

Prodigies 2681

Chapter 2681 Spirit Illuminating Mirror

When Zhuang Bibai and others arrived, the sight before them froze them in their tracks. The grand elder, one of the most formidable figures in the clan, had unleashed the tribulation rain law, yet he now lay battered beyond recognition?

“Stop!”

Zhuang Bibai’s roar cracked through the air, his square-jawed face twisted with fury, murderous intent boiling off him in waves.

“Not just yet.”

Lin Xun didn’t even bother to look up. A blade appeared in his hand, its cold edge flashing with a frightening gleam.

Zhuang Xiuwu, bloodied and half-dead, bellowed in outrage, “What are you doing?”

“What do you think? I’m going to cut open your belly and take out your treasures.” As his words fell, Lin Xun drove the blade straight into Zhuang Xiuwu’s abdomen.

Pu!

Blood gushed like a scarlet waterfall. Zhuang Xiuwu’s body curled up in agony, cold sweat pouring down his pale face. With his cultivation suppressed, he could do nothing to withstand the pain.

The sight made Zhuang Bibai and the others see red. Rage surged through them as they prepared to strike.

“If you move, we’ll kill this old geezer right here,” Jun Huan’s voice was like ice. That single sentence made Zhuang Bibai and the others hesitate, both startled and enraged. This was their Zhuang Clan’s own territory, but now, they were the ones being threatened!

“Do it! Kill them! Kill them!” Zhuang Xiuwu roared like a madman. Humiliated to such an extent, he felt as if he was on the verge of collapsing.

PA!

Lin Xun swung his hand back and delivered a sharp slap. “Make another sound, and I’ll cut you down first, old bastard!”

The stinging slap landed squarely on Zhuang Xiuwu’s face, yet it felt as if it had struck Zhuang Bibai and the others as well. Their fury surged and their eyes blazed with a murderous glare.

“What exactly do you want? Fight us to the death, and you may not escape today!” Zhuang Bibai sucked in a deep breath, forcing his voice steady.

Jun Huan smiled faintly. “Ten thousand pounds of immortal matter and thirty stalks of Thunderflame Bamboo that are over a hundred thousand years old. Hand them over, and we’ll leave right away.”

Zhuang Bibai and the others could hardly believe their ears.

Ten thousand pounds of immortal matter?!

Thirty hundred-thousand-year-old Thunderflame Bamboo?!

It wasn’t just a lion opening its mouth wide...it was asking them to strip their flesh and drain their blood!

“What’s the matter? Is the life of a Nirvana Spirit Immortal not worth that much?” Jun Huan asked lightly.

Chi!

Blood splattered as Lin Xun wrenched a pagoda-shaped treasure from Zhuang Xiuwu's body. It was the size of a clenched fist, nine-tiered, with plum-blossom eaves curling downward. Its body was a deep, lustrous green like polished divine jade, etched with intricate thundercloud patterns that shimmered brilliantly.

It was clearly a precious immortal-grade treasure, radiating an astonishing aura of immortality and divine might.

At that moment, the gravely wounded Zhuang Xiuwu felt as if a piece of his heart had been torn away. His face twisted in agony as he thrashed and roared hoarsely. "My Thunderflame Pagoda! No—! Stop him!"

Zhuang Bibai and the others were seething with fury, but still they didn't dare act. No matter how priceless the treasure, how could it be more important than Zhuang Xiuwu's life?

Jun Huan smiled. "If you don't agree...this old fellow might just..."

Zhuang Bibai's face darkened. "If we agree, you'll really let the grand elder go?"

Jun Huan said calmly, "We Fangchun Mountain disciples aren't like certain clans that go back on their word. When we say something, we always keep it."

This was a jab at the Zhuang Clan for repaying kindness with malice. Sure enough, the expressions of the Zhuang Clan members grew even uglier.

"Fine, I agree!"

Zhuang Bibai's eyes were bloodshot, and his voice sounded as if squeezed out from between his clenched teeth.

Jun Huan laughed on the spot. "Junior Brother, take it easy. Don't damage the grand elder's foundation. If you do, the Zhuang Clan will go down with us in a fight to the bitter end."

Lin Xun rose to his feet, “Senior Sister, so we’re just going to leave it at that?”

Jun Huan shrugged. “With just the two of us, we can’t take this Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land, and even if we did, we couldn’t hold it for long. Better to let them go this time.”

Lin Xun sighed softly, “That’s all we can do for now. When the time comes, I’ll return to reclaim Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land. And when I do, even giving it to a dog would be better than leaving it to those ungrateful, shameless, and despicable bastards.”

Every word landed like a blade, making the expressions of those Zhuang Clan’s high-ranking figures shift from dark to darker. The murderous intent in their eyes was barely contained.

Zhuang Bibai finally cut in, unable to listen any longer. “The immortal matter and Thunderflame Bamboo you want will take time to gather. If you trust me, give me some time and I’ll prepare them for you.”

“You think we still trust your Zhuang Clan?” Lin Xun snorted.

Jun Huan said, “How about this then? Hand over every treasure you’re carrying right now.”

“No way!”

“You’ve gone too far!”

“You Fangchun Mountain people are far too overbearing!”

The Zhuang Clan experts erupted in outrage. Never in their lives had they tasted such blatant humiliation.

“No?” Jun Huan’s gaze turned icy. “In that case, don’t blame us for being ruthless.”

Zhuang Bibai’s face went pale and commanded. “Quick, hand over your treasures!”

Everyone hesitated. Someone couldn't help but ask, "What if they go back on their words?"

Zhuang Bibai said through clenched teeth, "If they dare, we won't let them leave this place alive...no matter the cost!"

He was the first to take out his treasures. Seeing this, one by one, the others followed suit.

Jun Huan flipped her palm, revealing an antique bronze mirror. A playful smile touched her lips. "This is the Spirit Illuminating Mirror. It can see through any treasure in the world. If you've hidden something, the mirror will expose it instantly. Care to test it?"

The Zhuang Clan experts' expressions shifted, and a few looked like they were about to curse aloud. Who could have guessed Jun Huan had such a tool?

Ruthless!

Zhuang Bibai waved his hand and spat out, "Hand over everything!"

Even he kept a few things hidden, but now he was forced to surrender them all. No matter how reluctant they felt, everyone now handed over their hidden treasures one by one.

Seeing Lin Xun store away the treasures one by one with a radiant smile, the Zhuang Clan experts were so furious it felt like their lungs might burst. Those treasures were the fruits of their hard work. They were priceless beyond measure, but now, they had all been completely swept away!

"Now release him," Zhuang Bibai said coldly.

"What's the rush? We'll keep our word once we're outside the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land." Jun Huan said as she hoisted the gravely injured Zhuang Xiuyu and gestured. "Lead the way. And don't try anything."

Without a word, Zhuang Bibai turned around and strode off. If he stayed a moment longer, the anger burning in his chest might injure him. The other Zhuang Clan experts followed closely behind, eyes locked on Jun Huan and Lin Xun, ready to strike at the slightest sign.

Jun Huan, however, seemed oblivious, strolling along with Lin Xun at her side.

“Senior Sister, please lend me your Spirit Illuminating Mirror. I want to see if there are more treasures along the way.” Lin Xun said.

The Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land was filled with divine herbs and rare materials. Since he had nothing else to do, he might as well continue searching for treasures.

Jun Huan shook her head with a chuckle, “Junior Brother, I was just messing with them. The so-called Spirit Illuminating Mirror is nothing but my dressing mirror. Who knew they’d actually fall for it? Haha, isn’t it hilarious?”

Pu!

Lin Xun couldn’t help but burst out laughing. Senior Sister Jun Huan is too good at deceiving people. Even I didn’t catch on until now!

As the old saying went, the more beautiful the woman, the harder it was to guard against her tricks...

Zhuang Bibai and the others’ faces were as black as the bottom of a scorched pot, veins bulging on their foreheads, looking as if they had just swallowed a fly.

“You Fangchun Mountain brats dare to play such tricks? You’re nothing but shameless swindlers! Despicable!” someone fumed.

“I told you to hand over the treasures, but you wouldn’t listen. Can you really blame me?” Jun Huan gave a cold snort. “Besides, even if I’m a swindler, you’ve lived all these years and still let yourself get duped. Isn’t that just pathetic?”

Lin Xun laughed until his sides hurt. For the first time, he realized just how merciless his senior sister Jun Huan could be. She could drive someone to their grave from sheer anger alone. If she wanted to, she could toy with people until they were dizzy and defeated.

Their rest of their journey passed without any mishaps. Clearly, Grand Elder Zhuang Xiuwu's status was so high that Zhuang Bibai and the others didn't dare try any tricks along the way.

Once they stepped out of Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land, Zhuang Bibai's face darkened. "It's time to honor your word."

The surrounding Zhuang Clan experts immediately shifted into battle stances, eyes locked on Jun Huan and Lin Xun.

Jun Huan calmly swept her gaze around before glancing back at the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land. "Junior Brother, if I'm right, they've already reached a secret agreement. The moment we hand over the old man, they'll strike."

"What do we do then?" Lin Xun asked.

Zhuang Bibai barked angrily, "Are you planning to go back on your word?"

The others glared murderously, their killing intent almost tangible. Ever since arriving at Judgement Peak, they had been swallowing their anger. Now it was on the verge of erupting.

However, Jun Huan only smiled and said leisurely. "I forgot to mention...our Fangchun Mountain always keeps its word with those who honor theirs. But for those who repay kindness with betrayal and break their promises...we return tooth for tooth..."

As she spoke, she suddenly flicked a strange black jade talisman into the air.

Boom!

Before her voice had even faded, the talisman dissolved into a downpour of dazzling law light that surged outward in all directions. Zhuang Bibai and the others reacted instantly, dodging while unleashing the killing moves they had long prepared.

Unfortunately for them, in that same instant, Jun Huan and Lin Xun vanished without a trace. It was neither teleportation nor flight. It was as if the spatial laws of heaven and earth had seized them and whisked them away, vanishing without a trace.

Zhuang Bibai and the others stood dumbstruck, completely caught off guard. They had disappeared right before their eyes...without leaving so much as a ripple!

Chapter 2682 The Boundless Nearness Talisman

In the blink of an eye, they were gone. The abducted Grand Elder Zhuang Xiuwu had also vanished! The sight made Zhuang Bibai and the others nearly lose their minds.

"That Fangchun Mountain disciple is utterly shameless!" someone cursed furiously.

"She may have a pretty face, but she's nothing but a treacherous swindler!" Another fumed, their expression twitching with rage.

"My treasures...just gone?!" Someone clutched at their chest, feeling their heart bleed at the loss.

"What are you standing around for? Chase them! Kill those two Fangchun Mountain remnants and rescue the grand elder!" Zhuang Bibai bellowed, his roar echoing like thunder.

His eyes were bloodshot with fury. This time, their plan had been to capture Lin Xun and Jun Huan. Who could have imagined that first the grand elder was taken, then they had been tricked out of all their treasures, and now their enemies had disappeared into thin air before their very eyes...

The succession of humiliating blows nearly made Zhuang Bibai cough up blood. Shame, rage, and hatred surged in his chest like a landslide or a tsunami, leaving him trembling all over, his vision turning black.

If word of this spread, the Zhuang Clan would become the laughingstock of the entire Seventh Heaven Domain!

A cold, gravelly voice cut through the air, "If the Fangchun Mountain successors were so easily dealt with, they would have been annihilated long ago." Zhuang Bibai spun around. From the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land emerged a figure with delicate, childlike features, looking no more than five or six years old in appearance.

"Old Ancestor, even you were alarmed?" Zhuang Bibai stiffened in shock before hurriedly bowing.

That childlike figure was none other than Zhuang Longxiang, an old antique of the Zhuang Clan and one of its most senior elders. For the past tens of thousands of years, he had been in closed-door cultivation, striving to break through to the Transcendence Realm.

"With such a commotion, who wouldn't be alarmed?" Zhuang Longxiang looked like a child, but his voice was hoarse and ancient, laced with a cold, indifferent edge.

"So you already knew." Zhuang Bibai's expression froze, and a wave of deep shame surged within him.

Zhuang Longxiang gave him a sidelong glance. "This matter ends here. There is no need to pursue it further."

"But Grand Elder is..."

"Life and death are ruled by fate." Zhuang Longxiang interrupted, his tone indifferent, his calmness almost unnerving.

Zhuang Bibai's expression shifted. "Old Ancestor, our Zhuang Clan has suffered a grievous loss. Are we simply to let this go?"

