters, the amount of tungsten alloy was practically nil with just stone and dirt left in its place.

With the entire valley investigated, Jian Chen could finally ascertain that the heart of the tungsten alloy was located within a diameter of a hundred meters of this place. The tungsten alloy at the very heart of the valley was the purest at about eighty five percent purity.

Now that his investigations was completely over, Jian Chen and Tynes returned back to the headquarters of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries.

At the very top of the castle in which the Bloodmoon Mercenaries were located at, Jian Chen could be seen conversing with Tynes and the other high-ranking members of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries.

“Excavate the tungsten alloy as soon as you can while ensuring that no one learns of its existence. There should be no reason that anyone should learn about it. Tynes, I’ll leave it up to you to deal with this.” Jian Chen commanded.

“But, Imperial Protector, the purity of these ores is already an issue to be considered. Combined with the magical properties of the tungsten alloy that makes it a hundred times stronger than reinforced steel, a year wouldn’t be enough time to make even a single dent in the amount of ores.” A black-robed elder spoke. This elder in particular was an Earth Saint Master and a senior figure of the mercenaries.

“Imperial Protector, I’ve already notified the head of the other six heads, should we tell them the news as well? Perhaps have them choose a single reliable person to go extract the ore?” Tynes offered.

“Yes, I can agree to that notion. Wait until those six arrive and then tell them the news.” Jian Chen spoke.

Half a month later, the rest of the six heads had finally assembled at the headquarters of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries. With all seven gathered, Jian Chen could re-engage in another series of secret discussions and allowed for everyone to be delegated on their tasks to extract the ore.

This meeting had taken a significantly longer amount of time as Jian Chen had to discuss several aspects of confidentiality with the seven Heaven Saint Masters. Preliminary matters such as who would extract the ore, who would transport it, and who would refine it in secret.

On the second day, Tynes had immediately led five hundred of his most trustworthy men to go extracting the ore on pretense of hunting for magical beasts. Simultaneously, the other six leaders had dispatched several of their men in different areas of the mountain range for reconnaissance.

With the combined actions of the seven, information of the tungsten alloy had been completely suppressed, and the tungsten alloy was finally being extracted. Under the command of Jian Chen, the entire valley had been surveyed and mined.

He had still been very curious about that mysterious barrier several kilometers down beneath the earth, but because of the tungsten alloy in his way, Jian Chen had no way to get closer to it. The only way would be to dig a path down.

The next few days had been very calm and peaceful. For the sake of hiding the fact that they were extracting tungsten alloy, Jian Chen had been the only one left to oversee the miners along with Tynes. The other leaders had returned to their own territories so as to avoid any insightful person from connecting the dots and realizing something was amiss. But even with that, the seven had established a means of quick communication between each other. If there was even the slightest deviation away from the plans, they would all be notified and would arrive at the castle of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries as fast as they could.

Ten days later, the Flame Mercenaries had all been rushed to the Bloodmoon Mercenary's territory. Finally garrisoning themselves within the castle, the three Heaven Saint Masters and five hundred Earth Saint Masters had been included into the group, making the Bloodmoon Mercenaries stronger than before.

Jian Chen had not hidden the fact of the tungsten alloy from Ming Dong and the others and had told them about it. But Zhan Tian, the other captains, and the Heaven Saint Masters remained clueless about the ore.

When the time came for them to understand the magnitude of the tungsten alloy, each one of them had been so shocked that their jaws dropped wide open.

"A tremendous deposit of tungsten alloy like this is extremely rare on the continent. Should this make its way out, there will definitely be turmoil all over the place. Even a few of the isolated families or the Eight Great Powers would mobilize with such an event. With our strength alone, it would be difficult to maintain this." Huang Luan remarked grimly.

Equally grim, Jian Chen nodded his head, "I've already locked down on the information. If the time comes for this to leak out, then I will have the Qinhuang Kingdom step in."

"My Huang family is strong, if there is a need for it, then I'll have the ancestor of my family step in as well."

#### Chapter 596: Return to Mercenary City (Two)

Jian Chen's eyes had lit up when he heard Huang Luan's suggestion. He did not know just how strong the Saint Ruler was, but if he was able to go toe-to-toe with two other Saint Rulers, then he would definitely belong to the higher echelons of the chart. In the case that a Saint Ruler did help him, then very few people would dare work against him.

"Wait until for the situation to arise first before we call on your ancestor to help us." Jian Chen smiled. Aside from the four Imperial Protectors from the Qinhuang Kingdom, he had also the ancestor of the Huang family to help him. With those five, Jian Chen had no desire to use them at the wrong moment.

As for Ming Dong's uncle figure, Jian Chen had no delusions that he would be able to ask for his assistance. The Saint Ruler was very unwilling to complicate himself with any external affairs, and even the priceless tungsten alloy would not be enough to shake his neutrality.

But there had been no leaks of the information at all in regards to the tungsten alloy. Aside from Jian Chen's group, only the seven leaders and their men had known about it. The excavators had all their storage items confiscated during their time in the mines in order to prevent news or evidence from being spread. Even their movements had been limited to only ten meters beyond the mines.

The Flame Mercenaries had been stationed within the castle of the Bloodmoon Mercenaries whilst all of this was going on. When the seven leaders heard that it was Jian Chen himself who led the group, they had immediately announced their own desires to join the Flame Mercenaries. And now with the inclusion of those seven, the Flame Mercenaries had exploded once more in strength. The entirety of the land that had been the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom was fully engulfed by Jian Chen, and the amount of experts within the land had been plentiful. Aside from Jian Chen, there were nearly a dozen other Heaven Saint Masters included amongst the mercenaries, making the Flame Mercenaries a household name within the surrounding hundred thousand kilometers.

The following days had been calm in comparison to the news from above with the tungsten alloy being extracted methodically. Every day, an abundant amount of the ore would be collected, and the key figures in the operation such as Jian Chen had been all the happier to see it.

"When all of the tungsten alloy is extracted, we'd definitely have enough to use them for our city." Ming Dong spoke with a quavering voice.

"If this tungsten alloy is to be used to construct the city, then its defensive strength would be amongst the strongest on the continent--even the seven Capital Cities!" Even the normally quiet-spoken Dugu Feng had been filled with an expectant look in his eyes.

"We could even use the tungsten alloy to create a large amount of armor for the elite soldiers to wear!" Bi Lian piped up in excitement.

