

Prodigies 2711

Chapter 2711 Kick Him While He Was Down

With Chao Zonglin's cultivation, even if caught off guard, it should have been impossible for him not to fail to react in time. Of course, the truth was, he had never imagined that Lin Xun would dare to act so brazenly inside the Heavenly Treasure Hall.

At first, panic and fury flashed in his eyes, but he quickly steadied himself and sneered coldly, "Junior Brother Lin Xun, anyone who dares to resort to violence within the Heavenly Treasure Hall will be punished... Three years of allowance deducted, thirty strokes of the Divine Staff of Law and Punishment, and one year in the Prison of Repentance!"

Even though Lin Xun's grip was crushing his neck, he still managed to look at him with a mix of pity and ridicule. Three years' allowance amounted to thirty six thousand pounds of immortal divine essence!

In addition, the so-called thirty cane strikes were no ordinary punishment either. Law enforcement disciples of Origin Sky Pavilion would be dispatched to administer them publicly with the Divine Staff of Law and Punishment.

Regardless of one's cultivation, every strike from that staff inflicted unbearable agony. Thirty blows would leave even the toughest cultivator wishing for death. However, what was worse than the physical pain was the humiliation. Being flogged in full view of the successors of the nine peaks, that strike to one's dignity was the deadliest.

As for the Prison of Repentance, it was said to be a place loathed by gods and shunned by ghosts. To be confined within was like being cast into endless darkness, cut off from even the faintest trace of the great dao.

No matter how unshakable one's dao heart was, a year of torment in that prison would reduce them to a state worse than living or dead. Inside the Heavenly Treasure Hall, many had already noticed Lin Xun's actions. When they saw him seize Chao Zonglin, the crowd immediately stirred.

"He actually dared to strike?"

“Lin Xun is far too reckless. Even if he was furious, he should have challenged him in the Heaven’s Judgment Arena.”

“He’s new here, after all. Perhaps he doesn’t yet understand how harsh the punishments are for breaking the rules.”

Voices rose in heated discussion...some sighed, some pitied him, and others gloated openly.

This only fueled Chao Zonglin’s arrogance. Smiling radiantly, he declared, “Junior Brother, you’re finished.”

“You broke the rules first,” Lin Xun replied coldly. “So the one to be punished...should be you.” His palm lashed out.

Chao Zonglin’s head buzzed as stars danced before his eyes. His cheeks flushed red and swollen, blood dripped from his nose and mouth, and his smug grin twisted into shock and rage.

“You dare strike me? That’s an even graver offense!” he howled.

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Lin Xun struck Chao Zonglin with another slap, knocking his teeth loose and swelling his head like a pig’s as a pained scream tore from his throat. Gasps rippled through the hall. People exchanged shocked glances, eyes wide with disbelief. Is Lin Xun smashing the pot now that it is cracked? Acting reckless with nothing to lose?

“If Chao Zonglin really violated the rules first, then by the sect’s laws Lin Xun won’t be punished for this,” someone analyzed.

“However, who can prove it? Besides, plenty of influential figures already dislike Lin Xun. Since Chao Zonglin dared to provoke him so openly, he must have made preparations.” Another’s eyes glinted coldly.

“What are you doing?!”

At that moment, Lin Xun dragged the battered Chao Zonglin out of the hall.

“Senior and junior brothers, help me! Capture this lawless bastard!” Chao Zonglin shrieked in panic

“Lin Xun, you’ve already broken the rules! Stop immediately! Put Senior Brother Chao Zonglin down at once!” A thunderous voice rang out as a tall, imposing man in silver robes stepped forward to block Lin Xun’s path.

Lin Xun, however, remained calm. “This man abused his position to obstruct me from collecting my monthly allowance, a direct violation of the sect’s nineteenth rule. I am taking him to Origin Sky Pavilion for judgement. Anyone who dares to stand in my way will be treated as his accomplice, so don’t blame me for being merciless!”

His words echoed through the hall, leaving everyone stunned. Chao Zonglin angrily shouted, “You’re talking nonsense! How can you prove that I abused my position? How have I broken any rules?”

PA!

Lin Xun slapped him again, “You know the truth yourself. Since you’ve chosen to be someone else’s cannon fodder, you better be prepared for it.”

Everyone exchanged uncertain, bewildered looks. Lin Xun was simply too unyielding! Rules were rigid, but people were not. If Chao Zonglin really had someone backing him, would you ever have the chance to defend yourself?

“Move!”

Lin Xun’s eyes turned cold as he stared straight at the silver-robed man blocking the path ahead. That single look made the man’s heart seize with dread, and the oppressive aura forced him to subconsciously step aside.

Just as Lin Xun was about to drag Chao Zonglin out of Heavenly Treasure Hall...

“Ridiculous!”

A deep and solemn voice boomed through the hall. “Someone who just joined the sect dares to run wild on Origin Emptiness Pavilion’s territory? Such brazen defiance...outrageous!”

An old man with a pointed goatee, clad in purple robes, suddenly appeared out of thin air. A terrifying aura of immortality radiated from him.

“Deacon Xu Wen!”

The hall instantly fell silent. Not a sound could be heard as everyone recognized the old man. He was Xu Wen, one of Origin Emptiness Pavilion’s deacons, and a formidable immortal. The moment he appeared, his gaze locked onto Lin Xun, and he thundered, “Release him at once!”

Despite that, Lin Xun remained calm as ever. “Senior, before right and wrong are made clear, you want me to let this man go? Isn’t that a little too hasty?”

Xu Wen’s expression darkened. “Wretch! You committed violence in Heavenly Treasure Hall before everyone’s eyes. What is there left to argue? Since you stubbornly refuse to repent, I’ll personally take you to Origin Sky Pavilion!”

Boom!

As he spoke, he struck out to seize Lin Xun. Immortal laws surged forth, condensing into a massive hand that pressed down with suffocating force, leaving many in the hall gasping for breath.

It was clear to everyone that if Xu Wen captured Lin Xun, he would have no chance to turn the tables! The most chilling part was that Xu Wen had no intention of even hearing Lin Xun’s side. He moved directly, clearly not planning to give Lin Xun any chance to struggle or resist.

However, Lin Xun didn't flinch. He simply held Chao Zonglin in front of him like a shield. Xu Wen's massive palm froze in midair. If he struck, even if Lin Xun couldn't escape capture, the first to be obliterated would undoubtedly be Chao Zonglin.

"Despicable! How dare you use the life of a fellow disciple as a shield? This is simply unforgivable!" Xu Wen's face twisted with fury and his aura surged, heavier and more terrifying than before.

Lin Xun refused to back down and sneered coldly, "Old man, I'm a true disciple of the Ninth Peak, yet you keep calling me 'wretch.' Who gave you the audacity to insult me like this?"

Gasps rippled through the hall. In all these years, no one had ever dared to confront a great deacon of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion so boldly!

Unbelievable.

In truth, disputes within the Origin Sect rarely escalated to this degree. Clearly, all of this turmoil was aimed squarely at Lin Xun.

Xu Wen laughed in anger, "Hah! You harmed others, showed no remorse, and still dare to speak with such defiance. This is the Origin Sect, not a place for you to run wild!"

As his words fell, his terrifying might radiated outward, vast and unstoppable, surging toward Lin Xun like a mountain collapsing or a tidal wave, seeking to utterly crush him beneath immortal power.

However, who would have thought that Lin Xun would once again place Chao Zonglin in front of him and use him as a human shield?

Xu Wen's face darkened with fury. He had seen shamelessness before, but never anything like this! Helplessly, he could do nothing but restrain himself. After all, one must be careful not to destroy the vessel while trying to kill the rat.

"You're right. This is the Origin Sect. Even an elder cannot act recklessly and trample the rules," Lin Xun said calmly.

“Lin Xun, let him go at once!”

A cold, majestic voice rang out from beyond the hall. Then, a familiar figure stepped inside. It was Zheng Qian, the Ninth Peak’s elder in charge of law and punishment!

Lin Xun’s eyes narrowed. “Elder Zheng, you’ve come at just the right time. Earlier, I only came to collect my monthly allowance, but this scoundrel went out of his way to make things difficult for me and...”

Before he could finish, Zheng Qian cut him off impatiently, snapping, “I told you to let him go at once!”

Lin Xun’s heart sank, the warmth in his eyes gradually fading into a cold, chilling glare. “Your own disciple of the Ninth Peak is being bullied, yet you, Zheng Qian, as an elder, not only refuse to step in, but even side with outsiders to oppress your own... Isn’t that a bit disgraceful?”

Three days ago at the banquet, Zheng Qian had already revealed his disdain and hostility toward Lin Xun, speaking with utter rudeness. At the time, Lin Xun felt displeased but he saw no need to make an issue of it.

Now, it seemed Zheng Qian could already be counted as an ‘enemy’! Perhaps, just as Ye Chunjun had said, Zheng Qian was most likely trying to use him as a means to earn merit in hopes of securing a position as a deacon in the Origin Sky Pavilion!

“Absurd! I am acting impartially. Before the sect’s rules, I would never shield someone like you who refuses to admit his mistakes or repent!”

Zheng Qian’s expression darkened. The atmosphere in the Heavenly Treasure Hall grew increasingly oppressive and tense. Many successors nearby exchanged uneasy glances, realizing the situation was spiraling out of control, and Lin Xun’s position was becoming increasingly perilous.

“Act impartially? Fine, then let’s go to the Origin Sky Pavilion together and let the entire sect witness just how ‘impartial’ you are?” Lin Xun sneered coldly.

He wasn't afraid of escalating this matter. On the contrary, the bigger the storm, the better. Long before entering the Origin Sect, Xiao Wenyuan had warned him that there were plenty here who despised him, but also many who supported him. Lin Xun was curious to see if he stirred the waters enough, whether the hidden powers in the shadows would be forced to reveal themselves!

Zheng Qian faltered, hesitation flickering across his face. However, Xu Wen spoke coldly, "Why not? Let's head to the Origin Sky Pavilion now!"

He appeared very calm. From his attitude, it was obvious to everyone that even if they went to the Origin Sky Pavilion, the situation was bound to be unfavorable to Lin Xun...

One could even say that within the Origin Sky Pavilion, there were inevitably forces hostile toward him!

"Lin Xun, are you satisfied now? What was originally a trivial matter, you've turned into such a mess. Let's see how you clean it up!" Zheng Qian snorted coldly, his gaze frosty.

"Heh, how unfortunate for the Ninth Peak to have an elder like you." Lin Xun laughed lightly.

Compared to his enemies, what he hated even more was Zheng Qian, an elder of the Ninth Peak, who chose to kick him while he was down.

With that, Lin Xun no longer spared Zheng Qian a glance. Grabbing hold of Chao Zonglin, he strode straight out of the Heavenly Treasure Hall.

Chapter 2712 Unending Turmoil

Xu Wen made no move to stop him. His eyes were ice-cold, laced with faint pity. The Origin Sky Pavilion oversees all enforcement of rules and punishment and holds immense authority, yet this kid actually believes that going there will spare him from danger?

Before Lin Xun could leave, he was stopped once more. Outside the hall stood a white-haired man in a green robe, his posture calm and his eyes carrying the weight of endless years.

"Since this incident occurred within the Origin Emptiness Pavilion," the man said calmly, his voice resonant like morning bells and evening drums, "there is no need to alarm the Origin Sky Pavilion."

“Elder Jiang Ye!”

Gasps rang out from within the Heavenly Treasure Hall. Everyone instantly recognized the man. Jiang Ye was one of the most legendary elders of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion. His cultivation was unfathomable and his strength beyond measure. For countless years, he had guarded Scripture Mountain and was known as the right-hand man of Deputy Pavilion Master Dugu Yong!

“How should this matter be resolved then?” Lin Xun asked.

Jiang Ye replied calmly, “According to the rules.”

As he spoke, his gaze shifted to Chao Zonglin, still captured in Lin Xun’s hands. “Do you admit your guilt?”

Chao Zonglin had been beaten tragically by Lin Xun, and his heart burned with rage. All along he had been imagining how he would vent that fury once they reached the Origin Sky Pavilion. Despite that, before Jiang Ye’s calm, ageless eyes, all his anger froze into ice. A shudder ran through him, and he cried out, “Elder, you saw it yourself. It was Lin Xun who struck first!”

At this moment, Xu Wen stepped forward, cupping his fists. “Brother Jiang, I saw everything with my own eyes. It was indeed Lin Xun who started the fight, behaving outrageously with no regard for the rules.”

However, Xu Wen was only a deacon. Jiang Ye was an elder! Ignoring Xu Wen entirely, Jiang Ye’s gaze remained fixed on Chao Zonglin. His voice was calm, yet sharp as a sword piercing the heart, “I will ask you one last time. Do you admit your guilt?”

Chao Zonglin’s face went pale. His eyes darted instinctively toward Xu Wen.

Xu Wen said coldly, “Why look at me? If you were in the wrong, then admit it. If not, then stand firm! The sect will naturally uphold justice!”

Chao Zonglin drew a deep breath, gritted his teeth, and said, "Elder Jiang, I have not broken any sect rules. I truly don't know what crime I am guilty of. But Lin Xun..."

Before he could finish, Jiang Ye cut him off, "Bring him away. Escort Chao Zonglin to Origin Sky Pavilion and hand him over to Deacon Tao Leng for interrogation."