"Even if you wanted to sever all ties with the Fangchun Mountain disciples, there was no need to act like this. Now, you've completely infuriated them." Zhuang Longxiang's clear eyes were utterly devoid of emotion.

Zhuang Bibai's voice was bitter, "We only meant to give the Mu Clan a surprise gift...Who could have imagined that those two Fangchun Mountain brats would be so cunning and ruthless."

"What's done is done. Regret and anger are useless now." Zhuang Longxiang said flatly. "What you should be thinking about now is how to deal with the aftermath."

Aftermath?

Zhuang Bibai narrowed his eyes slightly and bowed low, "Please, Old Ancestor, give me your guidance."

Zhuang Longxiang snorted. "You are the head of this clan, and you still need me to teach you this? Compared to your elder brother Zhuang Shiliu, you...still fall short."

Without another word, he turned and walked away. Zhuang Bibai stood rooted to the spot, his expression shifting again and again. Only after a long pause did he draw in a deep breath and return to the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land.

Not long after, Zhuang Bibai, as the clan leader, issued a strict order: all news of what had happened with Jun Huan and Lin Xun that day was to be completely suppressed! It was a desperate measure to keep the Zhuang Clan from becoming a laughingstock across the Seventh Heaven Domain and to protect their reputation.

At the same time, he personally penned a letter, detailing everything that happened that day, and sent it to the Origin Clarity Pavilion of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court. Zhuang Bibai knew full well that Lin Xun might have escaped for now, but sooner or later, he would make his way to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court! This letter was addressed to his elder brother, Zhuang Shiliu.

Lastly, Zhuang Bibai dispatched his men to spread the word: 'Lin Xun, the Fangchun Mountain remnant, has appeared in the Seventh Heaven Domain and will take part in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's open selection!'

When the childlike Zhuang Longxiang learned of this, he couldn't help but nod inwardly. Zhuang Bibai had done three things: Seal off all news of the Zhuang Clan's disaster, send a letter to Zhuang Shiliu, and make Lin Xun's whereabouts known to the outside world.

The third in particular was nothing short of shrewd and ruthless. In these years, Lin Xun's name had long since become infamous across the Eternal True Realm, with countless immortal factions treating him as a mortal enemy. The moment word of his presence in the Seventh Heaven Domain spread, how many of those powers could possibly sit idle?

This was adding fuel to the fire. This was killing with a borrowed blade! The Zhuang Clan might have suffered a heavy loss, but once word spread that Lin Xun would take part in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's selection, assassination attempts and deadly schemes from all directions were bound to descend upon him.

Even if he somehow managed to escape unscathed from these dangers and successfully joined the Origin Sect, Zhuang Shiliu's vengeance would still be waiting for him! With his status as a deacon of the Origin Clarity Pavilion, the authority he commanded was something Lin Xun could not challenge.

"Although Bibai lacks Shiliu's great vision and ambition, his response and actions this time were commendable. He has not disappointed me." Zhuang Longxiang nodded to himself in approval.

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Cold Moon City.

This was a well-known, bustling metropolis in the Central Core Region.

Cloud Guardian Workshop.

In Cold Moon City, there was an unremarkable refining workshop tucked away deep within a secluded alley. In truth, although this alley was out of the way, it was far from deserted. Dozens of shops of all sizes lined the alley, including apothecaries, taverns, teahouses...There was a diverse array of businesses.

Cloud Guardian Workshop had been closed for some time and its doors were tightly shut. Deep inside the workshop was an ancient moss-covered well. As ripples spread through the void, Jun Huan and Lin Xun's figures emerged out of thin air.

Once they stepped out of the ancient well, Lin Xun was greeted by a plain and time-worn courtyard and paused in surprise, "Senior Sister, where are we?"

"Cold Moon City. Ever since Eldest Senior Brother and the others first arrived in the Seventh Heaven Domain, we've been lying low here," Jun Huan said casually.

Lin Xun looked puzzled. "How far is this place from the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land?"

"At least a million miles," Jun Huan replied with a smile. "You don't need to worry about the Zhuang Clan catching up. Do you know what that jade talisman I just used was? It's called the Boundless Nearness Talisman. It contains the profound power of a mysterious ninth grade Heaven Rank law. Once activated, it can instantly teleport you here from anywhere in the Central Core Region."

Realization dawned on Lin Xun, and he finally understood why their escape from the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land had been so effortless. It turned out that the unassuming black jade talisman was an extraordinary treasure!

"Here, put away this Boundless Nearness Talisman. I don't have many left."

Jun Huan handed a black jade talisman to Lin Xun. "When Eldest Senior Brother brought us to the Sixth Heaven Domain, he happened to subdue a force known as the boundless nearness law. Later, Third Senior Sister refined it and forged seventy Boundless Nearness Talismans, which were distributed among all of us.

As she spoke, she gestured toward the ancient well beside her and said, "The origin source of the boundless nearness law is sealed beneath this ancient well."

Realization dawned on Lin Xun. He carefully put away the Boundless Nearness Talisman and grinned. "Senior Sister, if I'd known you held such a treasure, I would've caused an even bigger stir back in the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land."

Jun Huan rolled her eyes. "Don't underestimate the Zhuang Clan. If it ever came down to a real fight, even with the two of us together, escaping wouldn't be so easy."

As she spoke, she led Lin Xun into the main hall of the courtyard. The courtyard looked small from the outside, but it hid a self-contained world, like a folded secret realm, mysterious and extraordinary.

Inside the main hall, Lin Xun was greeted by a scene of serene beauty: verdant mountains, crystal clear streams, fragrant blossoms, and buildings scattered like jewels across the landscape. According to Jun Huan, this was where the disciples of Fangchun Mountain had been lying low.

“Junior Brother, the other senior brothers and sisters aren’t around right now. Until the Origin Sect Ancestral Court begins its recruitment, how about you and I stay here?” Jun Huan blinked her beautiful eyes at Lin Xun, her voice soft and teasing. “In other words, for the next while, it’ll just be the two of us...a man and woman, living under the same roof.”

Her tone was laced with flirtation! Lin Xun, long used to his senior sister’s antics, smoothly changed the subject, “Senior Sister, what do you plan to do about Zhuang Xiuwu?”

“Kill him.” Jun Huan said lightly. “Nothing disgusts me more than ingratitude. And the Zhuang Clan is worse than ungrateful. They’ve repaid kindness with malice. Since that’s the case, why keep that old thing around?”

At that moment, Lin Xun couldn’t help but recall a saying ‘The path becomes empty in an instant, the path of the sword is the most elegant.’ Jun Huan truly lived up to that praise!

From that day on, Jun Huan and Lin Xun settled into the Cloud Guardian Workshop.

Only later did Lin Xun learn the meaning behind the name. It came from the saying ‘wait for the clouds to part and the moon to shine,’ which reflected a state of mind shared by all Fangchun Mountain successors.

One day, the Ten Immortal Giants of the Eighth Heaven Domain would be overthrown!

In just a few days after Lin Xun and Jun Huan had arrived in Cloud Guardian Workshop of Cold Moon City....

Explosive news spread through the Seventh Heaven Domain.

The Fangchun Mountain remnant Lin Xun has appeared in the Seventh Heaven Domain and will take part in the public selection for the Origin Sect Ancestral Court!

A single stone stirred up a thousand waves. Cries of shock and astonishment rang out in all directions.

“Isn’t it incredible that Lin Xun has made it through all this without meeting his end?”

No one had imagined that the man who had been hunted by countless immortal forces for years could survive and make it all the way from the First Heaven Domain to the Seventh. It was beyond everyone’s expectations.

“This kid is insane! He actually dares to enter the Origin Sect Ancestral Court? Doesn’t he realize that if his whereabouts are exposed, he’ll be bringing destruction on himself?”

Many people were left flabbergasted, unable to believe it.

“Where is Lin Xun now?”

“Who knows. He’s probably in hiding.”

“But the moment he dares to show his face in the selection, he’ll become the target of everyone!”

All across the Central Core Region of the Seventh Heaven Domain and the Four Great Starfields, discussions were endless. In short, Lin Xun’s appearance stirred up a monstrous wave, drawing the gaze of countless eyes in the Seventh Heaven Domain!

If it had been anyone else, even an Immortal, they likely wouldn’t have caused such a great commotion.

However, Lin Xun was different.

His fierce name had been forged long ago in the Great Thousand Battle Domain, and had spread all the way to the Eternal True Realm. In recent years, starting from the First Heaven Domain, he had carved a bloody path, leaving storms and upheavals in his wake.

It was impossible not to notice. Furthermore, that was exactly what the Zhuang Clan wanted. The storm against Lin Xun was already raging. The only question was how long before his enemies' knives struck?

Zhuang Bibai was filled with anticipation. The entire Zhuang Clan was filled with excitement.

Chapter 2683 Youran's Anger

The Ziwei Starfield was one of the Four Great Starfields of the Seventh Heaven Domain. Within its lay three of the twelve grotto heavens: the Xuanji Grotto Heaven, the Yaoguang Grotto Heaven, and the Kaiyang Grotto Heaven. The Immortal Imperial Dugu Clan was rooted within the Xuanji Grotto Heaven.

On the tranquil bank of a vast lake there stood a magnificent pavilion. The waters stretched endlessly, shimmering under a gentle breeze.

Inside, Dugu Youran sat before a table, resting her chin upon snow-white arms. Her long black hair cascaded like a waterfall to her slender waist, and her fair oval face seemed to glow with a sacred radiance beneath the soft sunlight.

She wore a plain, light-blue dress, and her slender waist and graceful curves were outlined as she sat cross-legged. Her rosy lips were lightly pursed, and her bright, star-like eyes shone with crystal-like clarity. Even sitting casually, she was like a scene from a painting. Everything else in the world served as her backdrop and ornament.

Yun Muzhe, seated not far away with a scripture in hand, happened to glance up and was entranced for a moment. Ripples stirred in his heart, impossible to suppress.

Among the Donghuang's Four Clans, only the Yun Clan resided in the Ziwei Starfield as they held the Yaoguang Grotto Heaven. The other three were based in the Qingguang Starfield. Therefore, the Yun and Dugu Clans had been allied for generations and often intermarried.

By seniority, Yun Muzhe was Dugu Youran's distant older cousin. Because of this close familial tie, the two had known each other since childhood and could be considered childhood companions.

Even now, although Yun Muzhe had long since become one of the ten supreme Emperor Ancestors of the Seventh Heaven Domain, he still often visited the Dugu Clan to remain at Dugu Youran's side.

The Dugu clansmen were no fools, how could they fail to see Yun Muzhe's deep affection for her? Thus, they were pleased to see the two together.

Unfortunately, Dugu Youran was clearly indifferent to Yun Muzhe's affection, which left her father, Dugu Xiao, the current patriarch of the Dugu Clan, deeply troubled. Over the years, he had attempted to arrange a marriage for her, but each time she firmly opposed it.

She even went as far as to slip out of the clan alone to avoid arranged meetings. A few years ago, she traveled to the Great Thousand Battle Domain to clear her mind.

In the end, although Yun Muzhe brought her back, Dugu Xiao never again dared to bring up marriage again, fearing that his most beloved and pampered daughter might slip away from home once more. At present his only wish was to send Dugu Youran to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court to further her cultivation.

Seeing Dugu Youran lost in thought for so long, Yun Muzhe could not help but ask gently, "Youran, what are you thinking?"

Dugu Youran said casually, "Cousin, how many successors do you think the Origin Sect Ancestral Court will recruit this time?"

Yun Muzhe smiled. "You're worried about that? There's no need. With the connections our two clans have, you'll have no trouble entering the Origin Sect."

After a pause, he added, "When the time comes, we'll most likely join the Second Peak for cultivation."

Dugu Youran simply hummed in response, unsurprised. The peak master of the Second Peak was Yun Tianming, an elder ancestor of the Yun Clan and by seniority, the great-grandfather of Yun Muzhe's branch.

Yun Muzhe's eyes lit up as though remembering something. "Besides, with our talent and background, it won't take more than a few years after entering the Origin Sect Ancestral Court for us to become core disciples of the Second Peak. By then, with your granduncle's help, joining the Origin Emptiness Pavilion will be as easy as lifting a hand!"

The Origin Emptiness Pavilion oversaw the passing on of the sect's inheritances and supreme arts and the teaching of disciples! Dugu Youran's granduncle was one of its three deputy pavilion masters, which was a position of intimidating authority.