Everyone had been quick to suggest what they should do with the tungsten alloy, all they needed to do was wait for a definitive number of just how much tungsten alloy had been mined and they could go ahead with their plan.

In the blink of an eye, three months had passed for Jian Chen's stay in the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom. Nothing out of the ordinary had happened within these three months, and the lockdown on the tungsten alloy had been as strict as ever. The tension from safeguarding this secret had been extremely large on Jian Chen's heart however,

Early one morning, Jian Chen had only just opened his eyes from his seated position on his bed to look out the window. In his mind, memories of the little fatty he met in Longevity Valley suddenly cropped up out of nowhere.

"I promised to meet him again in a single year after I left the valley. It's about time that I make true on that promise and visit the valley." Jian Chen muttered as he stepped out from his room. In the past few months, he had remembered about that fatty several times, but because of the matters on hand, he had

to put off the trip until later. But now that there was no foreseeable changes in the extraction of the tungsten alloy, he saw no need to delay the trip to Longevity Valley any longer.

As soon as he walked out from his room, Jian Chen had convened with the others once more to announce that he would be leaving for a short period of time.

“Jian Chen, where are you going? Let me go with you.” Huang Luan asked in reluctance to part away from Jian Chen again.

“I have an important matter to return to Mercenary City for. But I’ll be home soon enough, so remain here in the meanwhile.” Jian Chen shook his head to decline.

A disappointed look appeared in her eyes after that.

“Jian Chen, go quick and return early!” You Yue had been equally reluctant to part with Jian Chen. Despite her reluctance however, she knew that this trip was unavoidable for him.

Nodding his head, Jian Chen spoke, “If nothing happens, I should be home soon.”

Ming Dong walked forward to slap Jian Chen on the shoulder to speak seriously, “Brother, if you need to go, then we will not stop you. But you have to be careful. In the case that the Jiede clan and the Shi family see you, you must head for Mercenary City. They won’t dare touch you there.”

Laughing, Jian Chen replied, “Worry not. I know just how to handle that should the situation occur. But aside from their Saint Rulers, I should have no problem with the rest of their families.”

Out of nowhere, Bi Lian had cropped up around his arm, “Cousin, your little relative has a wish that I hope you can fulfill.” She spoke.

Seeing the coquettish actions of his younger cousin, Jian Chen could only laugh, “Say it then. Whatever it is that you want, your cousin will make sure to accomplish it for you.” For his own younger cousin, Jian Chen was a very doting figure.

Whirling her head to look at the little tiger on Jian Chen’s shoulder, she spoke with a mischievous smile, “Could you leave behind Xiao Bai, I want to play with it.”

The tiger was a very intelligent creature and had understood exactly what Bi Lian was asking for. As quick as lightning, it had jumped over from Jian Chen’s left shoulder to right shoulder to avoid Bi Lian and hugged at Jian Chen’s neck tightly with its paws and eyes that stared vigilantly at Bi Lian.

As if annoyed by what the tiger cub had done, Bi Lian stared at it with her arms at her waist, “Xiao Bai, am I really that scary? I fed you some roasted meat the past few days, and this is how you repay me? You won’t even let me hug you.”

“Mrrrowrrrrr.....” Xiao Bai had let loose a mournful sound that not everyone had understood. But its paws had only gripped around Jian Chen’s neck even tiger, meaning that it was very reluctant to split with Jian Chen.

“Forget it, Bi Lian. Xiao Bai may as well be Jian Chen’s shadow. You’d have a better chance climbing the ladder into the heavens than to separate Xiao Bai from Jian Chen.” You Yue giggled.

“Bi Lian, this is a request that I can’t help you with. I am not one to force Xiao Bai to do what it doesn’t want.” Jian Chen smiled apologetically.

“Hmph, forget it then!” Bi Lian glared balefully at Xiao Bai in disappointment.

With Xiao Bai on his shoulders still, Jian Chen bade farewell to the rest of the group and left. He had originally wanted to leave Xiao Bai here instead of carrying it over with him since he would have to pass Mercenary City to reach Longevity Valley. It was a trip that did not guarantee security, but the tiger cub had been completely deaf to any words Jian Chen had said to it. Unable to convince the tiger cub, he could only allow for the cub to go with him.

It had been extraordinarily good weather today. The sun was shining bright and not a single cloud could be seen, leaving the sky a boundless canvas of azure.

Flying a thousand meters high into the sky, Jian Chen headed straight for the Dazhou Kingdom so that he could use their Space Gate to reach Mercenary City.

Because of the growth that the tiger cub went through, its sense of smell had improved by several degrees as well. Every so often when Jian Chen flew over a forest, it would just barely be able to sniff out the heavenly resources hidden throughout the verdant plants. Some had been over a thousand years old in age and shocked even Jian Chen. It had been as Rum Guinness had said, the tiger cub would gain the ability to search and find heavenly resources with its own strength.

It took several days for Jian Chen to arrive at the frontier of the Dazhou Kingdom, but as soon as he hit that line, Jian Chen came to a stop mid-flight. Thinking for a bit longer, he immediately flew off in a different direction than before.

Just several hours after he had changed directions, Jian Chen had left the Dazhou Kingdom and arrived at the bordering kingdom of the Zhuya Kingdom. Heading within its borders, Jian Chen flew straight for the First Class city, Walaurent City.

Within the area of the city, Jian Chen touched down onto a relatively empty location and followed his memories through the city before finally coming to a stop right outside a large mansion.

The mansion that Jian Chen had stopped in front of had a giant signboard right above it saying, “Tianqin clan”. These two words had a seemingly magical feeling to them and brought forth a deluge of memories from several years ago. Unable to stop himself, Jian Chen began to replay the memories of when he and Ming Dong first came to this city.

In Walaurent City, it had been Qin Xiao that had left the biggest impression on Jian Chen.

“Hey, you there! What are you doing spacing out in front of the gates of the Tianqin clan? Get lost, this isn’t a place you can block the road!” In the middle of Jian Chen’s thoughts, one of the guards had let out a shout and disrupted him.

Waking back up to reality. Jian Chen looked at the burly figure next to him and cupped his hands in a polite greeting, “Would you perhaps know if the young master, Qin Xiao, is inside?”