At once, a tall, broad-shouldered man entered from outside the hall. His expression was cold and stern. Another stir of commotion rippled through the hall. It was none other than Elder Jiang Ye's closed-door disciple Wei Fang! He was also a peerless figure, having only stepped into the Immortal Stage less than a thousand years ago.

Long ago, Wei Fang, as a core successor of the First Peak, was personally chosen by Jiang Ye and brought to the Origin Emptiness Pavilion to cultivate. In under a thousand years, he smoothly broke through and stepped into the Immortal Stage!

"Junior Brother Lin Xun, please hand him over," Wei Fang said in a deep, steady voice.

Sensing the shift in the situation, Lin Xun didn't hesitate. He handed Chao Zonglin over and said, "Thank you, Senior Brother."

Wei Fang gave a nod, seized Chao Zonglin, and strode away.

"Lord Xu Wen, you must speak for me!" Chao Zonglin's desperate cries echoed back. However, his voice soon faded into the distance.

Silence fell upon the Heavenly Treasure Hall. Everyone could see that with Jiang Ye's arrival, the balance of the situation had completely shifted!

"Elder Jiang, Chao Zonglin is a disciple of our Origin Emptiness Pavilion, and he was also a core successor of the Second Peak. Was it not too hasty to simply hand him over to Origin Sky Pavilion?"

Jiang Ye looked at Xu Wen. "If he has done no wrong, he will return safely. Or do you not trust the Origin Sky Pavilion?"

Xu Wen's expression stiffened, but he quickly pointed at Lin Xun instead. "Then what about this boy?"

"Come," Jiang Ye said. "Give Lin Xun his monthly allowance."

A figure immediately came over and presented a storage pouch to Lin Xun. Xu Wen's face flushed red with rage, nearly coughing blood. Lin Xun had used violence in the Heavenly Treasure Hall, but instead of being punished, he was actually rewarded with his allowance?

It's obvious that Elder Jiang Ye has no intention of disciplining Lin Xun!

Taking a deep breath, Xu Wen said coldly, "Elder Jiang, Chao Zonglin is a disciple of our Origin Emptiness Pavilion, yet you personally handed him over to the Origin Sky Pavilion. But Lin Xun is merely a newcomer who has just entered the sect, and yet you shield him so blatantly. If word of this spreads, it will surely cause considerable dissatisfaction."

Jiang Ye said, "Are you dissatisfied as well?"

He remained calm throughout, yet his bearing was incomparably forceful.

Xu Wen's expression shifted. "I just think it's unfair."

Jiang Ye said indifferently, "If you're not convinced, you may go to the Origin Sky Pavilion and lodge a complaint against me. Have them come and speak with me directly."

At this, Xu Wen understood that Jiang Ye was firmly set on protecting Lin Xun. He could only suppress his frustration and say coldly, "Elder Jiang, if you insist on handling things this way, it will surely stir up considerable dissatisfaction."

With that, he turned and left. Jiang Ye remained completely unbothered, his expression calm and unchanged throughout. He then looked at Lin Xun. "When you collect your monthly allowance in the future, no one will dare to make things difficult for you. You may leave now."

“Elder, I am deeply grateful that you righteously stepped in and helped me clear my name.” Lin Xun bowed deeply.

Jiang Ye gave a small nod, saying nothing further. Lin Xun did not linger and turned to leave. From beginning to end, he never once looked at Zheng Qian again.

At this moment, Zheng Qian’s face was stiff with humiliation, his heart in turmoil. He could only watch helplessly as Lin Xun escaped danger and left with ease. It felt like being struck heavily in the chest, leaving him stifled and suffocated.

“As an elder of the Ninth Peak, he actually acted like this...sigh, what an eye-opener today.”

Murmurs of discussion spread through the Heavenly Treasure Hall. Zheng Qian felt a wave of discomfort, then, with an angry flick of his sleeve, he stormed out. Inwardly, he swore that next time he would seize the opportunity to utterly crush Lin Xun.

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Origin Emptiness Mountain, Little Pavilion Retreat. This was the cultivation residence of Deputy Pavilion Master Dugu Yong.

“Lord, the matter has been taken care of.” Jiang Ye appeared and reported calmly.

Seated beneath a pine tree, gazing at the rolling sea of clouds, Dugu Yong gave a slight nod. “I troubled you to make this trip.”

Jiang Ye hesitated, then said, “Lord, I fear the way we dealt with Chao Zonglin today may provoke Deputy Pavilion Master Fei Peng’s displeasure. After all, it was he who personally recruited Chao Zonglin into the Origin Emptiness Pavilion.”

Dugu Yong's expression remained calm. "No need to worry. We only acted in accordance with the rules. If Chao Zonglin is willing to be someone else's cannon fodder, then he must also be prepared to pay the price. As for Deputy Pavilion Master Fei Peng...no need to worry."

Jiang Ye nodded and quickly departed.

"Granduncle, thank you." Dugu Youran appeared, clad in a long pale-blue dress. Her slender waist graceful, and her whole being shrouded in an aura of elegance. Her beautiful face was exquisite beyond comparison.

Today, she had also come to collect her monthly allowance, and to pay a visit to Dugu Yong, the granduncle who doted on her most. Who would have thought that while the two were talking, the commotion in the Heavenly Treasure Hall would alarm Dugu Yong, and in turn let Dugu Youran witness the scenes of Lin Xun being bullied.

Dugu Yong smiled warmly, rubbing Dugu Youran's head with affection. "Even if you hadn't asked me, I would never have allowed such a thing to happen in the Origin Emptiness Pavilion."

Dugu Youran nodded.

Dugu Yong's voice grew gentle. "Youran, now that you've entered the Origin Sect, you should focus on your cultivation. With your granduncle here, I won't let you suffer any injustice here. However, you must keep your distance from that boy Lin Xun."

Dugu Youran was taken aback. "Why?"

"Even before he set foot in the Origin Sect, undercurrents were already surging here. The reason lies in his unique identity. He is not only a successor of Fangchun Mountain, but he also possesses the innate talent of the Grand Abyss Heaven Devourer."

Dugu Yong gazed out at the distant sea of clouds, his voice deep and low. "Just for these reasons alone, those old fellows in the Origin Sect from the Ten Immortal Giants will never sit idly by."

“But at the same time, there are others who hope Lin Xun’s arrival will disrupt the balance within the sect, using the turmoil he brings to purge the sect of its deep-seated maladies. In such circumstances, Lin Xun’s every move will be watched, and the slightest misstep could spark a storm.

“Take today, for example. If I hadn’t intervened, he would have been dragged to the Origin Sky Pavilion. Although the Origin Sky Pavilion is tasked with enforcing the sect’s laws, it is rife with factions, and many who already harbor deep hatred toward Lin Xun. If he went there, he would have been condemned to a grave crime without question.”

He mused softly, “Of course, there are also many who don’t want to see him punished, and they would definitely step forward to intervene. But if that happens, it would only make the turmoil grow worse. If it can no longer be contained, then a great upheaval may erupt within the Origin Sect!”

Dugu Youran’s heart pounded in alarm. Only then did she realize how precarious Lin Xun’s situation was!

“Now that the matter has been suppressed and settled within the Origin Emptiness Pavilion, it may leave some dissatisfied, but it will not provoke too great an upheaval. And that, at least, is enough,” Dugu Yong said softly.

“Granduncle, I want to go and visit Lin Xun,” Dugu Youran said softly.

Dugu Yong shook his head. “I’m not telling you to cut ties with him completely, but for your own good, you should limit your contact. Otherwise, you too may be targeted as well and dragged into the turmoil.”

After a pause, he said with a teasing smile, “Besides, even if you’re worried about him, what could you possibly do to help as a new disciple?”

Dugu Youran gave a playful blink and said, “But don’t I still have my Granduncle?”

Dugu Yong was speechless for a moment, then spoke gravely, “Youran, the situation in the Origin Sect is tangled and unclear. I cannot afford to wade into these muddy waters too early. Do you understand?”

Dugu Youran let out a faint sigh, a little dispirited. "I once thought the Origin Sect Ancestral Court was a pure land beyond the mortal world, a place where I could cultivate in peace and freedom. Who would have thought...it's no different from the outside world?"

"The path of the great dao has always been like this." Dugu Yong sighed. "And besides, within a hundred years, the position of the Origin Clarity Pavilion Master will become vacant. Who...could possibly remain unmoved?"

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Origin Sky Pavilion.

Deacon Tao Leng fixed Chao Zonglin with a calm stare that made his scalp tingle and filled him with unease. Within the Origin Sky Pavilion, Tao Leng had long carried a fearsome reputation. Cold-hearted and iron-blooded, he had personally dealt with countless disciples who violated sect rules over the years.

Every single one of them had met a miserable end. How could Chao Zonglin not be terrified? After a long silence, Tao Leng finally uttered a single line, "To let yourself be used as another's weapon...Fool."

Chapter 2713 Domineering

Chao Zonglin's voice trembled slightly. "Elder Tao Leng, I never meant to make things difficult for you. It's really..."

Tao Leng cut him off coldly, "If explanations were of any use, what need would there be for the Origin Sky Pavilion?"

He turned his palm, and a jade slip flew out, releasing a cascade of scenes. It displayed everything that had happened since Lin Xun entered the Heavenly Treasure Hall, even the voices and sounds.

"This jade slip was given to me by Wei Fang, disciple of your Origin Emptiness Pavilion Elder Jiang Ye. Now, do you still wish to refute it?" Tao Leng's voice was ice-cold.

Chao Zonglin's face was drained of color. He stammered, "Elder Tao Leng, you were right. I was used as a pawn. The true blame does not lie with me."

Tao Leng's gaze sharpened. "Even a pawn must have the awareness of a pawn. If you were to reveal those behind you, I'll be frank...I do not have the authority to touch them. But then tell me, how would you ever gain a foothold in this sect again?"

Chao Zonglin froze, as though plunged into an icy abyss. His face turned grim. "Elder Tao Leng, I accept the punishment."

Expressionless, Tao Leng said, "Just wait. You are, after all, a successor of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion, with the potential to step into immortality. Your standing is higher than that of core disciples of the nine peaks. In my view, someone will surely come to plead on your behalf before long."

In Tao Leng's view, despite being a supreme Emperor Ancestor, Chao Zonglin was far too naive in the ways of human schemes and struggles. After all, the ones who had pushed him from behind were all lofty figures. So what if he was a disciple of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion?

In their eyes, he was nothing more than a disposable pawn. Too disinterested to press or intimidate Chao Zonglin further, Tao Leng simply waited, curious to see who would step forward to defend Chao Zonglin.

Time trickled by. After a long while, a mellow voice sounded from outside the hall. "Brother Tao Leng, are you still here?"

"Come in." Tao Leng said lightly, though a gleam flickered in his eyes.

The hall door swung open, and a slender young man with skin as fair and lustrous as a beautiful woman's walked in. He was dressed in crimson robes, his eyes were long and narrow, and the faint creases at the corners carried the weight of years.

He was Cao Beidou, an elder of the Origin Sky Pavilion.

“Did Deputy Pavilion Master Fu Wenli send you here?” Tao Leng asked indifferently, cupping his hands.

Cao Beidou was a loyal follower of Deputy Pavilion Master Fu Wenli, who hailed from the Fu Clan, one of the Ten Immortal Giants.

Cao Beidou narrowed his eyes slightly and smiled. “Deacon Tao Leng, I just came to take a look. What does this have to do with the deputy pavilion master?”

Tao Leng hummed in acknowledgement, then asked. “Then how does Elder Cao view this matter?”

“Chao Zonglin should indeed be punished, but not too harshly. After all, he is a disciple of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion. Also he was personally chosen by Deputy Pavilion Master Fei Peng. What happened this time is hardly a grave offense. In my opinion, a deduction of three months’ allowance will suffice,” Cao Beidou said casually.

Chao Zonglin’s face lit up. “Many thanks for your magnanimity, Elder Cao!”

Tao Leng had already anticipated this and showed no surprise. He was about to speak when...

A figure suddenly stormed in from outside, voice booming, “What do you mean by only deduct three months’ allowance? Isn’t that nothing but brushing things under the rug? As long as I’m here, I won’t let this matter be swept aside!”

The man wore plain hemp robes and his handsome face was twisted with brazen arrogance.

“Who are you? How dare you storm into here? Do you not know the rules?” Cao Beidou’s face darkened in anger.

“I am upholding the rules,” the youth in hemp robes gave a cold snort. “That’s exactly why I can’t let the likes of you to trample on them!”

He jabbed a finger at Chao Zonglin. "Trash like him must be punished harshly, otherwise how can the entire Origin Sect be convinced?"

"Insolence!"

A cold light flashed in Cao Beidou's eyes as fury welled up. This youth clearly has the cultivation of a supreme Emperor Ancestor, but his face is unfamiliar. Clearly, he's not from the Origin Sky Pavilion.

And yet he had the audacity to barge in and spew such presumptuous nonsense? He's utterly arrogant and domineering!

Beside him, Tao Leng wore a strange expression and reminded, "Elder Cao, this is Xuan Jiuyin, the great grandson of Deputy Pavilion Master Xuan Feiling. He was brought into the sect just a month ago and now serves as Deputy Pavilion Master Xuan's dao attendant."

Xuan Feiling's great grandson!

Cao Beidou's expression stiffened. "Just a dao attendant who snuck into the Origin Sect through the backdoor. Even if he's the great grandson of Deputy Pavilion Master Xuan, he has no right to behave so unruly."