By comparison, Yun Muzhe's great-grandfather Yun Tianming, despite being the master of the Second Peak, held a far lesser status. However, it was obvious that Dugu Youran wasn't the least bit interested. Her mind was already elsewhere.

For her, the purpose of cultivation was simple and could be summed up in two lines:

To live freely and to enjoy a lifetime of serene happiness;

As for fame and fortune...they matter not to me.

Clearly, Yun Muzhe was different. He was the brightest star of his generation in the Yun Clan, one of the ten supreme Emperor Ancestors in the Seventh Heaven Domain, and the appointed young patriarch. Once he stepped into the realm of immortality, the clan's patriarch would gradually pass the reins of power into his hands.

Dugu Youran knew he harbored an even greater ambition: to free the Yun Clan from their reliance on the Donghuang Clan of the Eighth Heaven Domain and escape their control altogether!

With such a vision, he had the admiration and backing of many influential figures in the Yun Clan. Even Dugu Youran's father, Dugu Xiao, greatly admired his courage and spirit, believing him to be a young man full of promise and potential.

However, to the indifferent and contented Dugu Youran, who wished only for peace and happiness, there was nothing to admire.

Yun Muzhe knew her temperament well. Softly, he said, "Youran, I know you dislike this talk. But don't worry, whatever you dislike, I will take care of for you, and I will do everything in my power to ensure you never have to be bothered by such things in your life."

Dugu Youran said nothing. She stared toward the distant lake, dazed and absent minded. A faint disappointment rose within her.

Earlier, she had simply asked Yun Muzhe how many disciples the Origin Sect would recruit this time. However, his reply had nothing to do with her question. His response was filled with his longing to enter the Second Peak and his desire to join the Origin Emptiness Pavilion.

Their thoughts were worlds apart.

"Miss, there's news!" Suddenly, a crisp, delighted voice rang out. Moments later, Duoduo, a lively and charming maid hurried in, waving a jade slip in her hand. When she spotted Yun Muzhe, she paused for a moment, stuck out her tongue in awkwardness, and said, "Young Master Yun is here too."

Yun Muzhe smiled. "Duoduo, what good news made you so happy?"

Duoduo was Dugu Youran's personal maid. Although she bore the title of a servant, she was more like a younger sister and the two were extremely close.

If anyone else had barged in unannounced, Yun Muzhe's expression would have turned cold in an instant. It wasn't that he was petty, but instead he was simply a man of principle. Rules were rules, and he had no tolerance for people trampling them!

Duoduo hesitated, glancing toward Dugu Youran. Dugu Youran shot her a look. "What are you standing there for? Give it here."

Duoduo sighed and handed the jade slip over. Dugu Youran unfurled it and read it quickly. Her eyes that were as clear as still lake water glimmered with an odd light, and the corners of her lips lifted slightly. "That guy...just as I thought. He's still alive and well."

Duoduo beamed. "Yes, over the years, there've been endless rumors of his death. But now, he has come to the Seventh Heaven Domain and will be taking part in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's selection."

Dugu Youran stretched her graceful figure, a smile in her eyes. "I knew he wasn't the type to settle down. All the better. If he can join the Origin Sect Ancestral Court, we'll have the chance to see each other again."

Watching all this, Yun Muzhe felt a faint pang of discomfort, as if he had been quietly pushed to the sidelines. In addition, when Dugu Youran and Duoduo began chatting about another man, that faint discomfort only deepened. However, he masked his feelings well and asked with a smile, "And who might this person be?"

"Lin Xun." Dugu Youran turned leisurely toward him, her starry eyes meeting his. Her lips parted in a sweet smile, revealing her pearly teeth "You've met him too when we were at the Ninth Immortal Heavenly Pass in the Great Thousand Battle Domain."

"Him?" Yun Muzhe's brow rose in surprise. He remembered clearly. He had traveled to the Great Thousand Battle Domain alone to bring Dugu Youran home and had encountered Lin Xun at a banquet. Back then, Lin Xun was just an insignificant supreme Emperor in his eyes.

He could never have imagined that such an insignificant figure would not only survive the Ninth Immortal Heavenly Pass and endure the slaughter in the Ruins of the Gods, but also, over the years, make his name known from the First Heaven Domain all the way to the Sixth, spreading a fearsome reputation throughout the heaven domains.

All this was completely beyond his expectations. After all, when he left the Ninth Immortal Heavenly Pass, he had personally instructed City Lord Bai Jianchen that he did not want to see Lin Xun appear in the Eternal True Realm. Unfortunately, it was clear that Bai Jianchen had failed!

As a result, every time Yun Muzhe heard new rumors about Lin Xun over the years, an inexplicable anger would rise within him. It was as if an ant he could have crushed with a single hand had not only survived, but also had grown into a mighty dragon soaring across the heavens.

Even in terms of renown, Yun Muzhe, one of the ten supreme Emperor Ancestors in the Seventh Heaven Domain, was now far inferior to Lin Xun. This left him feeling unsettled. It wasn't jealousy. It was a regret. He regretted not having killed Lin Xun himself!

However, he never imagined that the person Dugu Youran was talking about with Duoduo would be Lin Xun. His brows knit slightly.

Dugu Youran didn't notice this. She also had no idea that back at the Ninth Immortal Heavenly Pass, Yun Muzhe had tried to have Lin Xun killed through Bai Jianchen. She handed him the jade slip with a smile. "Look, Lin Xun has actually come to the Seventh Heaven Domain."

Suppressing his displeasure, Yun Muzhe smiled faintly, gave a nod, and unfurled the jade slip. At a glance, his brows arched as he remarked, "If this is true, then when Lin Xun goes to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court, he will surely face a calamity...and may even lose his life!"

Straight to the point!

However, this was clearly not the response Dugu Youran wanted. She snapped, "Why is it that whenever Lin Xun is mentioned, you sound just like those outsiders, as if you can't wait for something bad to happen to him? Also, for all these years, everyone believed he was dead, but now we all know he's alive and living quite well."

With that, she took the jade slip back, turned away and said, "I'd like some time alone. The both of you should leave."

Duoduo was startled, then nodded obediently and departed. Having served Dugu Youran for many years, she could tell at a glance that she was upset.

Yun Muzhe's expression darkened. He was genuinely taken aback. He only just said a few words, simply analyzing Lin Xun's situation, yet it angered his cousin?

She cares about Lin Xun that much?

Chapter 2684 Protection from One's Ancestor

The atmosphere in the pavilion was heavy. Dugu Youran sat facing the lake in silence. Yun Muzhe gazed at her graceful figure from behind, feeling an indescribable rage welling up inside him. He rarely had an emotional fluctuation like this.

No one knew that he regarded Dugu Youran as his alone, but she had gotten angry at him because of another man. This was considered crossing a line for him, whose temperament was usually as steady as a rock.

All these years, they had grown up together, trained together, and shared their lives together. Their bond was so deep, but it turned out he couldn't even compare to some Fangchun Mountain remnant?

He wanted to ask her why, but he held back because he knew Dugu Youran all too well. She had a stubborn streak in her bones, so saying anything at this juncture would only push her further away from him.

In the end, Yun Muzhe stood up and bitterly shook his head, "Youran, I'll leave you alone."

He then walked away. Once he disappeared from sight, Dugu Youran let out a soft sigh. How could she not understand her cousin's feelings? It was only that...she had only ever seen him as her cousin.

She murmured, "You have your aspirations, and I have my own thoughts. How can we force ourselves to be together?"

Dugu Youran then gazed at the jade slip in her hand. Recalling the moments she had shared with Lin Xun in the Great Thousand Battle Domain, she couldn't help but laugh again.

That fellow has tough luck, but he's got nine lives to make up for it.

.....

Far away from the pavilion, Yun Muzhe no longer concealed his emotions once he was alone. His exceptionally handsome face flickered dimly.

Lin Xun!

After a long time, he inhaled deeply, and a kind of determination surfaced in his eyes. Back then, Bai Jianchen failed to kill Lin Xun, so this time, he would take matters into his own hands!

.....

One of the twelve grotto heavens, Linghong Grotto Heaven, was located in Tianxuan Starfield and was a base of the Immortal Imperial Zhou Clan.

Xuan Jiuyin was lying on a soft couch, sipping from a wine gourd made of green jade in a content and leisurely manner. Zhou Bowen, the patriarch of the Zhou Clan, was in another chair with a wry smile.

Even as a peak Nirvana Spirit expert and an elderly figure with prominent prestige in the clan, Zhou Bowen felt nothing but helplessness at this moment as he faced Xuan Jiuyin.

After what seemed like half a day, Zhou Bowen said, "Little friend, why don't you come with me to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court and ask for permission from Deputy Leader Xuan yourself?"

Xuan Jiuyin shook his head, "No. What if they lock me up? That would be the end of everything. Senior, can't you go and let Xuanyue tag along?"

"But..." Zhou Bowen hesitated.

Xuan Jiuyin let out a long sigh, rose from the couch, and said somberly, "Ahh, I crossed the cosmos, enduring countless hardships and risking my life to reach Linghong Grotto Heaven. I'm only making a small request, yet you want to turn me down? Don't you think that's a bit too heartless?"

Zhou Bowen almost rolled his eyes. Hardships, risks? With the Xuan Clan having your back, how could you have encountered any dangers?

Moreover, once you arrived at the Eternal True Realm, I dispatched my clansmen to escort you, providing you with the best food and accommodations along the way. How did you suffer in any way?

However, venting his frustration inside was the only thing Zhou Bowen could do. Although Xuan Jiuyin was a bit of a scoundrel, he had a great-great grandfather who currently served as the deputy pavilion master of Origin Sect's Origin Sky Pavilion—Xuan Feiling!

Furthermore, Xuan Feiling was sworn brothers with Zhou Zhongdao, who was the sixth ancestor of the Zhou Clan. The two shared an unbreakable friendship, having traveled worlds and overcome life-and-death ordeals together. In Zhou Zhongdao's eyes, Xuan Feiling's great-great grandson was his own great-great grandson!

Being two generations younger than Zhou Zhongdao, how would Zhou Bowen dare neglect this little rascal Xuan Jiuyin?

This was what people called to be blessed by one's own ancestors!

Xuan Jiuyin shamelessly pleaded, "How about this, let me bring Xuanyue and follow you to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court. If my great-great grandfather gets angry, I will take full responsibility."

Zhou Bowen suspiciously asked, "Is that girl really that important? You said she wasn't your dao partner."

Xuan Jiuyin snapped, "Senior, please don't get the wrong impression. Xuanyue and I are sworn friends who've been through life-and-death situations together. Heaven and earth bear witness to our bond! Besides, I brought her here to the Eternal True Realm. How can I just leave her by herself now?"

Zhou Bowen said, "Actually, you can leave her in my clan. We'll certainly treat her well... Um, never mind, forget I said anything." He shook his head with an awkward smile upon seeing the change in Xuan Jiuyin's expression.

Xuan Jiuyin said, "Senior, I'm not being unreasonable, nor am I using my great-great grandfather's status to be a bully. The situation here is plain and simple: I won't go to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court if Xuanyue can't."

By this point, he was mentally exhausted. Is it really that difficult to take Xuanyue to the Origin Sect?

Zhou Bowen, in fact, was just as exhausted. After a long silence, he finally sighed, "Alright, I agree to your request, but I can't guarantee that the Origin Sect Ancestral Court will allow her to stay."

Xuan Jiuyin grinned, "That's plenty enough, Senior, thank you so much. Once we get there, I will personally appeal to my great-great grandfather."

Zhou Bowen couldn't help but ask, "Little friend, do you truly have no feelings for her at all?"

Xuan Jiuyin took a deep breath and said earnestly, "I repeat: I have always considered Xuanyue my younger sister. It has always been like that before, and it will remain so in the future."

Shortly after, Zhou Bowen left. Xuan Jiuyin, on the other hand, excitedly went to find Jintian Xuanyue to share the good news with her.

"Lin Xun, Lin Xun, I'm going to bring Xuanyue to you. It'd be wonderful if the two of you end up together, but if not...then you'll be letting all my efforts down..." he mumbled to himself.

Having heard that Lin Xun had appeared in the Seventh Heaven Domain and that he was set to travel to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court in three years, Xuan Jiuyin was determined to take Jintian Xuanyue there no matter what.

She was such a great young lady. How could he leave her here to be alone and lonely?

.....