Stopping in his stride to size Jian Chen up, the guard had taken notice that the robes Jian Chen wore was quite expensive, and the air to him had been unordinary. Immediately growing wary, the guard asked, "Who are you? The young master Qin Xiao is not someone that anyone could see on a whim."

"This one is Jian Chen, a friend of the young master Qin Xiao." Jian Chen cupped his hands. Despite this person being only a guard, he had been calm and polite to him.

"What? You're Jian Chen?" The guard had immediately been surprised to hear that name. Straight away, the expression on his face had changed to have a smile on it, "Ah, so it is indeed lord Jian Chen. This lowly guard must be blind if I could not recognize lord Jian Chen. Please forgive me, lord Jian Chen. The young master Qin Xiao had said before that should lord Jian Chen arrive, we are to bring him straight in." The guard welcomed Jian Chen within the compound politely while then notifying another guard to report to Qin Xiao.

#### Chapter 597: Return to Mercenary City (Three)

Received once more into the Tianqin clan, Jian Chen had been once more honored into the compound just like with his last arrival here. Even the head and the senior figures of the clan had made their way over to the halls to greet Jian Chen. Jian Chen was after all, the King of Mercenaries, and a figure that the Tianqin clan would not dare bear arrogance with.

Even as he was being warmly received, Jian Chen had finally met up with Qin Xiao once more. Years may have gone past, but there had been no significant changes in Qin Xiao, whether it was in personality of body. There had been a tremendous increase in his strength however, as he was now an Earth Saint Master.

The moment when Qin Xiao saw Jian Chen, he had been ecstatic and wrapped him into a hug, "Hey, Jian Chen! I've been waiting for you return. Any later, and I would have gone looking for you instead."

Untying himself from the embrace, Jian Chen gave a cursory appraisal of Qin Xiao before approving of the change, "Not bad, you've become an Earth Saint Master. What a talent you have. If I'm not wrong, you've only just hit the age of thirty. Hmm, a thirty year old becoming an Earth Saint Master, that's an achievement that the entire Tian Yuan Continent would regard as true talent."

Replying for his son, the head of the Tianqin clan laughed with pride. "Qin'er is talented indeed. Even in our Zhuya Kingdom, there is not a single person that holds as much potential as he does. Just half a year ago, the king himself had betrothed his daughter to Qin'er. Many of the other factions of the kingdom have already tried their hand at arranging a marriage as well!"

Nodding at the man, Jian Chen looked to Qin Xiao, "Qin Xiao, is that true? You're wedded now?"

There had been an embarrassed look on Qin Xiao's face when faced with the question. Laughing, he said, "The wedding day has already been established. In two years worth of time, I will be wed to the third princess of the Zhuya Kingdom. Jian Chen, you and Ming Dong have to make sure that you will attend my wedding."

"Of course, of course we will." Jian Chen laughed with joy over Tianqin's excitement.

Moving on, Jian Chen and Qin Xiao had walked deeper within the courtyards of the clan to talk as they pleased.

Entirely out of the blue, Qin Xiao blurted out a single question as soon as they were alone, "Jian Chen, although I am not of the same level of strength as brother Ming Dong, I am still an Earth Saint Master and a man capable of my own decisions. I've stayed within the Tianqin clan long enough, would it be possible for me to follow you in your travels through the continent?"

"Really? Of course you can! As things turn out, I have founded a mercenary group that is short of people I can trust at the moment. If you're willing, why not join my mercenary group?" Jian Chen laughed.

"Coincidentally enough," Qin Xiao began with a bright look in his eyes, "I had been entertaining the notion of creating a mercenary group with you. But since you've beaten me to the punch, then I'll save my breath. Jian Chen, when will we leave then? Staying around in the Tianqin clan has bored me to death, I've had half a mind to leave earlier already."

Evasively, Jian Chen shook his head when he saw the impatient look on Qin Xiao's face, "I estimate that there'll be some time before then. I've still a trip to Mercenary City and the surrounding area. When I come back from then, I'll be able to bring you over to the mercenary group I've made to take a look."

Not even a moment after Jian Chen finished speaking, the gentle and refined sounds of a zither could be heard being played. The notes had been delightful and pleasant to the ears as if they were filled with an enchanting type of magic to captivate any listener. The music had been so much that Qin Xiao and Jian Chen had stopped in their conversation for just a moment. By listening to the music of the zither, the two of them had grown calm and tranquil like undisturbed water.

At a pavilion nearby, a single white-robed young woman could be seen seated on a stone table as she plucked at the strings of her zither. It was almost as if the entire world around her had harmonized with her music, as even the flowers and the grass nearby would sway and turn with the rhythm of the beat and the wind would harmonize with her notes.

"Right. My younger sister enjoys playing the zither in her spare time. Compared to the past, her ability in playing it has improved so much that even I can't help but feel intoxicated by the music she plays." Qin Xiao sighed in approval of his sister's music.

"Yes, your sister has grown skillful in the art of the zither if she is able to influence the heart and mind of a human with her music." Jian Chen agreed. The effects of her music had been more than enough for Jian Chen to really believe was possible.

Calmly walking over to the pavilion with Qin Xiao, the two of them sat at a nearby table to listen to the next ballad of the zither without disturbing her.

If the second daughter of the Tianqin clan saw Jian Chen and Qin Xiao enter her audience of one, she did not make notice of it. Even her eyes had remained unmoving as she focused completely on her zither to play earnestly. In this one moment, her eyes were solely glued on her zither and nothing else in the world had mattered to her.

The ballad continued on for some time before finally receding away into silence. Her tender fingers paused in its movements as she lifted her eyes away from the zither at last and then onto Jian Chen and Qin Xiao who were nearby. Her eyes had registered them with a bright gleam of light that contained a lively look to them as if it were sentient.

Yet, her face had been covered by a single piece of cloth when she smiled at the two, making her exact appearance unclear. "Brother, my apologies, I've kept you waiting. My lord Jian Chen, I had no idea you would come in either."

There had been a faint smile on Jian Chen's own face when he nodded, but when he was about to speak, Qin Xiao had cut in first, "Sister, you spend more than enough time wearing that veil outside, why do you wear it in our own home as well?"

"Wearing this veil has become something of a habit for me. To take it off now would be a strange change." She replied softly. Turning to Jian Chen, she spoke, "If I remember correctly, the last time we met, lord Jian Chen, it was a year ago. Have you been well since our last meeting?"