Xuan Jiuyin rolled his eyes. "Old man, you go on about rules with every breath, so let's talk about rules! Why did you let this person off so easily? Give me a good reason, or I'll go ask my great grandfather how the Origin Sect's rules are actually enforced!"

Cao Beidou was an Immortal who had long since stepped into the Nirvana Spirit Stage. In recent years, rumors said he was preparing to break through to the Transcendence Realm. As an elder of the Origin Sky Pavilion, he wielded great authority. When had he ever been threatened like this by a mere supreme Emperor Ancestor?

His handsome face sank into shadow as he snapped, "Aren't you ashamed of flaunting your great grandfather's name to act arrogantly?"

"I have my great-grandfather's support, why should I be ashamed?" Xuan Jiuyin replied with utter confidence.

Tao Leng's lips twitched. This kid's brazenness is truly something else.

Those words finally made Cao Beidou lose control. His voice was ice-cold, "Your great grandfather's reputation will one day be ruined by an unfilial descendant like you!"

"You don't need to worry about that," Xuan Jiuyin said lightly.

Cao Beidou's fury spiked. In the entire Origin Sect Ancestral Court, who else dared to be this arrogant, this shameless? In the end, he suppressed his wrath.

"Deacon Tao Leng, you will handle this matter!" He declared coldly, then turned and strode out. He knew if he stayed any longer, he might not be able to stop himself from striking Xuan Jiuyin.

Meanwhile, Xuan Jiuyin clapped Tao Leng's shoulder with a carefree smile. "Deacon Tao Leng, just handle things as you see fit. Don't feel pressured. If anything happens, I'll cover for you."

It was laughable. Tao Leng might be a deacon, but he was a veteran of the Nirvana Spirit Realm known for his cold-temper and iron-blooded means. His fearsome reputation made people tremble at the mere mention of his name.

Tao Leng could only stare in bemused disbelief. How could such a domineering boy exist in this world? Well...with such a powerful great grandfather backing him, perhaps it shouldn't be surprising...

Witnessing all this, Chao Zonglin, standing not far away, went deathly pale. His heart plummeted.

It's over!

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Profound Sky Mountain.

Wild Cloud Abode.

This was the cultivation abode of Deputy Pavilion Master Xuan Feiling. Upon returning, the previously arrogant and overbearing Xuan Jiuyin sneaked toward his quarters like a thief.

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A sharp slap landed the back of his head, sending him staggering forward, nearly face-planting on the ground. Gritting his teeth against the pain, he hissed, "Great Grandfather, could you maybe hit a little gentler next time?"

"How does it feel to be so arrogant?" A light, airy voice drifted through the void.

"Feels great." Xuan Jiuyin chuckled with a shameless grin.

"Good-for-nothing! If you could be like Lin Xun, and enter the Origin Sect on your own strength, I'd gladly call you Great Grandfather!"

"Don't. If you really called me that, I'd lose years off my life."

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Xuan Jiuyin received another slap to the back of his head. He sighed and muttered, "Great Grandfather, was I wrong before? It's obvious they're targeting Lin Xun because he has no one to back him up."

"As long as Lin Xun abides by the rules, no one in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court can touch him. But you...from this day on, you are not allowed to take a single step outside Wild Cloud Abode!"

Xuan Jiuyin froze, then wailed, "Great Grandfather, how long are you planning to keep me locked up?"

"That depends on my mood."

"..." Xuan Jiuyin was dumbfounded. Depends on the mood? Is that even allowed?!

"Brother Xuan, how is my young master?" From the distance came a graceful figure, her robes whiter than snow and a golden belt cinching at her slender waist. She looked like a moon palace fairy gracing the mortal world. It was none other than Jintian Xuanyue.

"Far better than me." Xuan Jiuyin said with a long sigh, already despairing at the thought of his future confinement.

"That's good."

A radiant smile blossomed on Jintian Xuanyue's beautiful face, brimming with heartfelt relief.

"Silly girl, are you not going to let him know that you're here?" Xuan Jiuyin asked.

Jintian Xuanyue shook her head, her expression serene. "As long as I know the young master is safe, that's enough. I dare not ask for more."

Xuan Jiuyin's heart surged with a mix of pity and anger. "Don't worry, sooner or later, I'll make Lin Xun beg to have you by his side!"

Jintian Xuanyue smiled, unbothered. Over the years, Xuan Jiuyin had made such declarations more than once, and she truly no longer gave them any thought.

.....

On the way back to the Ninth Peak, Lin Xun's thoughts lingered on what had just happened. He was certain this was an attack from the enemy. Even if he managed to withstand it this time, there would undoubtedly be more and more such troubles and provocations in the future.

In other words, they would stop at nothing to 'find fault' with him, using it as an excuse to attack and retaliate. Even if he endured it once, there would be a second time, a third time...until they finally found a weakness and crushed him completely!

Therefore, Lin Xun did not hold back. He recalled Xiao Wenyuan's words: Follow the rules!

Even if others tried to 'find faults' with him in the future, he would never tolerate it. Of course, he would not act recklessly or do anything foolish that broke the rules and gave them an excuse to punish him.

Lin Xun knew full well that rules were ultimately meaningless. If Jiang Ye hadn't intervened this time, even if he had gone to the Origin Sky Pavilion, he certainly would not have received fair treatment. Unfortunately, given his current identity and circumstances, he had no choice but to rely on those same rules, because for him now, they were an invisible talisman of protection!

I only went to collect my monthly allowance, and they still tried to make things difficult for me. Those enemies are insane...

When he returned to the Ninth Peak and entered his own abode, Lin Xun drew a long breath, forcing away all distracting thoughts. At present, he lacked the strength to retaliate. His top priority was to firmly establish himself in the Origin Sect as quickly as possible and steadily transform both his cultivation and his status.

That very day, news came from the Origin Sky Pavilion. Chao Zonglin, a disciple of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion, had been found guilty of abusing his position by unlawfully withholding the monthly allowance of Lin Xun, a true disciple of the Ninth Peak.

Chao Zonglin was fined three years' worth of allowance, given thirty strikes with the Divine Staff of Law and Punishment, and imprisoned in the Prison of Repentance for one year! As the news spread like wildfire, the three pavilions and nine peaks were shaken, sparking countless exclamations and heated discussions.

Chapter 2714 Enrollment

In the Origin Sect Ancestral Court, it was very rare for disciples to be punished. After all, it was a transcendent force, and even its true disciples were all supreme Emperor Ancestors who had cultivated

for countless years. Who would be foolish enough to deliberately violate the rules and invite needless trouble upon themselves?

Thus, when news of Chao Zonglin's punishment broke, it sent shockwaves through the sect. Those who knew the inside story, however, immediately sensed a deeper undercurrent. Some wished to suppress Lin Xun, while others were determined to protect him!

On the surface, it appeared as though Chao Zonglin had simply suffered a setback in his conflict with Lin Xun. In truth, it was a clash between the great powers lurking behind the scenes. Now, in this first exchange, those who tried to target Lin Xun had clearly been the ones that suffered a defeat!

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Meanwhile, within his own abode, Lin Xun was immersed in studying the immortal divine essence. This was a thick, liquid-like substance, murky in color, yet brimming with a pure and potent immortal aura. It was a precious, indispensable material for immortals to advance their cultivation.

For supreme Emperor Ancestors, such a treasure could already be counted among the rarest treasures of the great dao. Its benefits in cultivation were far superior to refining primal chaos aeth qi. Normally, it might take six hours to reach one's peak cultivation state. With immortal divine essence, that same result could be achieved in just half an hour.

For a supreme Emperor Ancestor, refining immortal divine essence was akin to bathing in immortal power itself. Their cultivation, body, and spirit would all reap immense benefits from it. It was even said that tempering one's foundation at the supreme Emperor Ancestor Stage using immortal divine essence increased one's chances of breaking through to the Immortal realm by as much as ten percent!

This was the true, unparalleled value of immortal divine essence. Lin Xun attempted to refine it, and within moments he experienced its astonishing wonders. He could not help but feel a deep sense of awe.

"One thousand pounds of immortal divine essence per month," he calculated. "The average supreme Emperor Ancestor can refine about thirty pounds a day. A thousand pounds is just enough to sustain a month's cultivation..."

“With my current cultivation, I can refine about a hundred pounds a day, which means a thousand pounds would only last me ten days. It seems I must become a core disciple as soon as possible.”

Core disciples were allotted two thousand pounds of immortal divine essence each month, twice as much as true disciples.

However, even two thousand pounds was not enough to sustain Lin Xun’s needs for a full month of cultivation. Therefore, he planned to begin taking on sect missions once he became a core disciple!

The merits earned could be exchanged for even more immortal divine essence. Lin Xun had not forgotten that one of the requirements to enter the Scripture Mountain and consult the immortal legacy was to complete three nine-star missions!

As night fell, Ye Chunjun came to visit.

“Brother Lin, I heard you provoked Elder Zheng Qian?” Ye Chunjun got straight to the point.

Lin Xun shook his head. “I didn’t provoke him, he was the one who jumped out to target me first. That old fellow’s a real piece of work. Back in the Heavenly Treasure Hall, he even sided with Xu Wen, a deacon of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion, to suppress me.”

A thought struck him and his eyes narrowed. “Brother Ye, don’t tell me that old fox is stirring up trouble again?”

Ye Chunjun smiled bitterly. “You guessed it. As soon as Elder Zheng Qian returned, he ran straight to the peak master to complain, claiming you’re disrespectful to your elders and reckless in your conduct. He even said that keeping you on the Ninth Peak would only bring chaos and trouble sooner or later.”

A cold gleam flashed in Lin Xun’s eyes. “He’s an immortal figure, yet he’s so petty and shameless. Truly despicable! What did the peak master say?”

Ye Chunjun replied, “The peak master only said that the Origin Sky Pavilion has already ruled on the matter. Brother Lin, you were not at fault. But it’s clear that Elder Zheng Qian won’t let this go so easily.”

Lin Xun asked casually, "Brother Ye, is there any way to punish an elder like Zheng Qian within the Origin Sect?"

The question caught Ye Chunjun off guard. "Brother Lin, please don't act rashly. Elder Zheng Qian is an Immortal with great authority. Even the peak master can at most reprimand him, but expelling him from the Ninth Peak is out of the question. You've only just entered the sect, it would be unwise to confront Elder Zheng Qian now."

Lin Xun chuckled, "I was only asking. Do you really think I'd be so foolish as to pick a fight with him right now?"

Ye Chunjun exhaled in relief. "Good. In any case, with your foundation and strength, it's only a matter of time before you become a core disciple. Once you do, you'll be eligible to take part in the Nine Peaks Dao Contest..."

"Oh right, thirteen years from now, the once-a-millennium Nine Peaks Dao Contest will be held. Brother Lin, you'll easily reach core disciple status within ten years, and in another three years you'll be able to enter the Nine Peaks Dao Contest."

"As long as you rank within the top ten, the sect will give you special training and provide boundless cultivation resources to aid your pursuit of the immortal dao."

Ye Chunjun couldn't help but chuckle, "With your combat prowess, you'll surely bring glory to our Ninth Peak at the Nine Peak Dao Contest in thirteen years!"

Lin Xun had no interest in the Nine Peaks Dao Contest nor in waiting a decade to become a core disciple.

"Brother Ye, to tell you the truth, I plan to go to the Origin Clarity Pavilion for the assessment," Lin Xun suddenly said.

Ye Chunjun was stunned. "What assessment?"

“The assessment for advancing to core disciple.”

Ye Chunjun gasped. “That path won’t be easy, Brother Lin. With so many enemies, if they find out you’ll be taking the promotion assessment, they’ll surely send their strongest disciples to stop you.”

Lin Xun smiled. “Brother Ye, do you think that concerns me?”

A strange look crossed Ye Chunjun’s face as he remembered Lin Xun’s dazzling performance in the three rounds of the entrance examination, and also the defeat of Li Zhongyuan at Lin Xun’s hands...

The next morning.

Atop Origin Purity Mountain stood the Heavenly Martial Hall. This was where the Origin Sect Ancestral Court held its selections and assessments, overseen by the Origin Clarity Pavilion.

When Lin Xun arrived, the hall was quiet and deserted. In fact, the hall was usually deserted and only came alive during assessments and recruitments.

Of course, deserted did not mean powerless. On the contrary, the Origin Clarity Pavilion wielded immense authority. It oversaw personnel appointments, the advancement and dismissal of the nine peaks’ successors, and even the evaluations of peak masters and elders.

Even those who wished to become a successor of the three pavilions had to pass the selection of the Origin Clarity Pavilion!

“Lin Xun!”

When Lin Xun stepped into the Heavenly Martial Hall, a voice rang out in surprise. It came from a handsome man in white robes, bearing the refined air of a scholar.

He was Chai Jun, a successor of the Origin Clarity Pavilion.

At that moment, Chai Jun was truly astonished. The events that had shaken the Origin Emptiness Pavilion yesterday were still the subject of heated discussion throughout the sect, and now, only a day later, Lin Xun had appeared here in the Origin Clarity Pavilion.

What was he here for?

Lin Xun produced his sect token, handed it over, and bowed slightly. "I wish to take the assessment to be promoted to a core disciple. I would like to ask Senior Brother to help me arrange it."

Chai Jun shot to his feet, staring in disbelief. "Junior Brother, you've only been in the sect for a few days, and you're already thinking about becoming a core successor?"