Word of Lin Xun's appearance in the Seventh Heaven Domain had also reached the ears of his enemy factions such as the Donghuang's Four Clans or various immortal factions associated with the Ten Immortal Giants of the Eighth Heaven Domain.

However, considering how expansive the Seventh Heaven Domain was, finding an individual here was like searching for a needle in an entire ocean. Despite the news having spread throughout the world, no one had found his exact current location.

Everyone was certain of one thing, though, which was if Lin Xun really dared to show his face at the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's successor selection three years later, then he would become the target of public ire!

.....

In Cold Moon City, the residents living around an alley had recently noticed the reopening of Cloud Guardian Workshop after a long closedown. Currently, the shop was being tended to by a handsome young man.

Since he was the only one in the shop, people speculated that he must also be a blacksmith. Business had been rather slow, perhaps due to him being an unfamiliar face. They often saw the young man placing a rocking chair in front of the shop whenever he had nothing to do, and he would lie down in it to soak up the sunlight and stay there until night fell.

Even when his shop had a potential customer, he answered their questions distractedly and quoted an exorbitant price that the customer would simply find unacceptable. As a result, the already bad business had become even more desolate.

Nevertheless, it was clear that the young man didn't care. He opened and closed the shop on time every day. If there were no customers, he would just remain in the rocking chair. He seemed to be the lazy type.

This caused the neighbors to look down on him. They viewed him as a young bum who idled away his days and was unprofessional.

The cultivation world favored relentless progress and diligence. Those who were lazy, unless they were descendants of Immortal Imperial Clans, were destined to amount to nothing.

In this alley, most of the residents were low-level cultivators of Cold Moon City. Their cultivation ranks varied, but it was difficult to find an Emperor among them.

Such was the reality of the lowest echelons in the cultivation world. Even in the Seventh Heaven Domain, where the atmosphere was rich with aeth qi, only a tiny fraction among the countless beings could become Emperors.

The path to the Emperor Stage spanned nine realms, and the higher one climbed, the more risky it became. Furthermore, the pinnacle was another turning point.

This meant that the higher a stage, the increasingly fewer the number of cultivators who could reach it.

The Seventh Heaven Domain certainly did not lack supreme Great Emperors or just Emperors in general; this world was too vast after all. Cold Moon City, for example, had produced countless Emperors.

Still, though, there were far more cultivators below the Emperor Stage.

The alley where Cloud Guardian Workshop was located was a remote area of Cold Moon City. Since most of the cultivators here were below the Emperor Stage, the shops established in this neighborhood primarily catered to this demographic.

Therefore, people had no idea that the bum they regarded as idle and unproductive was actually an Emperor Ancestor, someone so exalted that they could only look up to with awe.

Lin Xun had never explained himself as he had not been in this kind of environment for too long. Whether it was in the Great Thousand Battle Domain or on his journey from the First Heaven Domain to the Seventh Heaven Domain, he had almost only come into contact with those in the same stage as him, or even Immortals.

This led him to rarely pay attention to or experience the cultivation life of those below the Emperor Stage.

Settling down in Cloud Guardian Workshop, watching the bustling stream of people passing every day, living the chaos of the streets and alleys, and seeing cultivators rushing about in pursuit of the dao...

The feeling he got from these activities was familiar yet at the same time strange. It was as if he had been out for too long and had finally just returned to the mortal world, where all he could see were the various aspects of the normal cultivation life.

The lower five great cultivation stages, the Longevity King Stage, the Saint Stage, the Quasi-Emperor Stage... Cultivators in each stage had their own goals and hardships.

The various facets of sentient beings interwove into the diversity of life.

Chapter 2685 Letting Go and Picking Up, All Within a Thought

When the first morning light came down, Lin Xun opened Cloud Guardian Workshop as usual, placed the rocking chair carved from Dragon Spirit Wood in front of the door, and then lay down on it.

His body relaxed. With his eyes half-closed, he looked fast asleep. His breathing was almost imperceptible. The gentle sunlight cast a soft glow on his handsome face.

"This sluggard opens his shop at the same time every day, but that's the only commendable thing he does. What a waste of such a fine appearance."

"Haha, to live such a carefree life is a form of freedom, no?"

"I originally wanted to introduce my niece to him, but this guy is too lazy. I've never seen such a lazy young man in my entire life. How can he achieve anything on the path of cultivation?"

Many neighbors in the streets and alleys noticed Lin Xun. Having gotten used to seeing the way he acted, they gossiped for a few moments and then went about their business.

Lin Xun remained motionless. Inside him, the profound mysteries of the almighty dao formed a boundless and ever-changing world, constantly cycling through astounding phenomena. They operated in complete silence.

In his True Self Emperor World, the Primal Chaos Tree swayed its branches. The traces of primordial chaos dispensed by the tree fused with his cultivation, allowing the law powers in his arsenal to display their quintessential nature.

The Emperor Ancestor Stage was also known as Ancestral Reversion. The term 'ancestor' signified an original, primordial state. Lin Xun's cultivation had already reached the pinnacle of the Ancestor Stage.

Others were Ancestors of a Path, while he could be considered an Ancestor of All Daos, with every dao having the potential to evolve into an unimaginable Ancestor law! Currently, he was only a hair's breadth away from the path of immortality. All he needed was an epiphany to soar upward.

Lin Xun had been waiting for this epiphany for years. While he occasionally felt a surge of inspiration which he could grasp important signs from, those signs were ultimately too indistinct.

This had frustrated him at first, but he had come to terms with it now. He was no longer fixated on and endlessly overthinking those signs, for an epiphany on the dao could not be forced. Since settling in Cloud Guardian Workshop, he had abandoned all his plans and begun to experience things outside of cultivation.

The world was shaped by objects and beings.

This alley was a corner of the world, a small stage that exhibited the mortals' affairs and ways of life, their joys and sorrows, and their fights and hardships. Life was like a current which the beings struggled to cross.

At this very moment, Lin Xun finally understood the words uttered by Saint Buddha Xingjia upon realizing his path: "When my dao was proven, I realized the suffering of all beings." [1]

This suffering was the hardships, obsessions, and karmas that no one could escape when walking the great path.

Whenever there was desire, there would be obsessions. Obsessions trapped one in a cage, but at the same time, not having a focus made the mind become prone to turmoil and confusion...

Therefore, the first three realms of the Emperor path were known as 'Emperor internal struggles.' To be free of external obsession, of a physical form, and of shackles on the mind.

Only by penetrating these Emperor internal struggles could one see into the details at Pervading Mystery, achieve divinity at Pervading Deepness, and procure freedom at Pervading Emptiness. These were respectively the fourth through sixth realms.

No-Law, Against Heavens was another name for Pervading Emptiness.

This was equivalent to breaking free from the constraints of the law of a certain world, so that even in another world where the law was completely different, one could still cultivate and realize their own dao. From there, one would be able to reach Practicing Voidness, Fusing with the Dao, and attain Ancestral Reversion!

Such was what unfolded in the nine realms of the Emperor Stage.

Lin Xun had reached the very peak of this stage, boasting invincibility and a potential to surpass everyone ever existed. Despite that, breaking out of it and into the next level was no easy feat for him.

He did not know what epiphanies other Immortal experts had grasped to certify their Immortal dao. In fact, their experiences were useless to him anyway. Every cultivator pursued different things, leading to their epiphanies to be completely different from each other.

Emperor dao legacies were common, while there were almost no legacies on immortality because this stage concerned the profound principles of law powers, and law powers were numerous and covered many grades.

Even at the same realm of Heavenly Longevity, different Immortal cultivators condensed different immortal-grade laws since they had previously mastered different law powers. As a result, their strength vastly varied.

Killing a Heavenly Longevity cultivator who controlled an Earth Rank immortal law was far easier than killing their counterpart who wielded a Heaven Rank immortal law. All in all, it was extremely difficult to leave behind any legacy in the Immortal Stage.

Even if one did so, what they would pass on would still only be suitable for their own cultivation. Others would likely find it completely impossible to learn from or comprehend.

Lin Xun had specifically discussed this point with his senior sister Jun Huan. Her response then was simple: "This path is something you seek on your own. Experiences and insights of others are instead a burden; learning from them only does you harm and zero good."

Meaning, one must rely solely on themselves to embark on the path of immortality.

Lin Xun had contemplated this matter for years. He had analyzed it, meditated over it, and diligently sought information associated with it. In the end, none of that proved helpful and had instead trapped him in a cycle of obsession.

Therefore, he had abandoned it all and severed the obsession. He had ceased to think, ponder, yearn, and seek it. Each day, he would recline back in his rocking chair, observing the lively world with his heart. As it turned out, watching the beings put great efforts into reaching their goals proved to be quite a unique experience.

Spring went, and autumn came. Half a year had passed.

One day, the crisp voice of a child echoed in the distance, who was a little girl with pigtails, "Mom, why can't you just help me pick up the hairpin?"

A woman who was busy in her shop scolded the little girl, "Nuonuo, how old are you? Can't you pick it up yourself? What are your hands for?"

The little girl named Nuonuo pleaded, "But I'm holding a full basket of aeth fruits. If I try to pick up the hairpin, what will happen to these fruits? Please, mom, help me."

The woman said impatiently, "Just put down the basket, and you can pick it up."

Nuonuo looked at the basket of bright-red fruits in her hands then at the jade hairpin on the ground with an indecisive, conflicted look on her face.

At that moment, Lin Xun in his rocking chair suddenly laughed. Let go of what you're holding, then you can pick it up!

The conversation between Nuonuo and her mother was normal and mundane, but it had been like thunder to his ears, a revelation that pierced through the fog in his mind like a ray of light.

"Your mother is right," he smilingly said to the little girl.

Nuonuo was stunned for a moment before she fiercely criticized, "You're not only a bum but also such a meanie!"

Lin Xun smiled cutely, "Why am I a meanie?"

Nuonuo said angrily, "Your hands and feet are free, so why can't you help me?"

Lin Xun was speechless. He then stood up, picked up the hairpin, and inserted it into her black hair. Finally, he stroked her little head, "In fact, I should thank you properly. Why don't you tell me about your wishes? Maybe I can fulfill them for you."

Nuonuo rolled her eyes, "Fulfill my wish? A sluggard like you? Save it!" and turned toward her family shop.

However, she quickly turned back and presented the fruit basket to him, "You did help me after all. As a grateful person, I'll let you taste this fruit, but you can only have one!"

Lin Xun's smile grew even broader as he picked a red, plump fruit. Popping it into his mouth, he savored, "Mhmm, very sweet."

Nuonuo said proudly, "I got up early this morning and picked these on the mountain outside the city. Only I know about that place. The aeth fruits there are big, pretty, and delicious. If you really like it, then I'll take you there tomorrow to pick some."

Lin Xun shook his head, "I'm not a child, so I have no time to go fruit-picking with you. Haven't you seen that I have a shop to watch?"

Nuonuo dramatically rolled her eyes, "You're really a sluggard. You want the fruits but don't want to work for them. You're hopeless."

With that, she went into her family's shop, while Lin Xun returned to his comfortable rocking chair with a whole new mindset.

Let go to pick up. So letting go...was the only way to attain the 'dao'!

Never had his state of mind felt so light and transcendent. It was as though he had figured out an enormous confusion and shattered its shackles.

He wanted to go find Nuonuo again and ask her if she wanted anything, but he held back in the end, saying to himself, "When the opportunity arises, I'll help her family out."

Nuonuo and her mother ran a shop that sold ordinary mountain delicacies, nothing particularly precious, so business wasn't too great.

Lin Xun had long observed that her mother was merely a Longevity King who was busy with making a living. The amount of cosmic origin crystals she earned barely sufficed to sustain her and Nuonuo's cultivation needs. They weren't poor, but they were immensely far from being well-off.

He had also learned that Nuonuo's father had lost his life in a battle long ago, and Nuonuo had been raised by her mother from infancy, so the little girl had no memories of her father at all.

At this thought, Lin Xun shook his head and stopped dwelling on it. As he meditated, his qi and energy began to circulate quietly.

Bang!

The Primal Chaos Tree suddenly exploded shortly into the session. Its trunk and branches turned into countless streams of rich chaos qi flowing in all directions, which were gradually absorbed and refined by his True Self Emperor World.

The chaos law nurtured by the Primal Chaos Tree had brought Lin Xun immeasurable benefits over the years, polishing all of his law powers into their best, most original state. However, the tree had become an obstacle on his path to immortality.

All along, he had hoped that it would grow alongside him, maybe one day metamorphosing into an Immortal Primal Chaos Tree, but he realized now that stubbornly clinging to this idea would only turn it into a burden.