A bright smile appeared on his face, "Worry not, this one has done well. On the other hand, you've seemed to have made great progress in the art of the zither I see."

"This girl has been studying the art of the zither for as long as she's lived. Every day I try my best to study and dedicate myself to the art. Even now, my skills are still lacking in comparison to someone like the famous Heavenly Enchantress."

Jian Chen's heart had skipped a beat when he heard mention of that name. "Perhaps you wish to follow the Heavenly Enchantress' footsteps and wish to delve into the way of the zither rather than Saint Force?"

"I'd bet so. My sister has always been a smart one with a power of comprehension stronger than others. Even her skill in cultivation is decent, but what made my father disappointed was her lack of motivation to continue with her cultivation. As a result, she is only at the fifth layer of Saint Force and spends her time focusing on the zither instead. Although the ballads she plays are captivating, it's rather useless against an enemy." Qin Xiao shrugged his shoulders noncommittally. The fact that his own sister was so entranced by the zither had been a source of a headache for him since he did not see any applicable way it could be used for cultivation.

Even though her brother had criticized the usefulness of the zither, she did not grow angry. Instead, she explained, "Brother, you underestimate the zither. I have not yet reached the beginning steps of the way of the zither, that's all. The profound mysteries of the music that a zither produces is something you couldn't possibly imagine. In the case that one truly embarks on this path of cultivation, then the fighting prowess they bring is far beyond what Saint Force could compare to."

"Aside from the Heavenly Enchantress, I have never heard of anyone else using the music of a zither as a way of cultivation. Sister, you don't have any guidance nor teachings on how to embark on this path. To try and find this path by yourself is difficult, why not just cultivate with Saint Force instead?" Qin Xiao pleaded.

But she had shaken her head in response, "This is what I plan to do with my life. I will use all of my energy to accomplish my goal, and even if there lies nothing at the end of my path, I will not regret it."

"Qin Xiao, if your sister is so set on this path, then let her walk the path she chooses. Although the music your sister plays is far below what is needed to fully captivate the soul of a person, it has reached a point of maturity in its own right. As long as she continues to practice and study, your sister will grow and learn. She will definitely reach the way of the zither she talks of."



Qin Xiao could only sigh in response to Jian Chen's words. In his mind, he really couldn't approve of the arduous path his sister set for herself.

"Thank your lord Jian Chen for your encouragement. My name is Qin Qin. Please feel free to call me so in the future rather than sister of Qin Xiao, my lord." She smiled. But behind the veil, the smile had been hard to distinguish.

"Qin Qin!" Jian Chen spoke to herself, "So your name was that? It is a delightful sounding name that suits a lady like yourself."

The lively light in Qin Qin's eyes danced as she looked at Jian Chen and nodded. Without another word, her eyes went back to the old-looking zither on the table and her fingers moved to caress the strings of it once more to induce a melodious sound.

Looking at the zither, Jian Chen hesitated for a moment, "Miss Qin Qin, this one has once had the pleasure of meeting the Heavenly Enchantress in Mercenary City before. In the future should I meet her again, this one will ask to see if she will impart any guidance onto you."

Qin Qin's eyes had lit up at the sound of that, "Then I will be in your care, my lord, to ask for the Heavenly Enchantress to be my master. That alone has been the greatest desire of mine since young."

Jian Chen had not remained in the Tianqin clan long after that. Talking briefly with Qin Xiao and Qin Qin for a moment longer, he finally left the clan after a small discussion with Qin Xiao about the next thing he had to accomplish. Leaving behind Walaurent City, Jian Chen flew back towards the Dazhou Kingdom once more.

Afterwards, it had been an uneventful trip as Jian Chen finally crossed over into the Dazhou Kingdom and into the palace where he had the king welcome him in. There had been no obstructions for Jian Chen to use the Space Gate to travel hundreds of thousands of kilometers to reappear on the other side in the forests near Mercenary City.

Confirming his own position on a map, Jian Chen rose into the air and shot off away into the skies towards the city. He had planned on entering Mercenary City to not only buy several things for elder Xiu, but he he had also hoped that there would be anything else worthy of his notice in the city.

#### Chapter 598: Return to Mercenary City (Four)

Mercenary City was situated at the very center of the entire continent as if to serve as the heart of the land. Although there were no walls, the territory that the city spanned over was no less than the seven Capital Cities. In name, it was the most well known city in the continent.

And in the heart of every single mercenary, Mercenary City was the very symbol of divinity. As the holy grounds for every mercenary, the name of the city itself represented freedom and peace.

Within Mercenary City, a series of complicated regulations and laws were put into place to uphold the security and peace of the city. There was no division between the strong and the weak. Even if it was a Heaven Saint Master, their status was no different than from the common villager. Everywhere else on the continent, the law of the jungle reigned supreme. But here, that law was non-existent. Fighting was prohibited within the area of the city, and the very moment any single person entered the city, even the strongest wouldn't be able to use their strength without fearing the consequences.

This prohibition had thus led to many people referring to Mercenary City as the safest asylum to live in. As long as one lived here, there would be no need to worry about being chased down and killed by anyone.

In the course of history, there had been plenty of people that disregarded this law and broke it. But each and every single one of these lawbreakers had been killed without mercy, even the Heaven Saint Masters. Coincidentally, there had never been a case of murder that happened within the city.

The only thing that could serve to establish your status within the city was money. With money, one would be able to live a life that even a prince would envy. Without money, one would have to live on the streets; even finding food would prove to be a challenge.

With the tiger cub in hand, Jian Chen flew across the skies at a steady pace. From afar, a series of large buildings could be seen stretching into the skies. From above, Jian Chen could just barely see the transparent barrier that surrounded the entirety of the city.

His eyes carefully studied the barrier with curiosity. He had only been to Mercenary City once before, but even that had only given him a small portion of information when it came to the city. He knew of several things such as the fact that it was forbidden to fight within the city, and that the barrier that spanned across the sky had to do with that prohibition.

Because of the fact that Mercenary City had no walls, a series of roads and streets intersected one another throughout the entire area. With roads leading in and out of the place, mercenaries could travel through the city along with their carts in numerous amounts. Despite the fact that there were no guards stationed anywhere, none of these mercenaries had acted as unruly as they might be out in the wildlands of the continent. No matter where they were in the city, they acted nice and polite.

