Prodigies 3161

Chapter 3161 The Thought of Creating a Dao

In the depths of a desolate mountain wilderness, Lin Xun sat cross-legged in meditation. Dao aura coiled and drifted around him like pale mist, shrouding his figure and lending him an almost celestial air.

After defeating Black Crow's dao manifestation, he did not rush onward to challenge the dao manifestations left behind by his master, the Lord of Fangchun Mountain, or by the golden cicada. Instead, he chose to pause, to reflect, and to cultivate. This was because he had realized something crucial.

Take Chen Linkong, Ape Ancestor, and Black Crow as examples. When they were in the Mortal Transformation Zone, each of their dao paths had already reached the level of 'all daos converge into one, and from one arise all daos.'

Even so, their cultivation at that time still ran into a bottleneck, preventing them from truly entering the perfect state of the Immeasurable Realm. Could it be then that the power of 'all daos converge into one, and from one arise all daos' was merely a power that an Immeasurable Dao Lord could wield?

If one wished to reach the true perfection of this realm and to become an Immeasurable Sovereign, what kind of breakthrough was required on the cultivation path?

"All daos converge into one, and from one arise all daos. This is to smelt the daos of the world into a single furnace, and that furnace is one's own dao path. What is derived from it is still the daos of this world..."

As he sat in meditation, Lin Xun sank into deep contemplation. "The daos of this world...how vast they are...how countless... Traced back to their source, they are all born from the primal chaos origin. However, how did the primal chaos origin create so many great daos?

"Wait...create?!"

In that instant, Lin Xun's heart trembled violently. If the primal chaos origin could create daos that had never existed in this world, then why couldn't cultivators grasp such a power of creation as well? If this

could truly be achieved, then on the path of the dao, wouldn't it mean accomplishing 'creation from nothing'?

All daos converge into one referred to the unification of daos that already existed in the world. One giving rise to all daos was nothing more than the unfolding of laws and mysteries that had long existed in the world since immemorial.

What already existed in the world could be refined and derived. In contrast, what did not exist in the world, could it be created by oneself?

Like a thunderclap tearing through primal chaos, Lin Xun's mind roared. In that instant, it felt as though a veil of mist had been torn from apart, unveiling an inconceivably vast world. A world filled with mysteries so immense that his heart quaked with excitement, reverence and a faint unease.

Creating the great dao, creating power that had never existed in the world before. This thought itself was unimaginably bold, as if it had touched upon a forbidden ultimate mystery, filling Lin Xun with both exhalation and tension. Did such a power of creation truly exist in this world?

He did not know how long it took before his emotions finally settled. Slowly, he began to re-examine the Eternal Path. The Eternal Stage was divided into three great realms: Law Transcendence Realm, the Creation Realm, and the Immeasurable Realm.

The Law Transcendence Realm, as its name implied, concerned transcending 'law' itself, where 'law' referred to the laws, order, and principles that governed heaven and earth. To transcend the laws meant that after fully comprehending and mastering them, one could wield those laws at will and ultimately step beyond the constraints of heaven and earth themselves.

This was the first step of the Eternal Path.

The Creation Realm was the stage where one wielded the laws they had mastered to give birth to all things and manifest all phenomena, wielding power akin to that of a primordial creator. Upon reaching this stage, the more laws one refined, the more formidable and terrifying one's cultivation became.

This was the second great realm of the Eternal Path.

At first glance, the thought of creating daos that had never existed seemed faintly similar to the profundities of the Creation Realm. Of note, Lin Xun knew full well that the two were fundamentally different in essence.

One was the creation of all things and the manifestation of all phenomena. The other was the forging of daos that had never existed before in the world, akin to how the primal chaos origin itself gave birth to great daos.

Moreover, the power wielded by those at the Creation Realm stemmed from the laws they had refined. Only by refining more laws could they achieve the means to create all things and give rise to all phenomena. To 'create a great dao' was to touch upon the very secret of a dao's birth, to trespass upon the forbidden, primordial mysteries of the primal chaos origin! The two were utterly incomparable.

The Immeasurable Realm was the final stage of the Eternal Path, and also the ultimate destination of cultivation itself. To step into this realm was to traverse countless epochs, and to attain true freedom and ease.