Before long, Lin Xun felt an unusual sensation arising in him.

When the Primal Chaos Tree was completely refined, he clearly felt that his True Self Emperor World had received a kind of divine nourishment. The entire space appeared to have been filled with a heavy aura of chaos!

Such was to be free from worries in mind and body, to let go in order to gain.

Chapter 2686 I am the Dao

The Primal Chaos Tree was truly precious, so precious that it could drive all Emperors in the world crazy with jealousy, but Lin Xun felt no pain or regret after having refined it. Instead, there was only a sense of physical and mental ease.

The dao was to be sought from one's heart, and the law from one's body. While the body and mind were vessels for extraordinary achievements in the path of cultivation, how were the knowledge and experiences gained on this path, in another sense, not also a burden?

To break through, one must abandon certain past experiences, and then, perhaps only by studying and experiencing them anew could one finally take the next step!

Lin Xun took a deep breath and decided to refine the Primordial Chaos Thousand Daos Tree as well.

This tree was the greatest treasure of the previous epoch. When using it with the Origin Dao Canon, a cultivator would be able to comprehend various supreme legacies and profound principles of the great dao from that epoch.

Such were the immeasurable benefits Lin Xun had gained from it, and it had allowed his cultivation to encompass the strengths of two epochs and surpass everyone in history!

Therefore, a treasure like the Primordial Chaos Thousand Daos Tree would drive even Immortals mad fighting over it. This was why back in the Ruins of the Gods, Immortal experts had come in a constant stream to vie for this greatest fortune left from the previous epoch!

In Lin Xun's opinion, this tree was indeed marvelous beyond words and truly one of the most precious treasures he had ever possessed. Previously, he had intended to continue using it after he entered the Immortal Stage, so that he could explore the immortal dao of the previous epoch.

Now, however...he had woken up to reality. The path of immortality, when borrowed or imitated, was more harmful than beneficial. Such a dao ultimately needed to be sought with one's own efforts!

That being the case, it was better to let it go, to completely cut off this idea and free the mind of all concerns!

Boom!

In Lin Xun's True Self Emperor World, green mist filled the sky as thousands of green branches swayed. The Primordial Chaos Thousand Daos Tree trembled intensely as he slowly refined it. This divine treasure of an epoch saw its bark crack, its branches peel off, and its leaves wither...

Unlike with the Primal Chaos Tree, it took Lin Xun a whole year to gradually grind down the Primordial Chaos Thousand Daos Tree. It became a boundless primordial chaos power that was then fused into his cultivation.

During this process, he continued his usual life at Cloud Guardian Workshop, spending most of his time in the same rocking chair. The neighbors had long grown accustomed to his routine and no longer made a big deal out of it. None of them knew that his cultivation had undergone a silent transformation.

After absorbing the two trees, Lin Xun clearly sensed the quiet but tremendous change in his True Self Emperor World.

The primordial aura of chaos slowly filled the air in the form of mist, just like when the universe had first been created. In his vast True Self Emperor World, the sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, and everything else had returned to chaos, which was then nurtured and sublimated by the primordial mist.

His rank remained unchanged, but he knew that his cultivation had undergone an incredible evolution. His dao became like the primordial chaos!

If the stage of Ancestral Reversion was a journey to find the first mysteries of the most primal dao, then Lin Xun's current cultivation was akin to the most primitive chaos that reigned over all primordial daos!

At this moment, he was hit by a complete enlightenment.

He felt airy and ethereal, a feeling that Buddhist cultivators described as 'Having severed all ties, I am one with the dao: indefinable and manifesting the vision of the primordial time with chaos.'

In the rocking chair, Lin Xun quietly opened his eyes. In that instant, the sky and earth suddenly darkened, and the law and dao energy in the atmosphere stagnated as though startled by something.

However, all of that only lasted a fleeting moment before everything returned to normal. The bustling crowd on the streets had been completely unaware.

I am like the dao, imperceptible.

A smile flashed across his face as he stretched his waist and rose from the rocking chair.

My flower has bloomed, when will the butterflies come?

He did not care. He knew that the door to immortality would come and throw itself at him!

It had been over a year since he had first arrived at Cloud Guardian Workshop. There was also only over a year left until the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's disciple recruitment began.

Just as Lin Xun was about to get back into his shop, a crisp voice rang out. Nuonuo, with her pigtails, was running toward him as she called, "Sluggard!"

Lin Xun greeted her with a smile, "What's up?"

Over the past year, the little girl had grown much taller, shedding a little of her childish innocence and gaining a bit of youthful liveliness.

Nuonuo smiled proudly, "My mom said she's saved enough money to send me to Lingyuan Sword Palace to study. We're heading there soon."

Lin Xun was surprised to hear this.

Lingyuan Sword Palace, located in a deep mountain range over thirty thousand miles outside of Cold Moon City, was presided over by several Emperor Ancestors.

In terms of status and power, it was inferior to even the lowest-level Immortal forces. This was unworthy of Lin Xun's attention, but in the eyes of the low-rank cultivators in Cold Moon City, being able to cultivate in Lingyuan Sword Palace was already a huge blessing.

"Then congratulations are in order," Lin Xun smiled.

Nuonuo laughed, "I just came to tell you that if you work as hard as I do, you can go there too. But, if you keep being a bum, you're doomed for life."

With that, she trotted off, her lively figure adding a unique charm to the alley scenery. Youth knew no sorrow, as the saying went.

Lin Xun thought for a moment, then went to the shop run by Nuonuo's mother while the little girl was away.

Nuonuo's mother was named Gu Yunshan, who looked beautiful and elegant despite how plain she dressed. Running the shop alone while raising her daughter, she had always been busy, but something was unusual today as she was just sitting there and staring blankly.

Seeing Lin Xun approach, she was amazed. She laughed, "What a surprise – you actually dragged your bag of bones all the way here. First time this has ever happened."

Lin Xun chuckled. He knew the neighbors regarded him as a bum, but they meant no ill.

After a quick contemplation, he said, "From what I know, studying at Lingyuan Sword Palace is quite costly."

The immediate change in Gu Yunshan's expression showed that his comment had hit where it hurt. She sighed deeply, "Nuonuo is already ten this year. If she doesn't go now, she probably won't amount to much in her life. I don't want her to end up like me and waste her whole life in this shop."

Parents who loved their children planned for their future. Gu Yunshan had clearly made up her mind to secure a bright future for Nuonuo.

Lin Xun asked, "Are you planning to sell your shop to pay for her tuition?"

Gu Yunshan was taken aback, "How did you know?"

Lin Xun said, "Your shop is only a bit of a distance from mine. A few days ago, someone came to discuss the matter with you, and I happened to overhear your conversation."

Gu Yunshan looked visibly dispirited, "I have no choice. It can't be delayed any longer."

Lin Xun handed her a storage treasure and said, "Nuonuo has done me a great favor, so please accept this as a token of my gratitude, but don't tell her about this. Also, don't sell the shop. She'd be heartbroken if she finds that she doesn't have a home to return to."

With that, he turned and left. Gu Yunshan was stunned. This lazy good-for-nothing...what's gotten into him today?

When she opened the storage bag, she was stupefied. It contained a fortune that she could never have imagined in her life!

After a long while, she snapped out of her shock and immediately looked toward Cloud Guardian Workshop. However, the rocking chair had already been put away, and Lin Xun who was usually in it was nowhere to be seen.

Gu Yunshan ran to the workshop with the storage bag. After hesitating at the door for a while, she decided to return it. The staggering fortune inside made her uneasy and anxious.

Lin Xun's voice echoed from inside, "Don't refuse. It's for Nuonuo's cultivation needs. Compared to these riches, the help she gave me has been priceless."

Gu Yunshan inhaled deeply and said firmly, "Young Master, I will repay this in full one day. If I can't, then I'll make sure that Nuonuo will!"

Half a month later, Gu Yunshan closed her shop and took Nuonuo out of Cold Moon City. After a long journey, they finally arrived at their destination.

Lingyuan Sword Palace was built on the summit of a mountain, exuding an imposing and solemn aura. Gu Yunshan felt a bit uneasy; the sight intimidated her as this was her first time visiting such a powerful organization.

At the mountain gate, a kind-looking elderly man in a white robe stood like he was expecting someone. Upon seeing the pair of mother and daughter, he smiled warmly and came forward to greet them, "You must be Daoist Gu Yunshan?"

He then looked at Nuonuo without hiding his approval, "This little one must be Nuonuo, then. She truly possesses extraordinary aptitude. I'm sure she will shine brightly on the path of cultivation."

Gu Yunshan and Nuonuo were both dumfounded. How did this old man know their names? And it seemed as though he had been waiting here specifically for them.

Before they could ask, the white-robed old man smilingly invited them into Lingyuan Sword Palace, explaining the various aspects of the institution to them along the way, which left the two even more confused. They felt like they were in a dream.

This was Lingyuan Sword Palace, a sacred cultivation land in the hearts of countless cultivators in Cold Moon City. Yet, they were being welcomed inside so easily?

When they arrived at a spacious, ancient hall where the old man stated his intention to take in Nuonuo as his disciple, Gu Yunshan could no longer contain herself and asked, "Senior, may I know who you are?"

The white-robed elder smiled, "I am the principal of Lingyuan Sword Palace."

Those words struck Gu Yunshan like lightning, leaving her stunned and speechless. Never in her wildest dream had expected such a special treatment for her and her child!

She remained in a daze as she walked out of Lingyuan Sword Palace and traveled on the road leading back to Cold Moon City. All of a sudden, she remembered a certain someone.

Could it be because of him?

Upon this thought, Gu Yunshan immediately headed to Cloud Guardian Workshop after she returned to the city. To her surprise, the workshop was closed. She knocked for a long time but no one answered the door.

This kind of situation had occurred before, but this time, it filled her with an indescribable feeling. Uncontrollably, the scenes of the days when that young man was always lounging in his rocking chair started playing in her mind.

Chapter 2687 Thousand Star Sea

Under the misty sky, a treasure ship shuttled through the clouds, stirring ripples in the air.

In the cabin, Lin Xun took a sip from his green wine gourd and asked, "Senior Sister, where are we going?"

"Where else? We're going to take part in the successor selection of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court," replied Jun Huan who was lounging comfortably on soft, snow-white fur leather, with her long slender legs crossed on the desk without a care and her beautiful eyes half-closed. She tossed a jade slip to Lin Xun, "Read it carefully. I'm going to take a nap."

She then rolled over. The part of her clothes below the waist slid off her curvy bottom and exposed a stretch of fair, smooth skin. It was an undeniably sensual and alluring sight.

Lin Xun had intended to remind her to mind her behavior, but he ultimately refrained, knowing that he'd likely be teased if he spoke up. Forcefully moving his focus away from her, his gaze landed on the jade slip.

In the quiet cabin, Jun Huan was sound asleep like a lazy cat. Lin Xun sat at the desk reading through the jade slip with concentration. In the air, a faint but cool fragrance drifted. It was Jun Huan's natural body fragrance, having a refreshing and soothing effect like that of orchids and musk flowers.

After Lin Xun had settled down in Cloud Guardian Workshop, Jun Huan had left alone, saying that she wanted to gather intel on the Origin Sect Ancestral Court.

She was then gone for nearly two years. A few days ago, she had returned and immediately took Lin Xun to leave Cold Moon City on this treasure ship.

After a long read, Lin Xun put down the jade slip and sank into deep thought. Word of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's recruitment had spread throughout the Eternal True Realm, causing a sensation and attracting the attention of every Heaven Domain.

According to the information Jun Huan had gathered, it was expected that nearly a hundred supreme Emperor Ancestors were going to participate, making it an unprecedented event!

Even Lin Xun was stunned by this number. It was nothing short of astounding when the entity being discussed was supreme Emperor Ancestors.

Of note, in the First to Sixth Heaven Domains, it was virtually impossible to see a supreme Emperor Ancestor. Should one appear, they would quickly be noticed by the major powers of the Seventh and Eighth Heaven Domains who would then lead them away.

During the time when Luo Chong held the supreme power as the clan head, he had nearly exhausted all of the clan's wealth to produce a supreme Emperor Ancestor like Luo Feng.

The Seventh Heaven Domain didn't lack supreme Emperor Ancestors, but their numbers were pitifully small, to the point they could be considered as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns.