Touching down onto the ground several kilometers away from the barrier, Jian Chen walked the rest of the way. Without a care for the nearly transparent barrier, he walked through and into Mercenary City.

As soon as he entered the city, Jian Chen bought a Class 3 Magical Beast for him to ride throughout the city. Combined with the fact that Mercenary City was large and that Jian Chen was prohibited from flying, Jian Chen would have to ride a magical beast mount if he wished to get to his destination swiftly.

Riding on top of the magical beast, Jian Chen traveled slowly through the major streets of the city to buy all sorts of delicacies from the street stalls. These were all gifts for the natives of Longevity Valley--little fatty most especially. He had never once traveled outside the valley and knew nothing about the outside world. This by extension meant that he had never once experienced the delicacies of the continent.

For half the day, Jian Chen walked through the streets. Using the money saved in his Space Ring, Jian Chen had gone on a wild shopping spree and had managed to fill up five whole Space Belts before he had been satisfied. Hopping onto his mount, Jian Chen then rode straight for the drug stores.

About an hour later, Jian Chen arrived at a five-layered pavilion. This was where all sorts of priceless heavenly resources could be bought and sold from within the city.

“Mrowrrr....” As soon as Jian Chen and the tiger cub arrived in front of the pavilion, the tiger cub had caught a whiff of the fragrant aroma from the heavenly resources. Calling out with excitement from its

spot in Jian Chen's robe with such force, if not for the tight grip Jian Chen had on it, the cub would have dashed into the pavilion.

He had tried his best to hide the faint smile on his face when he saw the impatience of the cub. Heavenly resources all over the age of a thousand were very rare in the Gesun Kingdom and so it had gone for a very long time without tasting such a delicacy like that.

With the cub in hand, Jian Chen strode into the pavilion. There were plenty of other customers shopping around the place ranging from mercenary to merchant to attendants dashing around the place to help service everyone. From their mouths, talks of discussion about what item to buy could be heard. Several of the mercenaries could be seen buying even the several hundred year old ones.

Looking around the place, Jian Chen could see that the first story of the pavilion sold several priceless drugs, but not a single heavenly resource could be seen.

This way of merchandise selling was not unfamiliar to Jian Chen. He knew that the more expensive wares would be on the higher levels of the pavilion. So without further ado, Jian Chen walked up to the second story.

On this level, the more expensive types of drugs could be seen along with several heavenly resources. The ages of these ones were below the age of five hundred, but even here on this second floor had plenty of customers.

Again without looking around, Jian Chen headed for the third floor. But when he reached the stairwell entrance, a guard moved to stop him.

"My apologies sire, but the third floor onwards is restricted to customers with a purple card." This guard spoke apologetically.

Without a word, Jian Chen flashed several purple cards for the man to see. At the sight of them, the guard had relinquished the path to allow for Jian Chen to continue on his way with a smile.

Compared to the second floor, the third floor was quite peaceful. Only a few scant people could be seen haggling prices with the attendants here. And on this floor, Jian Chen could finally see some of the more sealed heavenly resources displayed here and there. Right below the caseboard, their prices were clearly written with a bottom line price of ten thousand purple coins. Some of the more ancient wares had surpassed even fifteen thousand purple coins, that had been an exorbitant price.

The thousand year old heavenly resources had caused the tiger cub to open its eyes wide and start to lick its lips in anticipation.

"My lord, how may I serve you today?" A twenty something year old woman attendant suddenly came into view.

Slowly walking up to one of the more well-preserved heavenly resources, Jian Chen spoke, "I wish to speak some business with you. Have your shopkeeper come out to talk."

She had looked at Jian Chen oddly, but without any further complaint, she went off to look for the shopkeeper.

Soon enough, a middle-aged woman with grandiose-looking robes came following the previous attendant in. Coming to a stop right in front of Jian Chen, the attendant smiled and introduced Jian Chen to the man, "My lord, this figure here is the shopkeeper."

Looking Jian Chen up and down, the woman gave a small smile on her face, "My name is Ochire, shopkeeper of this pavilion. Might I ask to know your name, my lord? You give me a familiar feeling, as if I have seen your visage somewhere before."

Smiling in return, Jian Chen spoke, "Shopkeeper Ochire, let us talk business. Does your store happen to have any heavenly resources over the age of a thousand?"

Seeing that Jian Chen was unwilling to disclose his identity, Ochire had decided not to push it any further and smiled. "Certainly, we have several of those heavenly resources in stock, but not by much. In total, there are twenty-eight of them over the age of a thousand. My lord, if you are asking such a question, do you perhaps mean to purchase them?"

"Shopkeeper Ochire, please calculate the total price of the twenty-eight then." Jian Chen replied.

The woman had been taken aback. Uncertain of how to phrase the question, she asked anyways, "My lord, do you mean to say that you wish to purchase all twenty-eight of them? That will certainly not be a small sum of money."

Jian Chen nodded his head and spoke no more of the issue.

With that confirmation, a small had lit up on Ochire's face. A customer purchasing over twenty thousand-year old heavenly resources was an extremely rare sight to be seen.

Hurriedly taking out an abacus, Ochire started to total up the sum of all the items. "My lord." She began. "Each of the twenty-eight heavenly resources have varying ages. Some are just a thousand years old, some are two or three thousand years old. Combined with the fact that some of them are of rare species, each one of the heavenly resources will be of different prices. As such, the cumulative price will be a million and thirty thousand purple coins. If my lord is willing to purchase them in bulk, then we will discount the remaining thirty thousand purple coins for a grand total of a million purple coins. Is that to your satisfaction?"

"Correct. Then the twenty-eight heavenly resources will be bought for a million purple coins." Jian Chen handed a purple card over to Ochire. He knew somewhat of the pricing of heavenly resources, and so even though the ages of the heavenly resources were all different, Jian Chen knew that the price given to him had been a very fair one. In the smaller cities, heavenly resources such as these would be priced for far higher.

Taking the purple card into her trembling hands, Ochire spoke, "Should my lord ever come to my pavilion for any future thousand year old heavenly resources, this servant here will be sure to give a favorable price."

With a small hum to himself, Jian Chen spoke, "Shopkeeper Ochire, would you perhaps have any heavenly resources over the age of ten thousand?"