He forced himself to calm down, then said with a chuckle, "Hey, don't take it the wrong way. It's just that no one has attempted this assessment in a long time. Have you thought it through?"

Lin Xun nodded.

Seeing his calm and steady expression, Chai Jun couldn't help but caution him, "In the past ten thousand years, only one true disciple has successfully passed this assessment. Everyone else who tried...without exception, failed. Junior Brother Lin Xun, are you really sure?"

Lin Xun smiled. "Of course."

Chai Jun fell silent, then said gravely, "Junior Brother, if you fail, you will not be allowed to attempt again for at least a thousand years. Do you understand?"

Lin Xun nodded once more.

Realizing that he would not change his mind, Chai Jun stopped trying to persuade him.

"Junior Brother, please wait here. I will inform the deacon in charge."

Chai Jun hurried away. Not long after, he returned, accompanying a tall man in gray robes whose face was cold and stern.

Chai Jun introduced, "Junior Brother Lin Xun, this is Deacon Zhuang Shiliu. Upon hearing your request, he came personally."

Zhuang Shiliu!

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed. This was an old ancestor of the Zhuang Clan's Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land. How could he possibly forget this name?

"Chai Jun, I'll take it from here," said Zhuang Shiliu.

Once Chai Jun's figure vanished from the hall, Zhuang Shiliu finally spoke, his voice cold. "I've heard plenty about you from my clansmen. Now tell me, Zhuang Xiuwu, whom you and Jun Huan captured, is he dead or alive?"

Lin Xun replied calmly, "Deacon Zhuang, I am here for the assessment. I have no wish to discuss anything else."

Zhuang Shiliu's face darkened, his entire being emanating a suffocating aura. Lin Xun remained unmoved and unfazed. This was the Origin Sect Ancestral Court. Even as a deacon of the Origin Clarity Pavilion and an immortal figure, Zhuang Shiliu dared not act recklessly here.

Seeing Lin Xun's unyielding stance, Zhuang Shiliu forcibly swallowed his rage and said in a low, heavy voice, "Young man, don't think that joining the Origin Sect means you can live without worries!"

"Are you threatening me?" asked Lin Xun.

Zhuang Shiliu gave a cold snort. "There are plenty who want you dead. One more won't make a difference. I'll be watching to see how long a supreme Emperor Ancestor like you can keep jumping around."

Lin Xun sneered, "Don't worry, I'll live just fine. Sooner or later, I'll reclaim the Emerald Bamboo Blessed Land and settle accounts with those ungrateful wretches of the Zhuang Clan one by one."

Zhuang Shiliu's expression grew even darker. He fixed Lin Xun with a long stare before saying coldly, "You want to take the assessment? Fine. Three days from now, come to Origin Purity Mountain. I'll personally preside over it. Just don't make a disgrace of yourself!"

With a flick of his sleeve, he turned to leave.

"Deacon Zhuang, as chief examiner, if you dare to act against the rules, be prepared to follow in Chao Zonglin's footsteps." Lin Xun's voice rang out behind him.

Zhuang Shiliu's figure paused briefly in the distance. With a cold snort, he vanished. That very day, news of Lin Xun asking to take the core disciple assessment in the Origin Clarity Pavilion spread like wildfire, stirring a great uproar across the nine peaks.

Chapter 2715 Storm Gathering at the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena

"He just clashed with Chao Zonglin yesterday, and today this news is already spreading? Isn't Lin Xun making too much noise?"

Many people were stunned, unable to believe what they were hearing. Lin Xun had only been in the Origin Sect for a handful of days, yet in that short time he had already caused one earthshaking incident after another. Chao Zonglin was now punished and locked away in the Prison of Repentance, but clearly, Lin Xun had no intention of stopping there.

"In the past, almost everyone who tried to gain core successor status this way ended in failure. Does Lin Xun really think this assessment will be so easy?"

The true disciples across the nine peaks struggled to remain calm. Some had cultivated for far longer than Lin Xun, with many already training for centuries, yet they were still only true disciples.

Meanwhile, Lin Xun had just arrived and was already striving for core successor status. The contrast was a sharp sting to their pride.

“Granted, he did defeat Senior Brother Li Zhongyuan. He may have a chance. And in the end, it’s just an assessment. Even if he fails, it’s not a devastating loss.”

“Wrong! If it were anyone else with his strength, they might have a chance. But not Lin Xun! Those factions hostile to him will never sit by and let him pass!”

Discussion erupted like wildfire. As for Donghuang Shaowen, Mu Zunwu, and Qi Qingshi, geniuses who entered Origin Sect at the same time as Lin Xun, they couldn’t help but feel complicated emotions.

They had to admit Lin Xun was frighteningly strong. However, never did they expect that so soon after entering, he would already dare to challenge for the position of core successor. This was something they themselves did not even dare to imagine. The comparison left them frustrated and restless.

“In three days, let’s head to the Origin Clarity Pavilion!”

Many disciples made their decision in secret, while even some powerful figures were shaken and decided to watch the event for themselves.

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On the Ninth Peak, Zheng Qian sneered, “What a show-off.”

His contempt was written all over his face. He was discussing things with Peak Master Qin Wuyu and Elder Mo Lanshan. When the news reached them, he could hardly believe his ears at first.

“Brother Qin, just look at Lin Xun. He’s so brazen and noisy! I’m afraid the whole Origin Sect is waiting for our Ninth Peak to make a laughingstock of itself!” Zheng Qian said bitterly.

Mo Lanshan frowned, pondering. “Given Lin Xun’s foundation and cultivation, he actually has a fair chance of passing the assessment.”

Zheng Qian retorted coldly, “Elder Mo, if he fails, it will disgrace our Ninth Peak!”

“But if he succeeds, it will bring us glory.” Mo Lanshan countered in a deep voice.

Just as the two seemed on the verge of quarreling, Qin Wuyu raised his hand to cut them off. “Enough. It’s already decided. What’s use is there in arguing?”

Even he felt a headache coming on. Lin Xun had only joined the Ninth Peak a few days ago, yet he had already beaten Chao Zonglin and stirred up a storm. That matter had barely settled, and now he was about to participate in the core disciple assessment.

This kid really had a talent for causing trouble!

“Leave it at that.” Qin Wuyu got up and left.

Meanwhile, Qin Ruoling, Huang Muji, Meng Haochen and the other successors of the Ninth Peak were also in heated discussions. Unlike most, they were filled with excitement and anticipation for Lin Xun’s performance.

For countless years, the Ninth Peak had ranked at the very bottom among the nine peaks. As a result, its members couldn’t help but feel inferior when facing those from the other peaks, leaving a bitter taste in their hearts.

Now, with Lin Xun’s arrival, things truly felt different. Chao Zonglin, a successor of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion, had been beaten by Lin Xun and thrown into the Prison of Repentance. How many in the nine peaks could claim such an achievement?

Now, as a newcomer, Lin Xun already dared to challenge for the position of core successor. If he succeeded, it would surely shake the entire Origin Sect once more!

The very thought made Qin Ruoling and the others shiver with excitement. They had already decided to go to Origin Clarity Pavilion in three days’ time to cheer for Lin Xun!

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As countless people looked forward to the event, three days passed in the blink of an eye. On this day, the usually quiet Origin Purity Mountain was unprecedentedly lively, packed with people in all directions.

True and core disciples from the nine peaks had gathered, along with many high-ranking figures. Even many successors and powerhouses from the three pavilions had come to watch.

“So many people...”

Qin Ruoling and the others gasped at the sight of the grand spectacle. The Origin World was immense, vast enough to rival a world of its own. The nine peaks were scattered across it. Normally, the successors of the nine peaks trained within their own territories, and it was rare for them to gather together in one place as they did now.

In the memory of Qin Ruoling and the others, only grand occasions such as the Nine Peaks Dao Contest could draw such a gathering.

“See? This is Junior Brother Lin Xun’s influence. Every move he makes shakes the sect. Our Ninth Peak...is finally no longer a place that no one cares about.” Qin Ruoling said proudly.

“Junior Sister, don’t celebrate too soon. For this assessment, Junior Brother Lin Xun must win three duels to qualify as a core disciple. If he fails...the other peaks will surely mock us.” Meng Haochen cautioned softly.

Qin Ruoling rolled her eyes. “Stop being so defeatist. Everyone else may be hoping for Junior Brother Lin Xun to fail, but we must not think like that.”

As they spoke, they found themselves standing before a colossal arena. The Heaven-Derived Dao Arena!

This was the grandest ancient arena of Origin Purity Mountain, normally reserved only for the most important evaluation assessments. Because Lin Xun’s assessment had drawn unprecedented attention, the Origin Clarity Pavilion made an exception and opened the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena.

By now, a sea of figures had already gathered around it. The nine peaks each formed their own camps, standing part in different areas. The disciples of the Origin Sky Pavilion and the Origin Emptiness Pavilion also stood together at another side, watching intently.

When Qin Ruoling and the others arrived, they quickly spotted Qin Wuyu, Zheng Qian and others, and immediately moved over.

“Father, why did you come as well?” Qin Ruoling couldn’t help but ask. She knew her father Qin Wuyu had been resistant to Lin Xun, so she had not expected him to attend.

“Lin Xun is still a successor of the Ninth Peak. With so many people from the other peaks here, if I didn’t show up, wouldn’t others think I, the peak master, despise him?” Qin Wuyu replied casually.

Qin Ruoling and the others exchanged glances and smiled knowingly. At this moment, Lin Xun stood in the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena. His tall, upright figure seemed at ease yet unshakable, calm and transcendent, naturally drawing the eyes of the entire audience.

For most of the Origin Sect’s disciples, although they had long heard of Lin Xun, this was their first time seeing him in person. Their gazes carried both scrutiny and curiosity.

In the Origin Sect, there was no shortage of heaven-defying talents. Even the most ordinary true disciple, if placed in the outside world, could crush old monsters of the same cultivation stage, and would have the confidence to stand against Immortals!

As for the core disciples, their power was even more overwhelming. It was no exaggeration to say that the Origin Sect was a nest of monstrous geniuses, each more powerful and terrifying than the last.

However, in recent days, the one who had undoubtedly become the center of attention was Lin Xun, the ‘newcomer’ of the Ninth Peak. The sheer number of figures gathered around the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena was proof of how much attention he had drawn.

Naturally, this provoked discontent from many, especially fellow true disciples like him, and even certain core disciples.

“That guy is Lin Xun? I want to see for myself how strong he really is.”

“The Ninth Peak has finally produced someone half-decent. Whether he wins or loses, the courage he’s shown in daring to take this assessment as a newcomer is already remarkable.”

“Hmph, it’s just for attention. He has nothing to lose even if he fails.”

“Don’t underestimate Junior Brother Lin Xun. His performance in the three rounds of the entrance examination was nothing short of world-shaking. Unless one’s cultivation surpasses Senior Brother Li Zhongyuan, defeating him won’t be easy.”

“It’s precisely because Lin Xun is so strong that he’s drawn so many spectators today. If he were just ordinary, who would care to come watch in person?”

Whispers rippled across the arena. Lin Xun paid them no mind. He stood alone in the arena, eyes lowered like an old monk in meditation, serene and composed. On the assessment platform, Zhuang Shiliu, who oversaw this assessment, wore a stern expression. From time to time, when his gaze fell upon Lin Xun, a faint chill flickered in his eyes.

That boy probably still has no idea who he’s about to face. In just a moment, you’re going to suffer!

Clang!

Before long, a deep, majestic bell tolled. At once, the arena fell into absolute silence, the atmosphere steeped in solemnity. The assessment was about to begin!

All conversations ceased as countless gazes turned toward the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena. In this assessment, Lin Xun had to fight three battles. In other words, three opponents in succession. A single defeat, and his chance of becoming a core disciple would vanish.

His opponents would be drawn from the core disciples of the other peaks. Yet even now, most present still had no idea which three had been chosen by the Origin Clarity Pavilion to face him.

At this moment, Zhuang Shiliu's deep voice resounded. "The assessment begins. Please invite Shen Zaidao, core successor of the First Peak, to step forward and face the challenger!"

The moment his words fell, the audience erupted in exclamations.

"Shen Zaidao! A peerless sword genius! His talent is unmatched across the ages. All these years, he has ranked among the top five of the Nine Peaks!"

"I never imagined the Origin Clarity Pavilion would actually send him. They clearly have no intention of letting Lin Xun pass smoothly..."

"He's an existence even stronger than Senior Brother Li Zhongyuan. Lin Xun probably never imagined that his very first match would be against such a tricky opponent!"

The uproar was laced with shock and astonishment. Under the countless gazes, a slender figure suddenly appeared in the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena.

He was clad in ancient black robes, his features chiseled and stern, and his eyes gleamed like sword light. His figure resembled a sword thrusting into the heavens, and the instant he appeared, a terrifyingly sharp aura swept across the arena.

From afar, he seemed like a sovereign of swords, his sharpness making even heaven and earth pale before him!

Shen Zaidao was a supreme Emperor Ancestor, a legendary figure among the Nine Peaks, and a towering giant of the sword dao, admired and revered by countless!

Chapter 2716 Sword for Sword

Shen Zaidao's arrival filled the crowd with awe and shock. Qin Wuyu's brow furrowed, his face darkening. This was only the first duel, but they had already sent out Shen Zaidao. It was obvious they weren't planning to give Lin Xun the slightest chance!