From what Lin Xun knew, each of the Immortal Imperial Clans occupying the twelve grotto heavens only had one or two supreme Emperor Ancestors. Moreover, this already included those who had realized their Ancestor dao a long time ago, with some having even broken into the Immortal Stage.

As for the thirty-six blessed lands from which many supreme Emperor Ancestors had emerged throughout history, it was still a matter of luck since not every generation could produce one such character.

In other words, one could scour the entire Seventh Heaven Domain and still wouldn't gather one hundred supreme Emperor Ancestors! It ultimately came down to the fact that too few cultivators were able to reach this level.

So why could there be nearly a hundred supreme Emperor Ancestors who were going to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's incoming selection? It was because a portion came from the Eighth Heaven Domain!

Jun Huan, having gathered related intel nonstop for more than a year, was able to confirm out of the Ten Immortal Giants in the Eighth Heaven Domain, there would be members of four taking part in the selection.

Those four giants were the Qi Clan, the Donghuang Clan, the Mu Clan, and the Zhongli Clan. Each of them would have six to seven supreme Emperor Ancestor participants.

Calculating from their numbers of supreme Emperor Ancestors alone, one could see how great the gap was between the Immortal Imperial Clans of the Seventh Heaven Domain and the Eighth Heaven Domain.

However, that was none of Lin Xun's concern. What grabbed his attention was that the four giants who had members participating in the Origin Sect's disciple selection were all his enemies!

The Donghuang Clan was the patron of the Donghuang's Four Clans, and Lin Xun had killed many of the latters' top young geniuses in the Ruins of the Gods.

As for the Qi Clan, one of their supreme Emperor Ancestors, Qi Lingyun, was still being imprisoned in his Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron.

Supreme Emperor Ancestors Mu Yi of the Mu Clan and Zhongli Xiao of the Zhongli Clan had both died at his hands in the Ruins of the Gods as well.

Under these circumstances, he was obliged to suspect that these four Immortal Giants got mixed up in this to target him.

All that aside, the jade slip also recorded other matters concerning the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's selection. The event would be presided over by a deputy pavilion master and three elders of Origin Clarity Pavilion.

The deputy pavilion master was called Fang Daoping, a Nirvana Spirit Immortal with a detached temperament and reputable prestige.

The three elders were Donghuang Qing, Xiao Wenyuan, and Li Zhen.[1] Lin Xun narrowed his eyes at the first name. There was no need to guess that this elder was from the Donghuang Clan.

“Indeed a bit troublesome. There might be complications if this old man were to secretly meddle in the selection process...” he mused. However, it was within his expectations.

The Four Great Ancestral Courts stood lofty above the world, but over a lengthy course of history, many members of the Ten Immortal Giants had joined them to cultivate. Donghuang Qing was clearly an example.

“Little Junior Brother, you can rest assured that no one has the guts to mess around when it comes to the successor selection. Even someone like Donghuang Qing wouldn't dare violate the rules of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court,” Jun Huan’s soft and pleasant voice sounded.

She had woken up at some point and was currently looking at Lin Xun with a smile in her beautiful eyes, “The reason the Four Great Ancestral Courts are so exalted is that even members of the Ten Immortal Giants must adhere to their rules.

“In the past, there was once a powerful expert from an Immortal Giant who was an elder at the Sixth Peak of the Origin Sect. In the race to become the peak master, he broke the rules. Guess what happened to him?”

Before Lin Xun could say anything, she casually continued, “He was executed, in public, by their Origin Sky Pavilion who oversees the rules. Destroyed in both body and spirit.

“After that incident, the Immortal Giant behind him sent their experts who traveled to the Origin Sect Ancestral Court overnight, not to demand retribution, but instead to apologize and ask for forgiveness.”

Hearing this, even Lin Xun was moved. An elder was killed, but the Immortal Giant behind him had to take the initiative to come and apologize. The influence of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court was terrifying beyond imagination!

“Little Junior Brother, what you really need to care about is how not to get eliminated.” Jun Huan sat up straight, her expression serious, “Everyone in the Seventh Heaven Domain knows that you will be there. Anyone who isn’t a fool knows that the other participants will target you first.”

Lin Xun nodded, “As long as the selection is conducted according to its rules, I’m not scared of anything.”

Jun Huan said, “I’m worried they won’t follow the rules.”

Lin Xun squinted, “Didn’t you just say that even the Ten Immortal Giants dare not defy the Origin Sect’s rules?”

Jun Huan said, “Members of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court won’t violate their own rules to kill you, but it doesn’t guarantee that the others won’t because both you and they aren’t yet disciples of the sect before the selection ends. If they use some vicious underhanded methods during the selection, it will be very hard to guard against.”

She paused briefly and added, “Moreover, I highly suspect that they will stop at nothing to take your life.”

Lin Xun was unfazed, “Then we’ll see if they are capable enough to do so.”

Jun Huan suddenly laughed and poked Lin Xun’s forehead, “You’re probably eager to go on a killing spree, aren’t you?”

Lin Xun smiled, “They’ve been hostile to me and trying to hunt me down for many years, and now they want to prevent me from entering the Origin Sect Ancestral Court. I’m not a Buddha statue without emotions, so how could I not be angry? If they have the guts to act against me during the selection, then I don’t mind sending them to hell.”

When he finished speaking, a cold glint flashed in his eyes. He then asked, "By the way, where will you go after I enter the Origin Sect Ancestral Court?"

Jun Huan looked quite happy, repeatedly blinking her eyes, "Why are you so concerned about me? Reluctant to part with your senior sister?"

Lin Xun's lips twitched, "What do you think, Senior Sister?"

Jun Huan said nonchalantly, "Of course you don't want to part with me. What else could it be?"

Lin Xun smiled wryly. What else could he say?

In the following time, the treasure ship carried Jun Huan and Lin Xun through the Central Core Region. Instead of rushing their journey, they acted as though they were on a sight-seeing tour, occasionally stopping to explore the famous locations along the way.

The Seventh Heaven Domain was different from any other one. It was so vast that a mortal could spend their entire life traveling and still wouldn't be able to make it out of a small corner of this world. Even cultivators would feel like a drop in the ocean here.

Day after day went by.

Lin Xun and Jun Huan had been a pair of travel companions. Together, they passed mountains, rivers, and bustling cities. They soared through the clouds and rested beneath the stars. Before they knew it, a year had passed.

On this day, Jun Huan, dressed in a pink robe with flowing sleeves, stood elegantly at the bow of the ship gazing at the horizon as she said, "My little junior brother, we will reach the shore of Thousand Star Sea in less than two weeks. At this moment, in this scenery, is there anything you wish to share with me?"

After asking that question, she turned around with a charming smile.

Thousand Star Sea had been a mysterious forbidden zone since time immemorial as the base of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court. Normally, no one could get anywhere near it, but this time, the court had chosen this location to hold their grand successor selection. During the event, Thousand Star Sea would also be opened to the world, allowing anyone to enter and exit at will.

Lin Xun was stunned, "What do I want to say?"

Jun Huan seriously corrected him, "You don't want to say something, but I know you have something to say to me."

Lin Xun gave her a weird look, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, "Do I have to say it?"

Jun Huan snorted, "You don't want to say it?"

Lin Xun immediately put on a solemn expression, contemplated for a long while, and finally said, "Senior Sister, once I enter the Origin Sect Ancestral Court, I will definitely help you keep an eye out for a good man who is worthy of you."

"You stubborn idiot!" An angry but amused Jun Huan poked his forehead.

Chapter 2688 Absolute Sunder Sword Palace

In Thousand Star Sea, where the waves seemed to billow endlessly, billions of stars were embedded in the clear sky. Under their gorgeous shine, the region looked as though an eternal paradise.

Virtually a forbidden zone all year round that was covered by an unknown law power, its veil was only lifted to the world when the Origin Sect Ancestral Court decided to hold its grand successor selection event here.

Whoosh!

The treasure ship carrying Lin Xun and Jun Huan shuttled through the air. All around were dazzling rainbows and teleportation lights of traveling cultivators. They rode divine birds, treasures, auspicious clouds, bronze chariots... They formed a colorful meteor shower, painting a lively picture over the mysterious sea.

Most of these cultivators weren't qualified to participate in the Origin Sect's successor selection. They were merely going to join the bustle as part of the audience.

"Wow! Is this the Thousand Star Sea?!"

"My goodness, guys, look at the thousands of stars in the sky! Their starlight is condensed from the purest dao essence!"

"Shush! Can't you keep your voice down? We look like country bumpkins thanks to you!"

Along the way, the clamor never ceased. The vast majority of cultivators were visiting the Thousand Star Sea for the first time, so one could imagine how shaken they would be by the sight of this magical zone. It was the first time for Lin Xun and Jun Huan as well, but they didn't let that delay them.

After the time it took to burn an incense stick, a massive ancient city came into view. Suspended between the sea and the sky, it resembled a floating continent. The city wall looked like one stretch of cemented divine gold in the clear starlight, emanating a solemn, sacred aura.

Such was Absolute Sunder City, the majestic, towering, divine, and ancient city where the Origin Sect was holding its selection.

"It's said that Absolute Sunder City was built by the very founder of the Origin Sect, using nearly ten thousand different types of immortal matter alone, not to mention other materials. This city is considered the number one city in the Seventh Heaven Domain. From what I'm seeing right now, its reputation is truly deserved," lamented Jun Huan.

Putting away the treasure ship, she and Lin Xun flew toward the city beneath the sky dome. The moment they passed through the city gates, they were greeted by a stream of dense crowds flowing along the streets, a bustling sight of vibrant prosperity.

Beautiful sunlight cascaded down from the sky with a glow so intense that it lit up the entire city. Basked in this glow, every breath one took was filled with the pure, thick, and primordial energy of the dao!

Everything here seemed to belong to a prosperous mortal city, but in fact, it was the best cultivation paradise in the Thousand Star Sea. Even with Lin Xun's experience, he was astounded nonstop, for the simple reason of how extraordinarily grand the atmosphere was.

More importantly than that, he had sensed at least a hundred obscure and terrifying auras, all at the Immortal Stage, the very moment he stepped inside the city!

This was merely what Lin Xun could currently perceive. If one accounted for the Immortals who were concealing themselves, the number would be even greater.

This will be where I, Lin Xun, begin establishing myself in the Eternal True Realm!

Looking at the crowded streets and feeling the powerful auras from all directions, Lin Xun's gaze became profound, and he silently clenched his fists.

"We're pretty much in the territory of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court here, so no one will dare to attack us here even if we reveal our identities. Let's head to the central area, we must first obtain a credential there in order to enter the selection," Jun Huan whispered and led Lin Xun forward.

"Holy, if I'm not wrong, then that over there should be the legendary golden qilin! A body that looks like it's cast from gold, a glorious sacred glow that illuminates everything... What a powerful aura too!"

"Rumors say that the golden qilin is the guardian beast of the Donghuang Clan in the Eighth Heaven Domain. Never thought I'd see it here..."

In the void, a qilin caused quite a stir as it galloped by. It was as big as a mountain with smooth and soft fur. Emitting a glow one hundred thousand feet in diameter, it dispensed a rain of light.

"The Donghuang Clan..." Lin Xun looked up and saw a group of figures on the golden qilin's back. They were clearly experts of the Donghuang Clan.

Suddenly, there was a terrifying fluctuation spreading through the air. It came from a beautiful, sacred-looking bird with striking feathers who was gliding across the sky with a group of people on its back. The sight of the bird immediately raised a hubbub.

“A Vermillion Bird! Heaven, a pure-blooded Vermillion Bird divine beast, a natural born fire god!”

“That’s the guardian bird of the Immortal Giant Qi Clan!”

“Roar~”

A thunderous roar shook the skies shortly after the Vermillion Bird faded from view. This time, it was a divine beast who was pure white except for its four black hooves. It had the head of a lion and the whiskers of a dragon, radiating countless auspicious lights as it tread the air.

“That...that’s a Pixiu!?”

“It must be. It’s the Zhongli Clan’s guardian beast.”

The streets erupted once more.

The Pixiu was an auspicious beast birthed by nature with the ability to maintain good fortune for a clan. Yet, it was currently being reduced to a mount, racing away with a group of people on it.

Before coming here, Lin Xun had already learned that the four Immortal Giants of Donghuang, Qi, Zhongli, and Mu would send their members to take part in the Origin Sect’s successor selection. Therefore, he calmly watched the scene unfold with little emotion on his face.