"What? Heavenly resources above the age of ten thousand?" Ochire had been astounded. Regarding Jian Chen with a stupefied look, she answered, "My lord, how could heavenly resources of that age

possibly be that easy to find? Ten thousand year old heavenly resources are something that the entire Tian Yuan Continent can only stumble upon once in a while. Not only are they impossible to find in markets, each time one appeared, they are worth countless of purple coins. They are something that could allow people to become anew and are known to many as ingredients to immortality. Many of the experts standing at the zenith of the continent would use such things to extend their lifespans even.”

“Perhaps shopkeeper Ochire knows of a place where such heavenly resources could be purchased at?” Jian Chen pressed on.

Pausing to think for a moment, Ochire then finally responded, “According to what I know, ten thousand year old heavenly resources are all rare. With each appearance of one, they have shown up in only the Capital Cities and Mercenary City. To my knowledge, they have appeared once every three years or so amongst the seven Capital Cities, and once a year here. A tremendous auction house always follows two days after its announcement, so if my lord is still in need of one, then your best luck would be at the auction house.”

Chapter 599: Spirit of the Barrier (One)

“Shopkeeper Ochire, thank you for your information.” Jian Chen cupped his hands in gratitude. “But where might this yearly auction house take place? There are plenty of auction houses in this city after all.”

“Perhaps you are not as familiar to Mercenary City as I thought if you know not even this, my lord.” Ochire spoke in between a small burst of laughter. “Then, please allow this servant to explain. There are indeed plenty of auction houses within Mercenary City, but those are all privately owned auction houses. There is only a single auction house that is regulated by the entire Mercenary City. As long as my lord makes the proper inquiries, you will learn of the place almost instantly.”

“It is how this auction house is run and what it sells that marks it different from the others. With Mercenary City itself running the auction every year, many extremely rare objects can be seen from it, ergo the ten thousand year old heavenly resource. They have always been sold off by this auction house.”

“Relevantly, the ten thousand year old heavenly resource that my lord wishes for will always appear here. But each time they appear, it has always been a fight of money to purchase it. If my lord is adamant on purchasing it, then you must prepare yourself to use a large sum of purple coins to purchase it.”

“Indeed, thank you for your warning.” Jian Chen replied gratefully.

The shopkeeper smiled, “My lord, you are far too polite. This is nothing that could warrant your thanks. The future patronage of my lord would be more than enough to keep this servant happy.” She spoke before handing the purple coins back to Jian Chen after processing it. Taking out a exquisite Space Belt, she handed it over to Jian Chen, “My lord, here is your purple card and the heavenly resources are within this belt. Please hold it well.”

Obediently taking the purple card back into his own Space Ring, Jian Chen took the Space Belt and inspected the inner contents to ensure everything was there. Smiling, he stored it away into his Space Ring and left the pavilion after bidding farewell to Ochire.

Freely walking up to the windowsill, Ochire watched as Jian Chen walked further and further away into the streets. With furrowed eyebrows, she began to mutter to herself, "Just who is that person? It is strange to think that he is familiar to me, as if I've seen him somewhere before. But I have never left Mercenary City as of late, and the amount of acquaintances I have is very few; where could I have possibly met a youngster like this before..."

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Taking the Class 3 Magical Beast mount for a ride, Jian Chen held a radish shaped heavenly resource for the tiger cub to munch on. With bright and spirited eyes, the cub devoured the entire thing happily.

Heavenly resources for the tiger cub were an extremely rare and delicious delicacy. They were the most delicious and blessed objects in the world to the cub.

Eying the cub with a small trace of adoration, Jian Chen could not help but smile fondly. In the short period of time the cub had been in Jian Chen's care, it had managed to worm its way into his heart so to see the tiger cub so happy had made him feel equivalently happy.

By asking the people of the city, Jian Chen had managed to find out the auction house Ochire had been talking about.

At the center of Mercenary City, this auction house was extremely large and stood at about thirty meters tall. Grand and impressive in its architecture even in comparison to the mighty city it was in, this auction house was very distinguishable like the head of a beast out in the open plains.

Right as Jian Chen was about to take another step, Ziyong's voice suddenly popped into his mind, "Ah! Master! This is stardust! Master, we've found some stardust!"

Repeating Ziyong's words, Qingsuo spoke up excitedly, "Master, quickly now! Take the stardust with you, that is a priceless item needed to forge the sword!"

Ignited by the words of Ziyong and Qingsuo, Jian Chen could feel a joyous smile appear on his lips. He knew that in order to craft the Azulet swords, he would need a specific amount of materials. And as long as he had those materials, he would be one step closer to forging the said swords.

Excited by the two spirits, Jian Chen began to question the two, "Ziyong, Qingsuo, where is this stardust located?" He had no idea what stardust looked like and so if it were not for the two spirits, he would simply never be able to distinguish it from the entire city.

Right away, a strange but mysterious sensation began to pull at his mind as he spoke. In this moment, he could feel a strange attraction as if some sort of magical connection was drawing him to a very specific location.

When Jian Chen's eyes hovered over the auction house run by Mercenary City in front of him, a response from within his head could be felt. With this sensation, he could more or less surmise a general approximation that the stardust would be located within this auction house.

"Master, you must take the stardust! As long as stardust is added to the swords when being forged, the quality of the blade will go up to a completely different level. It is far away from being a weapon for a

god, it can still be considered an ultimate magic weapon.” The excited voice of Qingsuo reverberated through Jian Chen’s mind.

“Stardust is a material used for weapons of the Immortal level, I never would have imagined that they would appear even here. Master, no matter what the cost, you must obtain them!” Ziyong spoke urgently. It would appear that stardust was an extremely important item to it.

Seeing just how much Ziyong and Qingsuo was putting emphasis on the stardust, Jian Chen could feel himself growing serious. His eyes fixated themselves onto the auction house and immediately dismounted from his magical beast mount to enter.

This stardust might have been in the auction house, but the actual house had not yet started any of their auctions and was thus unavailable to the audience. It would be at least another two days before it would start, perhaps the stardust would appear then.

Afterwards, Jian Chen had spent the rest of his time walking the streets. Going from one drugstore to another, he purchased another fifty or so thousand year old heavenly resources and spent well over two million purple coins.

The stab in his wallet had not been a stab to his heart however. The growth of the tiger was far more important than money, and since the tiger required an exponentially large amount of time to grow, heavenly resources were the only way to expedite this procedure.