Though he was initially reluctant to accept Lin Xun joining the Ninth Peak, this was now a fact he could not change. Therefore, seeing his own successor being openly targeted like this left him seething with unease.

The Ninth Peak had languished at the bottom for years. Hadn't Qin Wuyu ever thought of changing that? Unfortunately, it was not something that could be accomplished overnight.

As he watched Lin Xun being singled out, Qin Wuyu couldn't help recalling how, in the last Nine Peaks Dao Contest, the disciples of the Ninth Peak had also been ruthlessly suppressed.

"They've gone too far!" Rage churned in Qin Wuyu's chest.

Someone had clearly orchestrated this behind the scenes. Otherwise, with Zhuang Shiliu's limited authority as examiner, there was no way he could have brought in a peerless sword master like Shen Zaidao.

"How could it come to this..."

Nearby, Qin Ruoling and the other Ninth Peak successors who had come to support Lin Xun were already bristling with anger at the arrangement.

"Why not? Becoming a core disciple isn't supposed to be easy." A sneer came from somewhere nearby.

Qin Ruoling and the others were about to retort when Ye Chunjun cut in first. "Don't waste your breath, junior brothers and sisters! The fact they've done this shows they don't dare to fight Junior Brother Lin lightly. Yes, Shen Zaidao is frighteningly powerful, but if he loses, his reputation will be shattered here!"

At this, Qin Ruoling and the others fell silent, their expressions unsettled. Could a peerless giant like Shen Zaidao really...be defeated?

On the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena, facing Shen Zaidao, his first opponent, Lin Xun spoke calmly, "Whether you came here on orders or by choice, it doesn't matter. Since you've stepped forward, you must be prepared to lose."

His words were not only for Shen Zaidao, but also for those pulling the strings from the shadows. To the onlookers, those words were jarring. He had actually told Senior Brother Shen Zaidao to prepare for defeat? Where did Lin Xun find the confidence to speak with such arrogance?

“It seems Junior Brother Lin Xun thinks I’ve come just here to suppress him?” Shen Zaidao chuckled, his expression calm as drifting clouds.

The next moment—Shua!

He struck without warning. A stream of sword qi burst forth from his hands and pressed straight toward Lin Xun’s face, almost unimpeded by the spatial barrier. This strike was like the first ray of light at the dawn of creation, chasing sun and moon, suffused with the profound mysteries of heaven itself.

With a snap of his fingers, Lin Xun shattered the three-foot sword qi into fragments, dispersing it into nothingness before him.

“Show me your real strength. Stop wasting time. If I defeat you, I still have two more duels ahead of me,” he said calmly, his tone indifferent.

Many onlookers felt their hearts tighten.

Stop wasting time? In your eyes, just what do you think Brother Shen Zaidao is?

Clang!

In front of Shen Zaidao, an illusory, transparent sword manifested. His robes billowed in the absence of wind, rattling sharply. The sky above him suddenly dimmed, as if gathering momentum for what was to come.

A commotion spread through the battlefield. Shock rippled across the faces of many as they realized Shen Zaidao’s next strike would be a sword capable of shaking the ages, a blow to kill across eternity.

“Junior Brother, I cultivate the Formless Sword Consciousness. It cuts down the spirit and slays the mind. If you can’t withstand it, I advise you to admit defeat quickly. Otherwise, your spirit will be annihilated and your mind crushed,” said Shen Zaidao indifferently.

In that moment, he seemed to have become a peerless heavenly sword, merging with heaven and earth, one with the great dao. He was heaven itself. He was god

Rumble!

All at once, the arena was swallowed by pitch-black darkness.

“Circulate your cultivation at once!”

“Don’t try to peer into it! That’s the Formless Sword Consciousness! It kills the mind and extinguishes the spirit!”

Cries of alarm rang out from the spectators. Even those outside the arena felt a sharp, invisible sword power pierce their minds and spirits. Shen Zaidao’s sword intent was unstoppable, inescapable, impossible to deflect.

A wave of dread swept through them. No matter how they resisted, it was as if they would still be obliterated. Their thoughts, will and everything of them would be crushed beneath that sword!

Some powerful figures acted swiftly, shielding the disciples from the dangerous fluctuations leaking out of the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena. Only then were the others spared the brunt of the impact.

When several Immortal figures turned their gaze back onto Shen Zaidao, their expressions were shaken. This youth’s mastery of the Formless Sword Consciousness had already reached an unprecedented level!

At this moment, Lin Xun felt his surroundings blur into nothingness. He could see nothing, sense nothing, and even his spirit sense seemed sealed away.

It wasn't that the world had gone dark. Rather, Shen Zaidao's sword qi had imperceptibly blinded every one of his senses: eyes, ears, nose, mouth, body, mind and spirit.

He no longer knew where he stood, nor even where his own body was.

Within the endless darkness, Shen Zaidao's voice echoed, "This sword will decide the outcome."

Silently, a streak of sword light emerged from the darkness. In that instant, time ceased, space ceased, and thought itself ceased. That single strand of sword light became the only eternal existence.

Lin Xun made no move to resist. The instant his eyes fell upon that sword, its might and mystery were already acting upon his spirit. In other words, the true essence of this sword was a spirit-slaying sword art: formless, without substance, killing unseen, impossible to defend against, and terrifying beyond comparison.

If it was anyone else of the same cultivation stage, their spirit would have collapsed in terror, their will crushed, and leaving them like prey. Despite that, when that sword pierced into Lin Xun's mind sea, it was suddenly blocked.

Boom!

The spirit dharma that had long sat in his mind-sea like a cauldron suddenly blazed with light. In that instant, it evolved into myriad daos and reflected myriad arts, radiant and boundless, eternal and unmoving through the ages.

When the sword qi struck, it was instantly suppressed beneath the cauldron-like spirit dharma, pinned motionless and then mercilessly ground to nothing. Then the boundless darkness quaked, and all the visions vanished without a trace.

Outside the arena, no one could tell how grave Lin Xun's situation had been at that moment. All they saw was Shen Zaidao, who, after unleashing his sword strike, suddenly spat out a mouthful of blood. His face turned ashen and his eyes brimmed with disbelief.

“This sword might work on others, but against me, it’s no use.” Lin Xun’s eyes were dark and cold. On his path to the supreme, his body, mind and spirit had each reached their ultimate supreme peak. Even in a battle of spirits, he could not be shaken so easily!

The arena fell utterly silent. The gathered figures all wore stunned, uncertain expressions. It was clear that Shen Zaidao’s Formless Sword Consciousness hadn’t harmed Lin Xun in the slightest. On the contrary, it backfired, causing the wielder to suffer a backlash! This was without a doubt something beyond belief.

“Now, it’s my turn.”

Lin Xun made his move, pacing calmly through the void. At his fingertips, a wisp of sword intent coiled before drifting forth in a light thrust.

No Escape!

When he used this sword strike, a long-lost sense of nostalgia stirred within his heart. Passed down by Battle Emperor Mo Yang, this sword condensed his lifetime of cultivation into a single strike, unparalleled in its sharpness. Years ago, it had helped Lin Xun crush countless formidable foes.

Now, as he unleashed this sword once more, he was already a supreme All Daos Ancestor, and the sword’s true essence had transcended what it once was. This strike was his No Escape sword, infused with the profound essence of the Great Genesis Heart Sutra, the Emperor Scripture forged by his third senior sister.

This sword too struck directly at the mind. Tooth for tooth, eye for eye, sword for sword! In the eyes of others, Lin Xun’s sword seemed plain and ordinary, devoid of any imposing force.

However, the expressions of some old antiques changed. The reason this sword appeared so plain was because its essence was refined to the utmost, concealing every trace of its true profundity!

In the distance, Shen Zaidao's pupils shrank sharply, his expression shifting. The moment he tried to dodge, a blade of sword intent suddenly erupted within his mind. It burst forth with an unmatched, razor-sharp aura, slashing straight into his inner world.

Boom!

Darkness swallowed Shen Zaidao's sight. His head seemed to burst apart as every thought was drowned in unbearable pain, as if he were plummeting into a bottomless abyss...

His state of mind was equally unparalleled, yet beneath this sword strike it seemed to split into fragments, showing signs of shattering. Indescribable bewilderment and terror surged through his body and mind like rampant weeds.

From outside the arena, Shen Zaidao stood frozen like a clay statue, yet his expression shifted endlessly. At times twisted in pain, at times lost in confusion, and at times consumed by terror...

A chill that was cold and unshakable crept into the hearts of the onlookers.

Was Lin Xun's sword really so terrifying?

"Zaidao, compose yourself!"

Suddenly, an aged voice rang from outside the arena. Yue Wuchou, the master of the First Peak, bellowed, his words imbued with obscure and mysterious dao sounds that forcibly stabilized Shen Zaidao's state of mind.

After a moment, Shen Zaidao's ever-shifting expression finally calmed, and he slowly opened his eyes. However, his face was ghastly pale, his robes drenched in cold sweat, and his eyes brimming with fear and dread.

That sword strike had been aimed directly at his very state of mind! If Yue Wuchou had not acted in time, he could not help but wonder whether he might have been crippled beyond repair!

The arena fell into a heavy silence. Not a sound could be heard. Everyone was shaken by the scene before them.

From the start of the duel until now, Shen Zaidao had attacked twice. His first strike of sword qi was effortlessly shattered by Lin Xun. His second, his most powerful technique, the Formless Sword Consciousness, had not only failed to gain the slightest advantage, but also backfired, leaving him to suffer a devastating backlash.

Lin Xun, on the other hand, had acted only once from the start. With a single sword strike, Shen Zaidao was utterly defeated!

Everyone understood that if Yue Wuchou hadn't intervened, Shen Zaidao, a peerless figure ranked among the top five core disciples of the Nine Peaks, would most likely have suffered a disastrous setback!

"You've lost."

Lin Xun did not strike again. Even though the opponent's state of mind had been preserved, like Li Zhongyuan, Shen Zaidao's dao heart was left marred by cracks and shadows that would greatly hinder his chances of attaining immortality!

Shen Zaidao's expression was bleak. Without a word, he turned and left. The crowd's emotions surged like a turbulent tide. Before the duel, everyone believed that Shen Zaidao's appearance would ensure Lin Xun's defeat, leaving him with no hope of fighting a second or third match.

Unfortunately, reality struck them like an invisible slap across the face. With a single sword strike, Lin Xun completely suppressed Shen Zaidao! That terrifying might made the successors of the nine peaks visibly blanch, and when they looked at Lin Xun, their eyes involuntarily revealed deep dread and shock.

Chapter 2717 Unforeseen Variable

Qin Wuyu felt as though a heavy weight had been lifted from his shoulders. Lin Xun's sword strike had not only astonished him with its brilliance, but more importantly, it had also secured such a flawless victory.

Tooth for tooth!

He sighed inwardly. What a pity. Shen Zaidao was used as a pawn, and now even his dao heart had cracked. If he can't mend it, he will likely never touch immortality in this lifetime. Shen Zaidao himself was not detestable; what was detestable were those manipulating things from behind the scenes!

At this thought, his gaze shifted toward Yue Wuchou in the distance. That old man has always shunned trouble and maintained a neutral stance. Why then had he allowed Shen Zaidao to get involved in this matter?

Far away, Yue Wuchou's expression was as dark as water. No one could tell whether he was furious at Shen Zaidao's defeat or enraged at something else entirely.

"Zhuang Shiliu, I want an explanation for this!" Yue Wuchou's eyes were like ice as they bore into Zhuang Shiliu.

Zhuang Shiliu's face flickered uncertainly. "I didn't expect things to turn out this way..."

Yue Wuchou only snorted coldly, ignored him completely, and left with Shen Zaidao, vanishing from the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena. Seeing this, many important figures present had subtle changes in expression.

Qin Wuyu suddenly realized that Yue Wuchou, master of the First Peak, seemed to have been kept in the dark about Shen Zaidao's participation in this duel! This thought made his heart grow solemn.

Whoever dared to do that had to possess a status and foundation strong enough to not fear him! But who could it be? Zhuang Shiliu? Impossible. His standing was far too low.

Qin Wuyu sank into deep thought.

"Junior Brother Lin won!"

At that moment, Qin Ruoling, Ye Chunjun, and the other successors of the Ninth Peak erupted with joy, their eyes shining with excitement. Meanwhile, the successors of the other peaks were settled and doubtful, like a flock of startled birds.

On the assessment platform, Zhuang Shiliu's expression grew darker than ever. Yue Wuchou's furious words before departing made it clear that if he could not provide a satisfactory explanation, he would have completely offended the First Peak's master.

"All because of that little beast!" Grinding his teeth in secret, Zhuang Shiliu glared at Lin Xun.

Lin Xun met his gaze calmly and said, "Deacon Zhuang, let's begin the second match. There's no need to waste everyone's time."

Though he spoke casually, his words were like an invisible provocation. Zhuang Shiliu drew in a deep breath, forcing down his anger. However, when he thought of the peerless genius about to step onto the stage, his heart couldn't help but jolt with anticipation.

"In the second match, Feng Qixi, core successor of the Second Peak, will take the field." Zhuang Shiliu declared in a deep voice.

Feng Qixi!

The crowd was thrown into an uproar, with many showing astonishment.

"Didn't they say she had already been chosen by the Origin Sky Pavilion as their successor?"

"That will be next month. For now, she is still a core successor of the Second Peak and thus qualified to fight in this duel."