As he and Jun Huan continued forward, the number of celestial steeds they saw also grew. All of them were incredibly terrifying, with some so powerful that their mere auras sent shivers down one's spine.

Compared to cultivators who had arrived on the backs of these so-called divine creatures, the duo seemed utterly inconspicuous without even a beast for transportation. However, they weren't the type to care about such matters.

After the time it took to savor a cup of tea, a unique sword-shaped building came into view as they approached the city center.

From afar, the building resembled a divine cloud-piercing sword. The lower structures were packed side by side like a broad sword hilt, on which floor upon floor of pavilions were stacked straight upward like the blade.

Absolute Sunder Sword Palace!

Every Emperor Ancestor who wished to participate in the selection needed to register there and receive a certificate first.

At the moment, the spacious training ground in front of the palace was empty, but the area around it was completely crowded. The divine steeds earlier were all present among them, including the Donghuang Clan's golden qilin, the Qi Clan's Vermillion Bird, and the Zhongli Clan's Pixiu.

Looking around, the best positions in the area surrounding the training ground of Absolute Sunder Sword Palace had all been occupied by renowned immortal powers.

Putting aside the four Immortal Giants from the Eighth Heaven Domain, top-tier powers such as the Donghuang's Four Clans, the Dugu, the Zhou, the Liu...etc. Immortal forces from the twelve grotto heavens or the thirty-six blessed lands like the Zhuang Clan, could be seen everywhere.

Their parties were all guarded by Immortal experts, whose auras alone deterred other cultivators from getting close.

As soon as Lin Xun and Jun Huan arrived, an old voice rang out, "The disciples of Fangchun Mountain, who used to hide around like rats, actually have the courage to show themselves here in Absolute Sunder City. Cannot say I expected this."

The voice was not loud, but it reverberated clearly throughout the crowd and put a stop to all the chatter. The entire central area lurched into silence.

Then, everyone looked in its direction and found that the speaker was a tall, old man. He had snow-white hair and beard, and was dressed solemnly in a high crown and official attire. He was standing right next to the golden qilin.

He was Donghuang Qiong, a peak Nirvana Spirit relic of the Donghuang Clan! Following his gaze, the crowd saw Lin Xun and Jun Huan.

“Lin Xun! He’s really here! The audacity of this criminal!” The area grew restless as countless people looked shocked and disbelieved. Even those from the Immortal Imperial Clans were visibly affected, their eyes flickering nonstop.

Any other supreme Emperor Ancestor wouldn't have attracted so much attention because they were everywhere around Absolute Sunder Sword Palace right now. There were even several handfals of Immortals present as well, so who would care too much about one particular supreme Emperor Ancestor?

Lin Xun, however, was the exception. This young man was a living legend who had first made a name for himself in the Great Thousand Battle Domain. By now, he had fought his way to the Seventh Heaven Domain, miraculously surviving time and time again and throwing the Eternal True Realm into numerous uproars.

Three years ago, his appearance in the Seventh Heaven Domain and news of his intention to participate in the Origin Sect’s successor selection had gathered the attention of the entire world, but no one had expected this Fangchun Mountain disciple to dare to actually come!

The place erupted into a commotion, with nearly every eye fixed on Lin Xun and Jun Huan.

“Who’s the one next to him?”

“The path becomes empty in an instant, the path of the sword is the most elegant. Who else could it be if not Jun Huan of Fangchun Mountain?”

Jun Huan was immediately recognized by the cultivators from major powers, which also caused quite a stir. The two remain composed despite suddenly having the spotlight of the entire venue. This was within their expectations.

In fact, since their departure from Cold Moon City to their arrival at Absolute Sunder City, the duo had never tried to hide their identities, not even altering their appearances. There was no other reason: It was unnecessary.

By participating in the Origin Sect's successor selection, their identities were destined to be exposed. Why go to the trouble of concealing themselves if that was the case?

"Junior Brother, that old thing over there is Donghuang Qiong. His cultivation is at the peak of the Nirvana Spirit Realm. Once, our master blew off the head of a clan ancestor of his with a single punch." Jun Huan glanced at Donghuang Qiong, her voice echoing in the whole field, "But he has the audacity to call us rats. How funny is that?"

Lin Xun chuckled, "Yeah, very funny."

Donghuang Qiong frowned, his expression darkening.

The spectators looked at each other in shock. Donghuang Qiong represented the Donghuang Clan, an Immortal Giant of the Eighth Heaven Domain, so he was always one of the most eye-catching and intimidating experts present.

Despite that, not only had he been mocked, but even the Donghuang Clan behind him had also been ridiculed!

"The Master of Fangchun Mountain is dead, and you, his disciples, are but lost remnants who wander the world aimlessly. Had you not been cowering in some dark place all these years, how could you have lived until now?" a voice suddenly resounded, misty and cold with an overwhelming sense of authority.

It belonged to a black-clad woman who stood next to the Vermillion Bird. She had her white hair tied up in a bun and a face that was absolutely stunning yet icy.

Chapter 2689 Declaration of War

She was Qi Tingzi, a Nirvana Spirit expert of Immortal Giant Qi Clan! Dressed in black with snow-white hair, she looked like a beautiful young woman, but in reality, she was an ancient fossil who had been cultivating for tens of thousands of years. The moment she spoke, many looked over.

Jun Huan raised her brows, about to say something when Lin Xun took out the Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron and gently tapped its surface. Immediately, a muffled groan rang from inside the cauldron.

“Lin Xun, if you have the balls, just kill me instead of keeping me imprisoned here and humiliating me with despicable means!” The voice of a woman, filled with frost and hatred, came out from the Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron and resounded throughout the venue.

Qi Tingzi and the clansmen around her instantly paled. One of them exclaimed, “It's Lingyun!”

Lin Xun leisurely said, “That's right, it's Qi Lingyun. She became my prey way back in the Ruins of the God, and I haven't been able to bring myself to kill her.”

The crowd grew even more restless as they gawked in disbelief, never imagining that Lin Xun would start out with such a domineering stance. He had even taken hostage Qi Lingyun, the daughter of the Qi Clan's leader!

Qi Tingzi's expression had turned extremely unsightly, murderous intent flashing in her eyes, “Let Lingyun go, and I promise that my clan won't target you during this successor selection.”

Her voice was sharp and piercing like a cold blade. Many felt a stinging pain in their very soul from just hearing it, and their expressions grew serious.

“You wish.” Lin Xun, to everyone's surprise, casually grabbed Qi Lingyun out of his sword cauldron and tossed her to Jun Huan. “She's all yours, Senior Sister. Whenever you're in a bad mood, just take it out on her.”

Jun Huan smiled sweetly, “I just knew you love me the most, Little Junior Brother.”

"You...!" Qi Tingzi and her group were so angry their faces turned livid. If this wasn't in front of Absolute Sunder Sword Palace, they would have attacked long ago.

"Fellow cultivators, don't get riled up. No one can commit violence here. As rampant as these Fangchun Mountain remnants are, they wouldn't dare kill Qi Lingyun," stated an Immortal standing next to the Pixiu.

This Nirvana Spirit expert of the Zhongli Clan looked like a young man. Clad in a green robe, he stood on a cloud with his hands crossed behind his back. His eyes were filled with a majesty as deep as the sea.

He was Zhongli Chong, an old monster who had attained the Nirvana Spirit Realm countless moons ago!

He continued in that same indifferent voice. "It's also quite easy to save Miss Qi Lingyun. Lin Xun will undoubtedly fail in the Origin Sect's selection, so he and Jun Huan will have to leave Absolute Sunder City. When they do, we can suppress them together."

His voice rattled the whole field as he calmly but directly declared Lin Xun's defeat. Such an attitude was undoubtedly overbearing and fear-inducing.

"I guess that's the optimal solution," said Qi Tingzi.

"Ah, I suddenly feel a little unhappy." Jun Huan raised her hand and slapped Qi Lingyun across the face. The latter's fair cheek immediately became swollen and red.

The crisp sound of the slap echoed in the air and was heard clearly by everyone present. Zhongli Chong frowned slightly.

"Jun Huan, you have a death wish!" an enraged Qi Tingzi ground her teeth.

Jun Huan put on a winsome smile, "If I may be blunt, someone like you, I would take your life within three sword strikes in a one-on-one. What a pity I can't do that here, so this little prey will have to bear my anger for now."

Pa!

Jun Huan slapped Qi Lingyun again as soon as she finished speaking.

Being humiliated and trampled in front of so many people, Qi Lingyun was on the verge of losing her mind. She screamed desperately, but no sound came out—clearly silenced by Jun Huan.

“Abhorrent! Is this how you people from Fangchun Mountain act? Don't you fear the ridicule of the world?” said a towering man in the Mu Clan's party with sharp, scruffy hair and beard. His heavy voice resonated like thunder, causing many cultivators' eardrums to buzz and stars to dance before their eyes.

It was Mu Cangjia, an old Nirvana Spirit monster from the Mu Clan!

“You, who are all from immortal giants of the Eighth Heaven Domain, team up to threaten us...but somehow you don't find that shameless,” said Jun Huan calmly. “No need for further argument because we all know what will happen next. I'll watch the selection intently and see if all of you combined can withstand the might of my junior brother!”

This was a declaration of war against all the factions present who harbored hostility toward Fangchun Mountain. One of unparalleled domineeringness!

The top powers of the Seventh and Eighth Heaven Domains, as well as many cultivators from all over the world, were gathered there. At this moment, every single one of them was shaken by Jun Huan's declaration.

Three years ago, the world already knew that so long as Lin Xun dared to show up in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court's successor selection, he was destined to face countless dangers. What was currently transpiring certainly confirmed it.

However, no one had expected his party to declare war at this kind of juncture! What kind of courage and confidence would it take to utter such words?

“Very well! I'd like to see who will emerge victorious from this competition!” said Donghuang Qiong icily.

“After so long, Fangchun Mountain still hasn't given up on its arrogant and overbearing ways. Let this be an opportunity for the whole world to witness how you remnants meet your end!” Qi Tingzi's ruthless voice didn't hide her killing intent in the slightest.

The frost on the faces of those like Zhongli Chong and Mu Cangjia also showed that they already deemed Lin Xun and Jun Huan to be dead meat. The surrounding spectators trembled again.

The four Immortal Giants had all revealed their seething killing intent. On top of that, other enemy forces of Fangchun Mountain, such as the Donghuang's Four Clans and the Zhuang Clan, would definitely not stand idly by.

Under such circumstances, how could Lin Xun hope to enter the Origin Sect Ancestral Court?

Despite that, Jun Huan acted as if nothing was wrong, gently patting Lin Xun on the shoulder, “Junior Brother, go register in Absolute Sunder Sword Palace.”

Lin Xun instantly moved. He walked straight into the empty training ground toward the palace at the end of it. His tall and refined figure became the focal point.

Everyone wore different expressions: some felt bad and pitied him, some took pleasure in his misfortune, some exuded undisguised murderous intent...

Lin Xun remained expressionless like he was oblivious to it all until he entered Absolute Sunder Sword Palace.

In the spacious hall, there were only four individuals standing. The leader wore a wide-sleeved hemp robe over his tall and slender figure. His gray hair was tied into a Buddhist bun. His gaunt features bore the marks of time, and his eyes emanated an air of tranquility and detachment.

Upon seeing Lin Xun, he spoke, his voice resonant like the tolling of morning bells, “I am Fang Daoping, Deputy Pavilion Master of Origin Clarity Pavilion. I will be overseeing this selection.”

"It's an honor, Senior. I am Lin Xun," Lin Xun bowed with a clasped fist. He had heard that Fang Daoping was one who was unconcerned with worldly desire and held great prestige within Origin Clarity Pavilion.

Fang Daoping nodded, "The participants, regardless of their background or identity, must follow the rules of our Origin Sect. Do you understand?"

Lin Xun solemnly replied, "I understand."

Fang Daoping gestured to the three people beside him, "They are Elder Donghuang Qing, Elder Xiao Wen yuan, and Elder Li Zhen. The selection has three stages, and the three of them will each be responsible for one stage."

"Greetings, Seniors," Lin Xun cupped his fist, registering their appearance as he spoke.

Xiao Wen yuan had the appearance of a young man. He wore a blue outfit and a square headscarf, and his hand was holding a snow-white jade scepter. His lips curled in a slight smile, he radiated an otherworldly, scholarly aura.

He gave Lin Xun a slight nod, "Your reputation has preceded you."

Li Zhen had a sturdy frame, bronze-colored skin, disheveled hair and beard, and an unmistakable aura of iron-blooded ruthlessness.