However, even at this height, one could not act without restraint, nor do as one pleased. Because beyond the All-Wonder Dominion, to survive the destruction of an epoch, one must first endure the blows of the Great Silence Unlife Calamity.

In other words, setting aside the struggles for supremacy among cultivators, the only force in this world capable of threatening Immeasurable Realm beings was the Great Silence Unlife Calamity.

However, where did this calamity come from? No one knew. Even among the most powerful Immeasurable Realm figures, none had been able to unravel this mystery to this day.

In Lin Xun's view, if anyone truly possessed the answer, it could only be the Alpha Origin Master. That being wielded the Alpha Origin Bell and could command the power of the Great Silence Unlife Calamity itself. He could even allow his chosen Heavenly Mandate Apostles to borrow that power, an ability that could only be described as utterly taboo.

So why did the Great Silence Unlife Calamity exist? Why did it arise at the turning of each epoch? And why did it target only those who had reached the Immeasurable Realm?

Lin Xun had pondered these questions before, but he had never found an answer. Now, however, as the notion of 'creating great daos,' like the primal chaos origin itself, took shape in his mind, a bold and unsettling possibility suddenly emerged.

Could it be that the very existence of the Great Silence Unlife Calamity was meant to prevent any being from wielding a power akin to the primal chaos origin: the power to create great daos themselves? At this thought, Lin Xun fell silent. His mind roiled, unable to find calm for a long while.

The Alpha Origin Master must understand this answer most clearly. Or perhaps Elder Chen Xi, or that mysterious swordsman has already grasped part of the truth. After all, figures such as them would not come to the All-Wonder Dominion without reason. They most likely came for this very secret...

Moreover, it is said that within the All-Wonder Dominion lay fortunes and opportunities capable of granting ultimate transcendence upon the ultimate path...

Only after a long while did Lin Xun manage to sort through his tangled thoughts.

First, the path of 'all laws return to one, and from one arise all,' was a power that only Immeasurable Dao Lords could truly grasp. Back in the Mortal Transformation Zone, people such as Chen Linkong, Ape Ancestor, and Black Crow had all reached this level.

Second, to break through the boundary of Immeasurable Dao Lord, to step into the perfect Immeasurable Realm and become an Immeasurable Sovereign, one had to achieve a further transcendence upon their dao path. In other words, one had to achieve a breakthrough beyond the path of 'all laws return to one, and from one arises all.'

Furthermore, if one wished to determine whether the path of creating great daos that had never existed before in the world truly existed, then the answer could only be found by probing the primal chaos origin power of the All-Wonder Dominion.

After all, the Chaos Dao Fruit was born precisely from the primal chaos origin of the All-Wonder Dominion. Each Chaos Dao Fruit was a complete innate principle power, and it was rumored to be the very opportunity through which Immeasurable Realm beings could attain ultimate transcendence.

Finally, the origin of the Great Silence Unlife Calamity was almost certainly intertwined with the primal chaos origin of the All-Wonder Dominion. If answers existed at all, they could only be found within this All-Wonder Dominion!

As these threads fell into place, Lin Xun felt a sudden clarity wash over him, as though clouds had parted and brilliant sunlight flooded his mind. He understood now. If he followed these traces to their end, he might truly uncover those forbidden, ultimate secrets. Furthermore, in the process, his own path of cultivation would inevitably undergo a profound transformation!

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The mountains and wilderness lay vast and desolate, and every sound was swallowed by utter stillness.

Lin Xun sat cross-legged on the ground, his mind fully immersed in cultivation. Gradually, his aura began to transform. A wondrous and extraordinary dao path unfolded from within him, as though a vast starry cosmos was opening, billions of stars igniting, rivers of galaxies flowing, and endless astral vortices revolving...

Then, another completely different dao path emerged, one where all ages withered, the heavens fell, and all things dissolved into emptiness. Desolation spread without end as worlds were annihilated, apocalyptic visions unfolding one after another.