"I never thought she would personally take part..."

Voices of discussion erupted all around, and many of the Nine Peaks' core successors could no longer remain composed.

Feng Qixi.

She was a peerless genius who had deliberately suppressed her cultivation for over a thousand years, and who had claimed second place in the last Nine Peaks Dao Contest!

As Zhuang Shiliu's voice faded, a slender figure stepped onto the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena.

She wore black martial attire, her long dark hair tied into a simple ponytail that revealed the graceful curve of her snow-white neck. Her oval face was bright and beautiful, her eyes shining like stars. Most striking of all were her long, slender legs, standing with effortless grace. She radiated a heroic, valiant spirit, with a commanding presence that made even men instinctively feel inferior.

Her appearance instantly stirred the arena. Her prestige, background and cultivation surpassed even those of even Li Zhongyuan and Shen Zaidao. Rumor had it that hundreds of years ago she was ready to step onto the immortal path, yet she chose to hold herself back.

The reason was that she was not satisfied with that path of breakthrough! She would rather wait and continue suppressing her cultivation than breaking through so recklessly. That alone spoke volumes about her courage and determination.

"Why is she participating..." Qin Wuyu's face darkened.

If Shen Zaidao had already been unexpected, then Feng Qixi's appearance was an even greater shock. After all, everyone in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court knew that Feng Qixi immersed herself in cultivation, never meddling in disputes.

Despite that, she had come! Qin Wuyu's gaze shifted toward Zhuang Shiliu, whose eyes glimmered with pride. It was obvious this had all been within his grasp from the start.

“Shen Zaidao is ranked among the top five core successors of the Nine Peaks, and Feng Qixi placed second in the last Nine Peaks Dao Contest. This arrangement is clearly aimed at Junior Brother Lin Xun. They don’t intend to give him any chance of becoming a core disciple!”

Qin Ruoling and the others’ expressions sank. Even the dullest person could see what was happening. In the past, no participant in the core disciple assessments had ever been targeted like this.

Think about it, to dispatch core successors ranked in the top five of the Nine Peaks just to deal with a newcomer...was this not blatant bullying? It was utterly unfair!

At this moment, even the true and core disciples of the Nine Peaks had begun to realize that something was off about this assessment and that it was deliberately aimed at Lin Xun. Strictly speaking, it did not violate the rules of the Origin Sect. but such a scene inevitably ignited anger in many hearts.

This time, Lin Xun had become the target. Next time, would it be someone else they target? How could one not feel disheartened when what was meant to be a promotion assessment turned into nothing more than a chance for the Origin Clarity Pavilion to suppress Lin Xun?

It was true that many in the Origin Sect Ancestral Court harbored hatred toward him, but there were just as many who bore him no grudges. Seeing him being so unfairly suppressed naturally left them feeling displeased.

Although no one spoke up in his defense, the high-ranking figures present keenly sensed the shift in the atmosphere. This so-called assessment had clearly stirred public anger! Of note, that was no small matter.

If the successors began to resent such injustice and voiced their discontent, the reputation the Origin Sect had built up over the years would inevitably suffer. In addition, as the chief examiner of this assessment, Zhuang Shiliu...would very likely end up as the scapegoat to appease the outrage!

Thinking of this, many important figures couldn’t help but glance at Zhuang Shiliu with a trace of pity.

Zhuang Shiliu was no fool. How could he fail to notice the change in the air? Though his heart sank, he remained unconcerned. As long as he could stop Lin Xun from becoming a core disciple in this assessment, then even if punishment followed, he believed someone would come forward to shield him.

“The duel has started! Why haven’t you made your move?” Zhuang Shiliu shouted.

After stepping into the arena, Feng Qixi did not strike right away. She just stood in place, locking eyes with Lin Xun. By now, everyone had noticed her unusual behaviour and couldn’t help but exchange puzzled glances.

What’s going on?

Even Lin Xun was somewhat taken aback. In his eyes, Feng Qixi was a formidable enemy. Her aura alone carried enough weight to make him feel pressured. However, she showed no intention of fighting.

Finally, Zhuang Shiliu’s impatient urging seemed to stir her into action. But instead of attacking, she turned around and calmly walked out of the arena.

“This match...I concede.”

Those few words left the entire audience stunned.

She’s giving up without even fighting? This isn’t like Feng Qixi at all!

Even Lin Xun couldn’t hide his surprise. However, Feng Qixi looked as if nothing had happened. Her expression remained serene, and her tall, graceful figure had already walked out of the arena.

Zhuang Shiliu’s face turned an ugly shade of green. “Nonsense! This is an assessment. How can you declare defeat before even fighting? Do you not care about the rules?”

A wave of panic surged within him. If Feng Qixi refused to fight, then Lin Xun would claim his second victory by default, and that could trigger an unexpected chain of events.

“There’s no rule against conceding.” Standing outside the arena, Feng Qixi met the countless bewildered stares with unshakable calm. “Besides, I’ve already accepted that I’m no match for Junior Brother Lin Xun. Since that’s the case, why waste the effort?”

The scene fell into turmoil. No one could fathom what was going through Feng Qixi’s mind. Her decision was simply too peculiar.

“You haven’t even fought, yet you’ve already decided you’re no match? Feng Qixi, you placed second in the last Nine Peaks Dao Contest and will soon enter the Origin Sky Pavilion to cultivate. To come up with such a childish excuse...don’t you find that ridiculous?!” Zhuang Shiliu’s voice was cold.

Feng Qixi’s decision had completely unsettled him and in his frustration, he lashed out at her instead.

Feng Qixi frowned, her tone equally cold. “Since you put it that way, then I may as well speak plainly. The only reason I participated in this assessment is because the Second Peak Master, Yun Tianming, personally asked me to. As a successor of the Second Peak, how could I refuse?”

The crowd erupted, ripples of commotion spreading through the arena. Countless eyes turned to the Second Peak Master. Yun Tianming was clearly caught off guard, his expression darkening. “Feng Qixi, I merely suggested you take part in the assessment. I never ordered you. Please do not twist my words and mislead others.”

Feng Qixi remained calm. “Since everything has already been said, I may as well add more. Someone like me is far too insignificant to meddle in the open and covert struggles between the great figures of our Origin Sect. If such matters fall upon me, I can do nothing but endure. But fairness and justice live in the hearts of the people!”

After a pause, she continued, “Junior Brother Lin Xun’s achievements and strength are plain for all to see. Even though he has only just joined the sect, he is already more than qualified to be recognized as a core disciple. Yet now, there are people who don’t want him to pass the assessment and resort to such underhanded means to hinder him. This is truly disheartening!”

Her voice echoed throughout the arena, and many disciples from the nine peaks couldn't help but nod in agreement. Lin Xun's suffering filled them with indignation as well, and a bitter chill settled in their hearts

Yun Tianming and Zhuang Shiliu's expressions became increasingly dark. They had never imagined Feng Qixi would choose this moment to 'turn against them', leaving them with no chance to intervene. After all, countless high-ranking figures were gathered around the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena, and even some old monsters were secretly watching.

At such a time, how would they dare lay a hand on Feng Qixi?

Just as Feng Qixi seemed ready to continue, Zhuang Shiliu could no longer hold back and barked harshly, "Impudent! This is an assessment, not a stage for you to vent your grievances. If you continue to cause disruption, don't blame me for subduing you and handing you over to the Origin Sky Pavilion for punishment!"

Chapter 2718 Pressure from All Sides

A stern voice reverberated across the arena as Zhuang Shiliu's expression turned to ice. Everyone could see that his patience had snapped.

Feng Qixi said aloud, "You want to hand me over to the Origin Sky Pavilion? Fine. I'll be their successor next month anyway. Consider it an opportunity to get familiar with my new environment in advance."

Clad in black martial attire, her hair tied back in a ponytail, with long, straight legs and a heroic, graceful bearing, she exuded a presence that made many men pale in comparison. Even before Zhuang Shiliu, she showed not the slightest trace of fear.

Lin Xun watched the scene unfold, equally astonished. Just as Feng Qixi stepped off the arena, she suddenly turned back. Her star-like eyes fell upon Lin Xun.

"Junior Brother, there may be some in this sect who see you as a thorn in their side, but there are many more who will stand for rules, justice, and fairness."

With that, she strode away, and did not spare another glance for Zhuang Shiliu, whose face had turned livid with rage. The atmosphere in the arena fell into a tense silence. No one had anticipated Feng Qixi would act like this. Did she truly believe her strength was inferior to Lin Xun's?

No. She simply refused to be used as a pawn!

For this reason, she chose to tear all pretenses apart with Zhuang Shiliu before everyone's eyes, laying everything bare, even at the risk of offending some powerful figures. However, it was clear that Feng Qixi was prepared to burn her bridges and no longer cared about the consequences

"That's Senior Sister Feng Qixi!"

"Well done, Senior Sister Feng Qixi!"

"We, successors of the Origin Sect, should have such integrity and courage, staying true to our hearts and speaking out against injustice!"

A wave of cheers erupted. Successors from the Nine Peaks felt their blood stir as they shouted her name. Each cry was like a slap across Zhuang Shiliu's face, leaving him burning with humiliation.

"Silence!" He roared, crushing the uproar.

His expression darkened as he declared, "Feng Qixi's concession is full of suspicious circumstances. I will have the elders of the Origin Sky Pavilion investigate this matter personally. If it is proven she deliberately violated assessment rules, she will be punished!"

The crowd fell silent, stunned. Zhuang Shiliu's words made it sound as though he planned to take on Feng Qixi! All of a sudden, fury surged among the successors.

Compared to Lin Xun, Feng Qixi was a veteran core successor of the Origin Sect, widely respected and highly influential. If Zhuang Shiliu retaliated against her, who among them would not be enraged?

Despite that, Zhuang Shiliu ignored their reaction. Expressionless, he said coldly, "The sect will give a fair judgement on Feng Qixi's matter. For now, we proceed with the third round of the assessment."

Just as he was about to announce the name of the next opponent, a low, icy voice cut through the silence, "I concede the third match."

Shua!

All eyes turned to the speaker. It was a man with a lean frame, bronze-colored skin, and a face as sharp and chiseled as if carved from stone. His aura was obscure and restrained, not eye-catching at first glance, yet anyone who looked at him felt a stabbing pain in their eyes. It was as though before them stood not a man, but a volcano on the verge of eruption, brimming with savage and violent power.

Liu Yunfeng, successor of the Third Peak! He was a ruthless character who might be inferior to Feng Qixi in terms of foundation and inferior to Shen Zaidao in terms of background, but he was far more savage in nature than them both.

On the battlefield, his savagery was unmatched. No matter the opponent, he fought as though he had nothing to lose, utterly indifferent to his own life, like a madman. To him, life and death were nothing more than drifting clouds.

Over the years, it was this innate ferocity that had carved him a fearsome reputation throughout the Nine Peaks. Normally, few were willing to spar with him because he was simply too ruthless. Even when practicing with his own sect brothers, he fought with the same lethal ferocity, as if it were a battle to the death.

In the eyes of others, he was like a peerless killer, a man who disregarded life and death, caring only for the fight itself. When everyone saw that Liu Yunfeng had been arranged to appear in the third round of the assessment, countless expressions changed.

Even Ninth Peak Master Qin Wuyu felt a chill in his heart and was inwardly furious. To send someone who disregarded life and death into an assessment match...the intention was clear: Lin Xun would not be allowed to pass no matter what!

With Shen Zaidao, Feng Qixi, and now Liu Yunfeng, the opponents chosen for these three rounds were enough to bar even the most gifted true disciples of the Nine Peaks from becoming core disciples! Even most core disciples would struggle to succeed under such circumstances.

Furthermore, all of this was aimed at a newcomer like Lin Xun. It was no different from openly declaring that the Origin Clarity Pavilion had no intention of allowing Lin Xun to pass! How could Qin Wuyu not be enraged?

At that moment, a wave of murmurs swept across the arena, filled with disbelief and anger.

Liu Yunfeng!

Only now did the crowd realize that the three opponents chosen against Lin Xun had clearly been arranged with malicious intent. However, before their anger could ignite, an unexpected scene unfolded.

Liu Yunfeng stepped onto the arena and bluntly announced his withdrawal from the duel. The declaration shocked everyone, instantly reminding them of Feng Qixi's earlier concession.

Zhuang Shiliu was completely caught off guard. His face darkened, his anger breaking through as he shouted, "Impudence! Who gave you the right to concede?"

His eyes blazed with fury, his entire being radiating a terrifying aura.

Liu Yunfeng remained calm and said evenly, "If Feng Qixi can admit defeat of her own accord, why can't I? Had I known that this was the Origin Clarity Pavilion's arrangement, I would never have agreed to participate."

"You dare to slander the Origin Clarity Pavilion?" Zhuang Shiliu's voice was cold as frost.

Liu Yunfeng replied without flinching, "There are some things I don't think are appropriate to say in front of so many people. So please, Deacon Zhuang, don't force me. Otherwise, I fear today's matter will only spiral out of control."

With that, he turned and strode away without sparing another glance, leaving Zhuang Shiliu trembling with fury.

Around the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena, the high-ranking figures each wore different expressions, all seemingly lost in thought. Not appropriate to say in front of so many...?

It was clear that Liu Yunfeng's appearance in this assessment was anything but simple! At this point, the crowd could no longer restrain themselves. Voices erupted in every direction, boiling with outrage.