As he returned Lin Xun's bow, he said in a deep, resonant voice, "Remember what Deputy Pavilion Master Fang said: in the Origin Sect, everyone must follow the rules!"

Donghuang Qing was dressed in a violet robe. He had narrow cheeks and deep-set eyes that gleamed with a piercing light.

After taking a moment to assess Lin Xun, he smiled faintly but meaningfully, "Lin Xun, Lin Daoyuan. I've heard your name more than once, and now I finally get to meet you in person."

He acted normal, showing not a hint of hostility.

Lin Xun remained composed, giving no emotional reaction. He wasn't stupid enough to provoke Donghuang Qing, an Immortal with great power and influence in this territory.

"Lin Xun, imprint a thread of your willpower on this nameplate and keep it safe. This will be your participation credential in the selection," Fang Daoping took out a nameplate and handed it to Lin Xun.

Lin Xun did as instructed.

"Follow me," said a smiling Xiao Wenyan.

Upon arriving in this city, Lin Xun had learned that the successor selection would have three rounds.

The first round would take place in a secret realm called the Absolute Sunder Battlefield, where all the Emperor Ancestor participants would be competitors. The requirement to pass was defeating three opponents. The chief examiner of the first round was Xiao Wenyan.

Following him, Lin Xun went up a series of floors until they reached the highest point of Absolute Sunder Sword Palace, which was the 'sword tip.'

Here, there was a platform floating among the clouds. The magnificent sight of the billions of stars spreading across the sky was displayed in full when one stood on it. On one side of the platform, there was a vortex portal.

"Take this slip. Once the round begins, it will show the information of all the participants." Xiao Wenyan handed Lin Xun a golden jade slip and pointed at the portal. "Go through it to reach Absolute Sunder Battlefield. The first round will begin in two days, lasting a month. If you fail to meet the requirement within this timeframe, you will be eliminated."

Lin Xun nodded, "Thank you for your guidance, Senior."

Xiao Wenyuan smiled and waved his hand, "Go ahead and familiarize yourself with the conditions of Absolute Sunder Battlefield."

Lin Xun immediately walked toward the vortex portal on the cloud platform. As a spatial ripple swept through him, his figure vanished.

Xiao Wenyuan muttered to himself, "Lin Xun, oh, Lin Xun, do you know that your arrival caused quite a stir in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court? If you are eliminated from the selection, then there will be nothing interesting to watch... Although I don't see much of a possibility of your success, I do hope that a miracle will happen..."

He then smiled, shook his head, and turned to leave.

Chapter 2690 Attack the Body, Break the Mind

In Absolute Sunder Sword Palace.

Seeing Xiao Wenyuan return, Donghuang Qing asked with a smile, "Brother Xiao, what do you think of Lin Xun now that you've met him?"

Taken aback, Xiao Wenyuan said, "What do you think, Brother Donghuang?"

Donghuang Qing laughed brightly, "I am a member of the Donghuang Clan after all. I have nothing good to say about a disciple of Fangchun Mountain. This is not an appropriate time to say anything anyway."

Xiao Wenyuan chuckled, "Brother Donghuang, you are truly open and honest. As for my opinion, Lin Xun is a very interesting young man."

Donghuang Qing raised his brow, "Care to elaborate?"

Xiao Wenyuan casually said, "This young man has made enemies with numerous immortal factions. Yet, he is surprisingly still alive and kicking. Is that not interesting?"

Donghuang Qing went silent for a moment before he asked, "So, Brother Xiao, do you think he can pass the selection?"

Xiao Wen yuan shook his head, "I didn't say that. Everyone knows what's going on with this selection. Once it begins, Lin Xun will definitely become everyone's target. I cannot comment rashly under such a circumstance."

Donghuang Qing laughed, "That's only fair. Fangchun Mountain is known as the enemy of the whole world. Countless organizations want it erased from existence. Now Lin Xun has shown himself in public in an attempt to join the Origin Sect Ancestral Court, he clearly sees our sect as a place of refuge."

He paused, a cold gleam flashing in his eyes. "Perhaps this young man believes that once he becomes a disciple of our sect, he will be safe, and no one will dare to harm his life?"

Hearing this, Xiao Wen yuan frowned.

Li Zhen, who had been quiet the whole time, suddenly said, "If he truly becomes a disciple of the Origin Sect, will there still be anyone who dares to harm him?"

He had a loud and deep voice, a large frame, bronze-colored skin, unkempt hair, and eyes like the coldest lightning. Seemingly normal otherwise, he gave off a strong sense of oppression the moment he spoke.

Donghuang Qing's smile faded. He said indifferently, "That depends on whether he can become a disciple of our sect."

Li Zhen looked Donghuang Qing in the eyes, "You didn't answer my question."

The tension in the atmosphere heightened as it felt like an interrogation.

Donghuang Qing looked at Li Zhen without flinching and said firmly, "Because your question is meaningless; Lin Xun has no chance of passing the selection!"

Li Zhen stared at Donghuang Qing for a moment and said, "If you dare to violate our rules and commit shameful acts, I will not forgive you."

Donghuang Qing's face darkened, "Li Zhen, what do you mean by that?"

"All right, no need to argue," the calm and detached Fang Daoping frowned. "My requirement for this selection is very simple: follow the rules. This is also my personal stance."

Li Zhen fell silent and said nothing more.

Donghuang Qing nodded, "Rest assured, Deputy Pavilion Master Fang, I will not tolerate any violations of the rules."

Xiao Wenyan looked at Li Zhen, then at Donghuang Qing, smiling without a word as he fiddled with his jade scepter.

The selection hadn't even begun, and two chief examiners are already at loggerheads. Lin Xun can indeed stir up unexpected waves... But what does Deputy Pavilion Master Fang actually think of him?

Xiao Wenyan couldn't figure it out, but he found the matter increasingly interesting. An undercurrent of treacherous turmoils was surging!

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Inside Absolute Sunder Battlefield, mountains and rivers undulated infinitely beneath the azure sky. Lin Xun appeared in a canyon. The instant he did, an intangible law power descended, restraining his cultivation without hindering his movement. Before the competition began, his cultivation would remain restricted like this.

Lin Xun looked around. After some time, he sat down cross-legged and recalled the various rules of the first round.

The use of law power was prohibited! The use of treasures and external forces beyond the scope of the Supreme Ancestor Stage was prohibited!

The nameplate token acted as the final lifeline; when a participant was killed, it would automatically sustain their life.

The first round would last one month. Those who defeat three opponents within the time limit could advance to the second assessment.

Among the rules, one put a frown on Lin Xun's face, which was that an opponent he killed wouldn't really die but instead would have their life preserved by their nameplate.

He found this rule troublesome, but he had already devised a strategy to go around it: when encountering an enemy, he would attack their body and break their mind!

The higher one's cultivation level was, the more perilous the calamities they would face if their mental state went awry.

Take Martial Uncle Kong Jue for instance, the issues with his mental state had turned him into an insane person with a muddled consciousness. His situation was utterly miserable.

Another example was Yan Ji, the pavilion master of Origin Sky Pavilion. He was said to have lost his mind during cultivation, and all that had remained afterward was only his primordial spirit...

Lin Xun was certain that as long as he broke his opponent's mind, they would be nothing but a waste even if they managed to live. Even if their cultivation made a complete recovery after that, they would never be able to tread the path of immortality in their lifetime!

However, it was not easy to achieve this. After all, anyone who could reach the Ancestor Stage had a mind of steel that was far more resilient than the ordinary.

For such individuals, any form of mental torture, humiliation, or provocation is useless. To break their mind, I must deal a fatal, devastating blow to the very core of their confidence and force them to live under the shadow of their defeat for the rest of their lives. Only then will their mentality crumble...

Lin Xun had made up his mind. He then got up and began walking around the canyon, surveying his surroundings. Although his cultivation was limited, it did not affect his ability to perceive with his spirit sense.

Two days passed in the blink of an eye.

In the big training ground before Absolute Sunder Sword Palace...

Buzz!

A strange fluctuation rolled out, revealing a bizarre, magnificent world in a painting where the mountains and rivers stretched endlessly. It was none other than the world inside the Absolute Sunder Battlefield!

The cultivators who had been waiting in the vicinity all stopped whatever they were doing and became fixated on the projection.

"The first round is about to start!" They couldn't help but feel excited, having endured the long wait for this exact moment.

The Origin Sect Ancestral Court was once again publicly recruiting disciples after so many years. Such a rare event naturally attracted the attention of all the major Heaven Domains. Even four Immortal Giants from the Eighth Heaven Domain were participating, making it an unprecedented spectacle.

Now, the curtain to the first round was about to be drawn open. How many of the talented supreme Emperor Ancestor participants would be able to pass?

In the quiet and solemn atmosphere, Deputy Pavilion Master Fang Daoping of Origin Clarity Pavilion led the three elders Donghuang Qing, Xiao Wenyan, and Li Zhen to emerge before the Absolute Sunder Sword Palace.

Instantly, all eyes fell on them.

Fang Daoping, with his hands on his back, calmly announced, "There are a total of one hundred and nine Emperor Ancestors participating in this successor selection of the Origin Sect. When the assessment begins, everyone present will be able to watch everything that takes place in the Absolute Sunder Battlefield.

"In other words, you are all witnesses to this assessment. My stance is simple: regardless of who you are, your background, or your origin, anyone found to be cheating or violating the rules will immediately be kicked out."

His voice resonated through the field like the tolling of a bell, letting the crowd feel the gravity of it.

Follow the rules!

Such was Fang Daoping's attitude, as well as the attitude of Origin Clarity Pavilion and the whole Origin Sect Ancestral Court!

Finishing his speech, Fang Daoping nodded to Xiao Wenyan. The latter stepped forward and gently waved his jade scepter. The world of the Absolute Sunder Battlefield projected in the air like an unfolded scroll painting suddenly rippled.

Following that, the figures of the one hundred and nine Emperor Ancestor participants appeared on it, scattered in different parts of the painting world like chess pieces. The venue erupted with voices.

"Look, that's Donghuang Shaowen, the strongest supreme Emperor Ancestor of the Donghuang Clan this generation. They call him the dragon son of the Eighth Heaven Domain. He commands a very powerful natural talent that once allowed him to ignore the cultivation gap and kill an Immortal expert, or so I heard!"

“That one is Qi Qingshi. Since entering the Ancestor Stage, she has been undefeated through numerous battles and risen so high above the rest. An extremely stunning goddess of the Eighth Heaven Domain.”

“See that person? That’s Mu Zunwu, an invincible existence so terrifying that people made a quote about him: Zunwu is the only one respected on the great dao path!”

All kinds of discussions heated up the atmosphere. The one hundred and nine Emperor Ancestors were all extraordinary individuals in their stage, each having their own unique talent, power, prestige, and charm.

They had been leading glorious lives in the highest Heaven Domains, shining like the sun at its zenith that illuminated their respective territory. Now, they had converged in the Absolute Sunder Battlefield, about to stage an unparalleled competition. How could the audience not be thrilled and full of anticipation?

“On the Emperor path, the Ancestor Stage is the supreme apex. To think that a group of supreme Emperor Ancestors are about to have a debate on the dao here... Such a grand occasion is rarely seen in thousands of years!” lamented an old fossil.

Lin Xun also gathered a great deal of attention, even surpassing that of other participants, for everyone knew that once the round began, he would become the very first target of his many enemies who aimed to destroy him!

“The round begins!” shouted Xiao Wenyan, his voice echoing in the whole field.

Almost simultaneously, the participants scattered in different regions of Absolute Sunder Battlefield felt their sealed cultivation come back, which let them know that the competition had begun!

In the canyon, Lin Xun immediately opened his eyes, waking from meditation. He rose to his feet and scanned the surroundings. His moon-white clothes then fluttered as an overwhelming killing intent surged out from his core.

He made no attempt to conceal any of his aura, instead even striding out of the canyon with his hands crossed behind his back. He walked out in the open with confidence!

In the past many years, he had been hunted down by numerous hostile factions and slandered as a remnant of Fangchun Mountain. He had been forced to hide his tracks, suppress his killing intent, and act with discretion wherever he went.

Even in front of Absolute Sunder Sword Palace earlier, he and his senior sister had been repeatedly provoked and mocked by those hostile forces.

However, from this moment on, at the territory of the Origin Sect Ancestral Court, in this Absolute Sunder Battlefield, he would no longer dim his light and bide his time like he had done before!