Jian Chen wasn’t short on money either since he took the purple coins from the Space Rings of the Heaven Saint Masters he killed along with any other valuable item. There was still the money from the treasuries of both the Pingyang Kingdom and the Heavenly Eagle Kingdom that he had not yet exhausted along with the monster cores. These alone were enough to make Jian Chen into a mobile treasury with the raw amount of value he had on him.

It was only until dusk that Jian Chen finally stopped his window-shopping spree through the streets and settled in one of the inns to wait for the auction two days from now.

There would undoubtedly be heavenly resources over the age of several thousand years old at this auction house as well as the stardust needed to forge the Azulet swords. This meant that the upcoming auction event would definitely be an event that Jian Chen couldn’t afford to miss. In the same vein, this meant that Jian Chen would have to delay his trip to Longevity Valley for another two days.

Later that evening in his own grand room, Jian Chen sat on top of his bed in the midst of concentration. He had wanted to try his best to come to understand the energy of the world along with the piece of a Saint Tier Battle Skill to become a Saint Ruler as soon as possible. By his side, the tiger cub wolfed down three heavenly resources and quickly fell into a deep slumber to process it into energy.

The candle wick within the room had long since gone out, leaving the entire room in pitch black darkness. Even if one’s hand were in front of one’s face, the fingers would not be visible at all. But in this darkness, the room was exceptionally quiet so that even a needle could be heard if it were dropped onto the ground.

In the skies above Mercenary City, the gigantic barrier that had spanned across the entire city pulsed once. Shortly afterwards, a single girl’s voice could just barely be heard from the skies.

“This, this is master’s scent! But, didn’t master leave this world already? Why do I smell his scent then. Did master return then?”

This clear voice had been clear in the dark skies over the city, but even with the peacefully quiet city, the sound did not travel far.

“Yes, this is master’s scent. But it’s faint. Very faint. Did master really return?” The clear voice reverberated through the skies. From the voice however, the tint of excitement could be heard. Soon enough, the wave of excitement sped into the city and caused everyone to feel slightly odd, but no one could pinpoint the reason why.

“I’ve found it! It’s here! Master’s scent is definitely coming from here! Hee hee, master has to have returned, this must be his way of testing me. Hee hee, how good my nose is. No matter how faint master’s scent is, I will definitely always be able to find it.” The voice spoke, this time closer to the city. It had already traveled to the inn Jian Chen was in and phased into the building.

From within his room, Jian Chen’s ear twitched slightly and caused his eyes to open suddenly. At the same time, two bolts of light flew out from his eyes and illuminated the candlewick in the room to light up the room.

Jian Chen’s eyes swept across the room vigilantly. The darkness was not a problem to him since he could see everything clearly.

“Who’s speaking?” Jian Chen asked seriously. He had heard that clear voice earlier, but his presence had told him no one was around at all, causing him to be extra vigilant.

Even if Mercenary City was extremely safe, he could not afford to drop his guard.

“It’s faint. Very faint! Master’s scent is here.” This time, the strange voice could be heard originating from the same room Jian Chen was in. It had been extremely clear to hear, but no matter how much Jian Chen looked around, he could not see just what human or ghost was speaking.

#### Chapter 600: Spirit of the Barrier (Two)

Bolting straight up from his bed, Jian Chen landed gracefully onto the ground with his eyes staring hard at the entirety of the room. With his presence completely spread out so that the entire inn was covered in it, he began to test to see just who was there. But what had disappointed him was the fact that not a single being came into his detection.

He had clearly heard the distinguishable voice of a person nearby him earlier. It was not of the same skill that a Saint Ruler would use to pitch their voice since a Saint Ruler would use it to speak directly into the ear. This voice was different, it was a clear voice that anyone within earshot would be able to hear and detect the origin of. But even though it came from his side, the strange and bone-chilling thing was the fact that not a single living thing or spirit could be seen.

“Who is speaking, come out now!” Jian Chen commanded with a solemn face. This was a first that he had never seen before.



As if responding to Jian Chen's question, a previously dark spot near the corner of his room suddenly began to glow with light. Wisps of light began to gather in this one spot and slowly condense to show the silhouette of a person.

As the light dissipated from the room, a single young woman who looked to be around twenty-three years old came into view. She had been quite cute and was slightly pink to the eyes. But the only defect in this otherwise beautiful figure was the fact that her body was eerily fake. It was not an actual human body and looked to be made from only light. Following her appearance, light filled the room and dispersed any remaining darkness from it.

The iris in Jian Chen's eyes dilated as he stared at the young woman as if he had seen a ghost.

"Who are you?" Jian Chen growled. Against this foreign threat with untold power, Jian Chen was extremely vigilant. This girl could be an evil being after all.

Curiously, the young woman stared at Jian Chen before circling around him several times. Even while she walked around him, her eyes never left his body as she muttered, "It's faint. Master's scent is very faint. But you are clearly not my master. Hey, who are you then?"

Her words had rendered Jian Chen at a loss. Scratching his head in befuddlement, Jian Chen had still remained calm throughout this, "This one is Jian Chen. Just who might you be? Why have you come to my room."

"Jian Chen?" Her eyebrows rose up as if she was thinking heavily. "Who's Jian Chen?"

"Jian Chen would be me!" The muscle in Jian Chen's face twitched.

Looking at Jian Chen, the young woman asked, "You're Jian Chen? No no, you're not my master. My master's name isn't Jian Chen. He isn't as weak as you are either. Weird, why do I smell master's scent then? Did I smell wrong? No way! There's no way I would mistake master's scent for someone else! No matter how faint, I will be able to find it."

Her eyes then spun around the room several times along with her face as she laughed and giggled at Jian Chen, "Big brother, why don't you tell Little Spirit if you've seen my master before. Where is my master? Why has he not come back in forever? Does he not want Little Spirit anymore, or even worse, did master forget about me??" At the last few words, the young woman's eyes began to grow red as if she was ready to cry at any moment with sorrow.

Seeing just how pathetic the young woman was getting, Jian Chen felt an emotion tug away at him from within. It was almost as if he was looking at a small child sadly despairing over the separation from her parents. She was alone and helpless, a pitiful creature to the eyes.

"Little sister, why don't you tell me who you are? Who is your master, perhaps I might have seen him before." Jian Chen inquired. Right now in his mind, he was trying his best to think of any possible person that could fit the bill as fast as he could.