"There's definitely scheming behind this!"

"The Origin Clarity Pavilion must give us an explanation!"

"Junior Brother Lin Xun may be a newcomer, but how can he be treated with such blatant injustice? If he can be oppressed today, who will be next tomorrow?"

"How can the sect's rules be trampled on like this?"

Furious cries rang out one after another, all directed at Zhuang Shiliu, and the situation was on the verge of spiraling out of control. What was supposed to be Lin Xun's assessment had now turned into a storm of unexpected upheavals.

First, Feng Qixi admitted defeat, and then Liu Yunfeng withdrew. All of it pointed to one thing: there was something seriously wrong with this assessment! Standing alone in the arena, Lin Xun was stunned. He had never imagined things would unfold this way. It was completely beyond his expectations.

When he looked at Zhuang Shiliu, now besieged by public outrage and condemned from every direction, a cold sneer tugged at his lips.

"Zhuang Shiliu, our Ninth Peak demands an explanation from you!"

Suddenly, Qin Wuyu spoke up, questioning Zhuang Shiliu in the name of the Ninth Peak's master. The arena was instantly thrown into turmoil, the atmosphere more turbulent than ever.

Lin Xun was taken aback. He had never expected that Qin Wuyu, who had been openly resistant to him from the very beginning, would now step forward at such a critical moment to speak on behalf of him.

Lin Xun couldn't help but think of Qin Wuyu's words on the day he joined the Ninth Peak, "As long as you don't violate the sect's rules, no matter what happens, I will stand behind you."

Now, as Lin Xun looked at Qin Wuyu in the distance, his heart stirred. For the first time, he felt a genuine sense of belonging to the Ninth Peak. Zhuang Shiliu's expression shifted uneasily.

As a Nirvana Spirit Immortal, he had weathered countless storms in his life. Although he was only a deacon of the Origin Clarity Pavilion, his authority was no less than that of the nine peak masters.

Now, for the first time in many years, he felt cornered, trapped in a predicament he could neither control nor resolve. The three matches had all ended in ways he had never expected. Shen Zaidao had been defeated far too quickly, Feng Qixi had conceded, and Liu Yunfeng had withdrawn. Each turn of events completely blindsided him.

In addition, faced with the furious accusations of countless successors of the nine peaks and the direct questioning of Qin Wuyu, he was struck by a chilling realization: If this matter could not be properly resolved, the first to suffer would be none other than himself, the chief examiner!

Drawing several deep breaths, he forced himself to remain calm before speaking, "Everyone, it's true that today's assessment encountered some irregularities, but I believe the sect will give a satisfactory explanation. The assessment has already concluded, so please disperse for now."

Clearly, he was attempting to stall for time, hoping to seize an opportunity to turn the situation around. Unfortunately for him, his evasive answer only fanned the flames.

"Hmph! Zhuang Shiliu, unless you give the Ninth Peak a proper explanation today, I won't leave!" Qin Wuyu's voice was cold and unyielding.

“That’s right! None of us from the Ninth Peak will leave until this is settled!” Qin Ruoling and the other successors of the Ninth Peak all spoke out one after another.

Only Zheng Qian stood aside, his face dark and wooden, saying nothing. But clearly, no one cared what he thought.

“This matter concerns not just the Ninth Peak, but the assessment of every true disciple across all nine peaks. How can we possibly let it end like this?” said Tian Wucuo, master of the Seventh Peak.

“Zhuang Shiliu, what we want to know now is that: was this assessment arranged by you alone, or by the Origin Clarity Pavilion?” The Eighth Peak’s master, Cang Zhongxue, pressed coldly.

“In my view, it would be best to have the Origin Sky Pavilion intervene and investigate. A newcomer has just joined the sect and already faces such oppression. If word of this spreads, how will our Origin Sect preserve its reputation?” The Fifth Peak’s master, Yu Xiangting, and the Sixth Peak’s master, Wen Dongmian, also spoke in succession.

All at once, the gathered high-ranking figures turned on Zhuang Shiliu, pushing him to the crest of the storm. A cold dread gripped him as he realized how grave the situation truly was. Never had he imagined the situation would spiral so wildly to the point it was now utterly beyond his control.

He couldn’t help but cast his gaze into the distance. The Second Peak’s master, Yun Tianming, wore a blank expression. The Third Peak’s master, Nan Bohong, stood in silence. The Fourth Peak’s master, Mu Yunzhen, had already turned his head away.

It was obvious these three intended to stand idly by! First Peak Master Yue Wuchou had already departed with Shen Zaidao. However before leaving, he had demanded that Zhuang Shiliu give a satisfactory explanation.

In this moment, Zhuang Shiliu’s composure shattered entirely.

Chapter 2719 Edict

The public was in an uproar, and the situation grew increasingly turbulent. Zhuang Shiliu felt as though he were sitting on pins and needles. From a distance, Lin Xun observed calmly. He could already see that old Zhuang Shiliu was doomed this time.

Sure enough, a stern voice suddenly resounded, “Deacon Zhuang Shiliu, do you acknowledge your guilt?”

The words boomed like a giant bell, resounding across the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena. Then, Deputy Pavilion Master Fang Daoping’s figure materialized out of thin air. Usually mild and detached from worldly strife, he now radiated a sea-like majesty and a terrifying aura. The entire arena fell into instant silence.

With that one question, he had basically pronounced Zhuang Shiliu guilty!

“I...” Zhuang Shiliu’s face changed drastically. He had just opened his mouth to defend himself when a deep, indifferent voice cut him off, “Keep quibbling, and your punishment will only grow heavier. I advise you to abandon any hope of getting away with it and admit your wrongs at once. I believe the sect will see justice!”

As the voice faded, a gaunt old man appeared. It was Tang Qiu, another deputy pavilion master of the Origin Clarity Pavilion.

At Tang Qiu’s reminder, Zhuang Shiliu’s face turned ashen. With a defeated look, he admitted, “This time, it was indeed out of resentment that I deliberately made things difficult for Lin Xun during the assessment.”

The fury of the crowd gradually subsided as Zhuang Shiliu admitted guilt, though several high-ranking figures frowned, their eyes flickering with suspicion.

It was obvious that Zhuang Shiliu confessed only because of Tang Qiu’s appearance, not Fang Daoping’s! He had clearly intended to argue, yet the moment Tang Qiu appeared, he confessed without hesitation. The sudden change was rather peculiar.

Tang Qiu gave a slight nod. “If one is wrong, one must be punished. Only then can the public be convinced. However, given your years of service to the Origin Clarity Pavilion, though you’ve archived little, you’ve at least worked hard...I will dock you five years of allowance. Do you accept this punishment?”

Zhuang Shiliu nodded without a moment's thought. "I accept!"

"Only five years of allowance?" Fang Daoping's brows furrowed. "Deputy Pavilion Master Tang, what he did today was truly despicable. As a deacon, he exploited the assessment to suppress a true disciple. His actions have stirred public outrage, yet you punish him with only this? How could the public possibly accept it?"

"Deputy Pavilion Master Fang is absolutely right. Zhuang Shiliu's despicable conduct gravely violated the rules of assessment." Lin Xun's voice rang out from the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena. "If he is not punished severely, I will not be satisfied."

"Yes! He must be punished severely!"

"Such vile methods cannot be tolerated!"

Voices rose one after another in furious agreement.

Zhuang Shiliu's expression shifted between gloom and uncertainty. He wished he could silence them all. As a deacon, it was his first time tasting the feeling of being judged, and it left him feeling humiliated and flustered.

His gaze turned to Tang Qiu. Among everyone present, only Tang Qiu could throw him a lifeline.

Tang Qiu spoke after a moment's thought, "Let's do this. As for Zhuang Shiliu's punishment, we will announce it to the sect three days from now. Although today's assessment encountered some twists and turns, it has still concluded smoothly. In my view, it would be best to confer the status of core successor upon Lin Xun first."

Fang Daoping's tone was sharp with displeasure. "Why wait three days?"

Who here couldn't see that Tang Qiu was just stalling for time?

Tang Qiu replied solemnly, "In my view, this matter should first be discussed by the three pavilions, with us deputy pavilion masters reaching a decision together. After all, the incident itself might be minor, but its repercussions are significant, so we must proceed with caution."

"Deputy Pavilion Master Tang is right."

In the distance, Second Peak Master, Yun Tianming spoke in a deep voice, "Convicting Zhuang Shiliu rashly would be inappropriate. His fate should be decided only after discussion."

"That's right. I believe that after discussion, the sect will give everyone a satisfactory answer."

The Third Peak Master, Nan Bohong, and the Fourth Peak Master, Mu Yunzhen, also spoke in support of Tang Qiu's proposal.

Many successors looked on in confusion and doubt. The shifting situation made them realize that what was unfolding was most likely a struggle among the high-ranking figures of the sect, something far beyond what they could interfere in.

Lin Xun frowned faintly. He firmly engraved the name of Tang Qiu, deputy pavilion master of Origin Clarity Pavilion, in his mind. There was no doubt that among the enemies harboring hatred toward him, this old fox was one of them!

"Qin Wuyu, what do you think?" Tang Qiu turned his gaze toward Qin Wuyu, the master of the Ninth Peak, in the distance.

After a brief silence, Qin Wuyu replied, his voice steady, "I only hope that the sect will give justice to Lin Xun, a true disciple of my Ninth Peak. If not, I will never let this matter rest."

Tang Qiu's brows knit almost imperceptibly. He then nodded with a solemn expression. "That is naturally my intention as well. What do you think, Deputy Pavilion Master Fang?"

Fang Daoping replied evenly, "Very well. But when the time comes I want a clear answer as to how Zhuang Shiliu decided those three duels. Even Feng Qixi of the Second Peak and Liu Yunfeng of the Third Peak found them unfair and chose to withdraw. Who instructed them to take part in the duels in the first place? I do not believe Zhuang Shiliu's influence alone was enough to make this happen."

Those words made the expressions of many shift. Among them were Yun Tianming, Nan Bohong, Mu Yunzhen, and other peak masters.

Even Tang Qiu's eyelids twitched. He realized that Fang Daoping intended to escalate the matter! If that happened, it would likely plunge the entire Origin Sect into turmoil. Lin Xun could already tell that the faction standing behind Tang Qiu wanted to protect Zhuang Shiliu, but it was equally clear that Fang Daoping would not allow it!

"Gentlemen, enough. No need to argue further."

Suddenly, a figure as rotund as a small hill appeared. His enormous physique exuded an immense oppressive pressure. It was Yu Xing, one of the three deputy pavilion masters of the Origin Clarity Pavilion.

His sudden arrival made both Fang Daoping and Tang Qiu stiffen in surprise.

Yu Xing's expression turned solemn as he announced, "The Pavilion Master has issued an edict: Zhuang Shiliu is stripped of his deacon's post and sentenced to a hundred years in the Prison of Repentance!"

The announcement sent shockwaves through the entire audience. The master of the Origin Clarity Pavilion, You Beihai, had long been in closed-door cultivation, yet at this moment he issued an edict, making clear his stance of severely punishing Zhuang Shiliu.

To abolish Zhuang Shiliu's post as deacon was to strip him of all authority within the sect. In addition, being confined in the Prison of Repentance for a hundred years meant that for the next century, he would have no chance of ever rising again!

The punishment struck Zhuang Shiliu like a thunderbolt. His face went deathly pale as if his soul had fled his body. Tang Qiu's expression grew increasingly grim. He cared little about Zhuang Shiliu's punishment.

What worried him was that once imprisoned, Zhuang Shiliu might let slip things that should never be spoken...

With that thought, Tang Qiu secretly sent a voice transmission, "Keep your mouth shut. I will use every means to help you. But if you dare to speak what must not be spoken, it won't be only you who suffers. The Zhuang Clan behind you will meet with calamity as well."

Zhuang Shiliu shuddered, then forced a difficult nod.

.....

That day, what happened at the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena of the Origin Clarity Pavilion swept through the sect at an astonishing speed, shaking the entire Origin Sect from top to bottom.

Deacon Zhuang Shiliu was stripped of his position and thrown into the Prison of Repentance. Meanwhile, Lin Xun, a newcomer who had just joined the sect less than ten days ago, was promoted to core successor status before the eyes of countless witnesses!

"Lin Xun has set a new record for the fastest rise from true disciple to core disciple. But it's no accident. His strength is simply overwhelming."

Many sighed in amazement. The duel at the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena was witnessed by countless eyes. Even Shen Zaidao was defeated by Lin Xun's single sword strike, so his strength was nothing short of heaven-defying.

Figures like Donghuang Shaowen, Qi Qingshi, and Mu Zunwu, supreme Emperor Ancestors who joined the sect alongside Lin Xun, could not help but feel a swirl of complex emotions. They could only watch helplessly as Lin Xun left them far behind and claimed his place as a core disciple!

"The most unfortunate one is Senior Brother Shen Zaidao. A crack has appeared in his dao heart, and he is following the same tragic path of Li Zhongyuan. His chances of ever stepping into immortality are slim now. It's truly pitiful."

Many could not help but sigh for Shen Zaidao.

“The most admirable one is undoubtedly Senior Sister Feng Qixi. Her grace and bearing compels admiration from all.”

“Senior Brother Liu Yunfeng was equally decisive, unafraid to confront contemptible scum like Zhuang Shiliu who trampled on the sect’s rules.”

“But behind these duels surge hidden undercurrents. Zhuang Shiliu once wielded immense power and he possessed an immortal cultivation, but now he has been reduced to a prisoner, stripped of all authority. His situation is utterly tragic.”

“Ultimately, the clashes between those mighty figures are far too treacherous for us to meddle in.”

Across the three pavilions and nine peaks of the Origin Sect, heated discussions broke out. Everyone was shaken by what happened that day at the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena.

“Come to think of it, Junior Brother Lin Xun is truly remarkable. Before even joining the sect, he seriously injured Li Zhongyuan. Then after entering, he caused Chao Zonglin to be punished. And now, he even toppled Zhuang Shiliu. His destructive power is beyond what ordinary people could ever compare with.”

“Better not provoke him in the future. No, it’s best to keep as far from him as possible to avoid bringing disaster upon ourselves.”

Whenever Lin Xun was mentioned, it always stirred complicated feelings in people’s hearts. Ever since joining the sect, this newcomer had set off storm after storm, in ways no one could have anticipated.

In Wild Cloud Abode of the Origin Sky Pavilion.

“What do you make of this matter?”

A light screen gradually dissipated. The projection it displayed was precisely what happened at the Heaven-Derived Dao Arena.

Xuan Jiuyin, who had witnessed everything, angrily exclaimed, "Even a fool could see Tang Qiu was protecting Zhuang Shiliu. He might be the true mastermind behind it all. So why wasn't he punished? And that old dog Zhuang should have been hacked into a thousand pieces. But he got off so lightly."

PA!

A sharp slap landed on the back of Xuan Jiuyin's head, leaving him grimacing in pain.

"That's what you think?" Xuan Feiling's voice carried suppressed fury.

"What else am I supposed to think? Lin Xun is my brother, so of course I'll stand on his side." Xuan Jiuyin said righteously.

Xuan Feiling let out an exasperated laugh. "So for the sake of brotherhood, you would just ignore the sect's rules?"

"I'm not a disciple of the Origin Sect, so why should I follow its rules?" Xuan Jiuyin retorted.

Xuan Feiling fell silent, rubbing his temples as though struck with a headache. After a long pause, he finally said, "In today's Origin Sect, some must obey the rules, some are able to bend them, and some can stand above them.

After a pause, his tone deepened. "You can choose to ignore the rules, but only if you have the strength to stand above them. Otherwise, if you trample them at will, you will only bring disaster upon yourself!

"Take Zhuang Shiliu for example. He thought he could twist the rules to bully and suppress Lin Xun, but in the end he became just a sacrificial pawn.

"Or take Tang Qiu. He believed himself to be above the rules, but the moment You Beihai spoke, he could only lower his head and obey."

Then Xuan Feiling asked, "Little Nine, do you think You Beihai has already reached the point where he stands above the rules?"

Chapter 2720 Xia Zhi

Xuan Jiuyin pondered for a moment before speaking, "Great-Grandfather, do you think that even the Origin Clarity Pavilion Master can't override the rules of the Origin Sect?"

Xuan Feiling retorted unhappily, "I'm the one asking you."

Xuan Jiuyin said helplessly, "How should I know what you big shots are thinking? It's hard for me to guess. I only know that the Origin Clarity Pavilion Master had settled the matter immediately, and no one dared to grumble or disobey."

Xuan Feiling sighed, "It's hard for you. I'll tell you, though, You Beihai is doing this because he doesn't want to make this a big deal. Otherwise, he could have just held Zhuang Shiliu hostage and forced him to reveal the truth. That way, not only others, but Tang Qiu would also be implicated, and there would be no way he wouldn't pay the price for breaking the rules."

Xuan Jiuyin was shocked, "Even a pavilion master like him doesn't want to make a big deal out of this? If this really gets out of hand, how many people would be implicated?"

Xuan Feiling said, "It's pointless to discuss this now. If I were in You Beihai's shoes, I would do the same thing."

After a pause, he added, "At least for now, we can't let chaos break out within the Origin Sect. Otherwise, the situation would be difficult to clean up..."

His voice had gradually become gloomy toward the end.

"So, will Lin Xun encounter similar situations like this in the future?" Xuan Jiuyin's face darkened.

Xuan Feiling guffawed, "Has this guy ever truly encountered real danger since he entered the Origin Sect Ancestral Court? As long as he follows the rules, he will be backed by many."

Xuan Jiuyin seemed to understand that point and pondered out loud, "That's true. I had resolved the Chao Zonglin incident with your authority, Great-Grandfather. This time, first Fang Daoping intervened in the Origin Clarity Pavilion incident, and then You Beihai personally ordered the matter to be resolved. From beginning to end, Lin Xun, despite being at the center of the storm, remained unscathed."

Xuan Feiling was silent for a moment and then said, "Lin Xun is a fine knife. Used well, he can eliminate the chronic diseases and tumors within the Origin Sect. Used poorly, he might even injure the user."

After a pause, he continued, "Just wait. When this guy reaches the Immortal Stage, he will go from being a mere chess piece to a capable opponent against those old fogeys."

Xuan Jiuyin was shocked, now realizing how his great-grandfather actually viewed Lin Xun!

...

Ninth Peak.

"Congratulations, Junior Brother Lin Xun, on successfully becoming a core disciple of our Ninth Peak!"

Upon his return, Ye Chunjun, Qin Ruoling, and the other disciples of the peak congratulated Lin Xun with faces filled with joy.

Lin Xun's performance today had astonished the entire audience, allowing the members of the Ninth Peak to hold their heads high and steal the show in front of the other peaks. It had been a long time since they had experienced such a feeling.

Lin Xun smiled and returned their greetings, then immediately went to pay his respects to his peak master. Upon seeing Qin Wuyu, he bowed earnestly. "Disciple Lin Xun is here to pay my heartfelt thanks to the peak master!"

Qin Wuyu said, "Today's incident was truly dangerous. Although it was ultimately resolved, you must be careful in the future and avoid any improper behavior."

His tone was still cold and stern, but Lin Xun knew that Qin Wuyu had recognized him from the moment he accepted him as a Ninth Peak disciple.

"As a disciple, I will remember your instructions, Peak Master." Lin Xun bowed. After leaving Qin Wuyu, he returned directly to his own abode.

Zhuang Shiliu, Tang Qiu, Yun Tianming, Nan Bohong, Mu Yunzheng...

While sitting cross-legged, Lin Xun recalled the events at Origin Clarity Pavilion, mentally memorizing each of the prominent figures who were against him. Right now, he likely did not have the opportunity to exact revenge. However, sooner or later, he would have to confront these old men who were lurking in the shadows and wreaking havoc!

The next step is to figure out a plan to become a disciple of Origin Clarity Pavilion, but this step requires an opportunity...

Lin Xun pondered. He had already become a core disciple. Moving forward, he could aspire to enter one of the three pavilions to cultivate.

However, this step was incredibly difficult. After all, becoming a part of a pavilion meant that his status would no longer be a simple disciple's. Instead, he would begin to come into contact with and wield a certain level of authority!

For example, even if someone entered the Origin Clarity Pavilion as a mere successor, they could still oversee matters related to selection and assessment. While their power wasn't significant, they were now on the path to advancement to deputy deacon, deacon, elder, and deputy pavilion master!

For example, Chao Zonglin, a disciple of the Origin Emptiness Pavilion, was responsible for distributing the sect's disciples' salaries, which was a considerable authority.

As the saying went, those who were closest to the water got to drink first. Being in charge of salary distribution meant they were naturally the first to receive the sect's various benefits! However, becoming a disciple of the three pavilions was exceptionally difficult.

First, the person needed to be a core disciple of the Nine Great Peaks. Then, that person needed to achieve a top-ten ranking during the Nine Peaks Dao Contest. Finally, a recommendation from a prominent figure was required.

While there were many core disciples of the Nine Great Peaks, only ten could reach the top ten through the Nine Peaks Dao Contest!

Of course, there were other ways to enter the three pavilions. For example, a deputy pavilion master could grant special admission for someone to enter a pavilion. Another method was completing three nine-star missions.

I've only just joined the sect, and I've already become a core disciple. It's probably inappropriate for me to ask Deputy Pavilion Master Fang Daoping to admit me to Origin Clarity Pavilion. Even if he's amenable to this, old Tang Qiu definitely won't agree to this.

Lin Xun was certain that Tang Qiu probably hated him to the core after what had happened today. How could he possibly allow him admission to Origin Clarity Pavilion?

It seems the only thing I can do next is accept nine-star missions...

Lin Xun also remembered that if he wanted to visit the Scripture Mountain to review the Immortal Legacy, he would also need to obtain three nine-star merits.

In addition to cultivation, the disciples of the Nine Great Peaks also traveled, and most of this travel was related to carrying out sect missions. Lin Xun decided to visit the Heavenly Treasure Hall of Origin Emptiness Pavilion another day to see if there were any suitable missions for him.

Hmm?

As Lin Xun pondered this, a feeling stirred within him, and the Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron quietly emerged. A breath of life then awakened from his weapon.

Xia Zhi!

Lin Xun's heart trembled. He could sense that Xia Zhi, who had been nurtured in the Nirvana law power, had quietly awakened at this moment. Indescribable joy surged within him, causing him to lose his usual composure. "Xia Zhi, you're finally awake."

A hooded black robe veiled Xia Zhi's slender, delicate figure. Beneath the brim of her hat lay a face so stunningly beautiful that it could eclipse the heavens and earth. Her long, slender fan-like eyelashes trembled slightly as she opened her clear, translucent, and luminous eyes.

Even after years together, the sight of Xia Zhi's beautiful face still left Lin Xun feeling a wave of disorientation.

Her features seemed a masterpiece crafted by the hand of heaven: dark eyebrows like ink, rosy lips, skin as white as cream, and a straight, slender nose. Her beauty was breathtaking, like a legendary celestial being. It was almost hard to believe that someone like her existed in this world.

Anyone facing such beauty would likely find it difficult to suppress their inner shock. Back when Lin Xun had first entered the Eternal True Realm, in Yunying Village next to Fallen God Ridge, Xia Zhi had fallen into a deep hibernation due to her severe injuries.

Unlike before, this time Xia Zhi had slept within the Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron, nurtured by the Nirvana law power while experiencing an incredible transformation. Now, over a decade had passed. She had finally awakened from that miraculous hibernation session!

"Lin Xun, I'm hungry." Xia Zhi's clear, ethereal voice echoed, leaving Lin Xun stunned yet filled with a long-lost sense of familiarity.

In years past, whether in Feiyun Village in the lower realm, in the Ancient Wasteland Domain, or even on the Ancient Nebula Road, whenever Xia Zhi awoke, she would immediately tell him that she was hungry.

She never seemed to be excited or ecstatic that she was seeing Lin Xun again. However, the more she was like this, the more excited and joyful he felt. Because this was Xia Zhi. She had always been like this, different from the rest.

"I've collected a lot of delicious food for you over the years. Wait a moment."

Although Lin Xun was excited and delighted, he also knew that they were currently on the territory of the Origin Sect, so Xia Zhi's unexplained appearance would likely cause some commotion. He stood up and activated all the restrictions in his cave haven. Then, taking a deep breath, he lifted her out of the Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron.

At that moment, an invisible ripple of law power quietly emerged. Lin Xun's heart tightened, remembering the resistance he'd faced from the Haotian law spirit when he'd attempted to store his martial uncle Kong Jue in the Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron in Chaotian City in the Great Thousand Battlefield.

Despite that, he wasn't nervous. Because the Nirvana law power was here, and it was that very same power that had initially neutralized the Haotian law spirit's inquiries. Sure enough, as the mysterious law power emerged, the Nirvana law power also surged forth, resembling a lotus flower, as it neutralized the invisible law power.

It worked!

Lin Xun smiled knowingly and completely relaxed.

Xia Zhi glanced around, then turned to Lin Xun, her voice clear and ethereal, "Where's the food?"

She was always like this. When he was around, she cared for nothing else. Or rather, she never cared about anything else in the world; as long as Lin Xun was around, that was all that mattered.

With a flick of his sleeves, a dazzling array of exotic fruits and delicacies were displayed before Xia Zhi. She was never one to be polite with Lin Xun, so she sat cross-legged on the ground and began to focus on the food before her. She wasn't moving quickly, but she ate with a remarkable speed.

Lin Xun watched with a smile as he pointed out various unique aspects of the food to Xia Zhi. His heart was filled with joy and happiness. Whenever he was with her, he never thought of anything else, because the very presence of her company was all that he needed.

What he hadn't noticed was that, outside his cave, a large, fat cat with silky, snow-white fur had quietly appeared and crouched there. A pair of emerald eyes shone with an obscure light.

Inside the cave, Lin Xun's voice was gentle, doting, "Eat slowly, there's plenty left, enough to last you a long time."

From what he could tell, after more than a decade of being nurtured and healed under the Nirvana law power, Xia Zhi had made a full recovery, and her whole being was now brimming with vitality.

While it was impossible for him to discern the exact benefits she had gained from the Nirvana law power, her recovery had already given Lin Xun a greater peace of mind. As long as Xia Zhi was safe, that was all that mattered.

"Hungry, I'm hungry too. I want to eat meat and drink alcohol—"

A sudden wail echoed from within the Limitless Abyss Sword Cauldron, startling Lin Xun. It was only then that he realized who the voice belonged to.

"Martial Uncle is awake too?" Lin Xun was pleasantly surprised.

What a day it was today! So many good things were happening!