"I'm Little Spirit! But people call me the spirit of the barrier. As for my master, you should know him, he's the lord of this city!" She answered.

“The lord of this city?” Jian Chen uttered a low grunt of stupefaction. It came to mind that the lord of this city was a divine figure, and when the thought came to mind, Jian Chen’s face immediately slackened, “What did you say? Your master is the lord of Mercenary City?”

“Hee hee, that’s right. Mercenary City is ruled by my master. Big brother, so you do know my master! Tell me where my master is, okay? Big brother, I’m begging you.” Her face had lit up when Jian Chen had answered her. But then it quickly turned into a look of pleading and pity as she begun to beg him.

A breath of surprise escaped from Jian Chen’s lips as he stared dumbfoundedly at this twenty something year old woman in front of him.

The lord of mercenary city--that title had only one person in its history--and that person would be the strongest of the Tian Yuan Continent, Mo Tianyun!”

This girl that was right in front of him, her master was actually the one hailed as the strongest of the continent--Mo Tianyun! That realization had been like a clap of thunder to his ears.

A considerable amount of time had past before Jian Chen had finally regained his wits. Still staring rather shocked at the girl, he just had to ask once more, “Little sister, did I hear you correctly? The lord of Mercenary City, Mo Tianyun, is your master?” Even now, Jian Chen was doubting what he had heard.

“Yes, of course! He is Little Spirit’s master! Even for her entire life, Little Spirit has not forgotten about master! It was master that give Little Spirit her name, you know. But master left a long time ago and never saw me again. Little Spirit really misses master.” As she got to the end of her words, the little girl’s face grew crestfallen. For this one moment, she had looked truly alone.

As if a bomb had gone off, Jian Chen had not known what to think. He could only stare at this girl tongue-tied while trying to find his mind to respond.

This eccentric young woman, was she really a person of the same lifetime of Mo Tianyun?

But with that thought, an extremely terrifying question had came to mind that Jian Chen couldn’t help but start to tremble and shake about. If this young woman was truly a person from the lifetime of Mo Tianyun, then just how long had this person lived for?

“Big brother, please tell Little Spirit okay? Where is my master now? Why hasn’t he come back for Little Spirit? Little Spirit misses master.” While Jian Chen had been quiet, the young woman’s eyes had already begun to grow teary and pitiful.

Even Jian Chen had felt a twinge of sympathy when he saw the pathetic expression of hers. The words she was asking for however, would render anyone speechless, and Jian Chen had no idea how to respond.

Mo Tianyun was a figure of antiquity. Even if he was the strongest on the continent, even he could not withstand the corrosion of time. Many generations had already past since his pinnacle, and only the illustrious fame his name brought was left behind. Jian Chen had never once seen Mo Tianyun before.

“Big brother, please tell Little Spirit, okay? Where is my master?” The silence from Jian Chen had prompted the young woman to plead again.

Sighing to himself, Jian Chen turned to look at the woman with a slight amount of fear, "Little sister, I'm afraid to disappoint you, but I have never seen your master before."

"Impossible! You're lying to Little Spirit! Little Spirit's nose is strong! Big brother, you can't lie to Little Spirit! Big brother, you have master's scent, you've had to see master before!" She howled in disbelief.

Giving a small shake of his head, Jian Chen forced out a smile, "Little sister, you must be mistaken. I've never seen your master before. Your master may have been the strongest this continent has ever seen before, but too much time has gone by. Your master has to have reached the end of his age span by now."

"You lie! Master was a magical figure who already broke free of most of the binds he had, even age itself! How could he reach the end of his life span then? Big brother, you can't lie to Little Spirit!" The very notion of her master dying from age had made her angry beyond belief.

Rubbing his temples with some pain, Jian Chen was at a loss in how to deal with this noisy woman in front of him now.

"Big brother, please! You have to tell Little Spirit where master is, okay? Little Spirit will definitely pay you back." This time, she spoke a second phrase to sweeten the deal.

"Little sister, it's not that I don't wish to tell you. It's that I've never seen your master before in truth." Jian Chen spoke helplessly.

As if worried now, the young woman began to howl and cry, "But, but, but! You've clearly master's scent! Even if it's faint, Little Spirit can smell it. Brother, you've have to have seen master before."

"Is there?" Jian Chen carefully looked at his own clothes in strange suspicion. This woman in front of him was adamant that he had the scent of Mo Tianyun, but he was absolutely convinced that he had never even seen him before.

Then, a sudden thought came to Jian Chen. "Little sister, perhaps I have something that your master left behind. That may be why you sense your master's scent."

"Is that really it? Big brother, have you really not seen my master before?" The young woman's face grew incredulous.

"I vow that I, Jian Chen, have never seen your master before!" Jian Chen could no longer bear her questioning, and so in order to absolve him from any future questions, he had to pledge in such a manner.

Dazed, the young woman stood transfixed to her spot to stare earnestly at Jian Chen to try and confirm for herself. After a standoff for what had felt like an eternity, she finally let out a cry of sorrow, "Master, where in the world have you gone? Do you no longer want Little Spirit anymore? Little Spirit has missed you so much! Master, where are you!" She cried out bitterly. As she cried, her body continued to convulse with shudders, and just slowly, Jian Chen could see her body start to fade before finally disappearing and plunging the entire room back into darkness.

“Waaaaah..... Master, where did you go? You have to come back to find Little Spirit. Little Spirit wants to see you so much!” The darkness of the night had continued to convey the grieved crying sounds of the young woman for some distance before finally waning off into silence.

Jian Chen had felt influenced by her tears and grew uneasy as he tried to figure out the reason why she had appeared to him in the first place.

Rekindling the light once more, Jian Chen opened the window covers to look out into the sky. As of right now, it was roughly an hour past midnight, meaning that it was now one of the quietest moments in the city and so the crying of the young woman would not be heard by many, if any.

Shutting the windows once more, Jian Chen sat back onto his bed to take out the Space Ring containing the three fist-sized patches of white animal skin to give it a good look.

It would be only these three objects that Jian Chen knew not the history of, and where they originated from. He had once thought that these three patches of animal skin would somehow lead to a hint of the Saint Ruler who oversaw the destruction of the Bi family in the past.

“Perhaps Mo Tianyun left these three patches before in the past.” Jian Chen thought.