Thereafter, innumerable Buddha realms came into being. Marvellous lotuses drifted through the ten directions, Brahma chants rolled forth like an endless tide, and boundless radiance illuminated a realm of great dao bliss. At last, nine pure heavens took shape, unfolding visions of pure emptiness, primordial vastness, and the wondrous harmony of all transformations...

These were the supreme dao paths once followed by the founders of the Four Great Ancestral Courts: Yuan Chu, Tian Wu, Shi, and Xu Yin. Now, Lin Xun used the power of Nirvana to reenact them in turn, unveiling every last trace of their profound mysteries!

Time slipped by. In the blink of an eye, an entire month had passed

One day, Lin Xun's aura suddenly shifted again. Clear and turbid qi surged forth, interweaving and circulating, separating into yin and yang, revolving endlessly until they formed a complete Taiji...

That aura was unmistakably the power of Ape Ancestor's dao path! However, in less than an hour, the power Lin Xun had manifested abruptly stalled, then collapsed and dispersed completely.

At the same time, Lin Xun let out a muffled groan and jolted awake from his deep meditation.

"The mysteries of this dao path cannot yet be deduced," Lin Xun sighed inwardly. "It seems my cultivation is still lacking. Otherwise, it would not have turned out this way..."

Defeating Ape Ancestor's dao manifestation was one thing. Fully unraveling the mysteries of his dao path was something else altogether. After all, the dao manifestation Ape Ancestor left behind already belonged to the realm of the Immeasurable Dao Lords, where all daos converge into one, making it extremely difficult for anyone to glimpse its primordial secrets.

With Lin Xun's current level of cultivation, fully manifesting the profound mysteries of this dao path was still beyond him.

"Very well. Then I shall go and experience the power of Elder Golden Cicada's dao manifestation." Lin Xun rose to his feet and departed from the mountain wilderness.

The Yong Kingdom, Mapleleaf Crossing.

A fiery red maple forest spread along the banks of a great river. Crimson leaves drifted down upon the water's surface, resembling burning flames rippling and dispersing with the current.

Above Mapleleaf Crossing drifted a lone auspicious cloud, upon which a golden cicada lay, head raised, gazing silently toward the sky. Lin Xun stood above the fiery-red maple forest, his moon-white robes stirring in the river breeze, his bearing as aloof and untainted as a celestial. The golden cicada gazed at the sky. Lin Xun gazed at the cicada. Their eyes met in silence, content to look at one another without end.

Near Mapleleaf Crossing, ordinary travelers waited for the boats to dock, while farther away, the silhouettes of many mighty cultivators stood in silence. Each of those mighty figures stood far away, but when their gazes fell on Lin Xun, reverence and awe inevitably surfaced in their expressions.

Of the five dao manifestations ranked jointly first in the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws, three had already fallen to Lin Xun. Now, he was about to face the golden cicada's dao manifestation!

Suddenly, a fiery-red maple leaf rose with the wind, spinning lightly before drifting into the blue-green river below. At that very instant, Lin Xun moved as well.

He clasped his hands in salute from afar and spoke gently, "Elder, please grant me your guidance!"

Beneath the vault of heaven, above the drifting auspicious clouds, a cicada's cry suddenly rang out. At first it was faint, barely perceptible, then it soared through the clouds, shook heaven and earth, and echoed across the mountains and rivers of the world.

Those mighty figures who had long hidden themselves far away all felt their minds shudder. In their hazy vision, they seemed to see a cicada beating its wings as it came forth from the eternal river of time amid the turning of epochs.

Chapter 3162 The Formless Dao of Illusion and Reality

Above Mapleleaf Crossing, cicadas chirped in a deafening chorus. The spectators standing far away were all plunged into shock and daze, their thoughts scattered, as though they had been dragged into a strange and dreamlike illusion. The dream felt so vivid, so overwhelmingly real, that it seemed to carry them back to the very beginning of their own pursuit of the dao, reliving joys and sorrows, triumphs and setbacks, endless hardships and bitter struggles.

Lin Xun's mind rippled for an instant, but he quickly regained his composure. When he looked again, a handsome young man stood upon the auspicious clouds. He wore coarse hemp robes and was barefoot, his demeanor gentle and unassuming. His eyes were clear and serene, devoid of arrogance, pressure or menace. Suddenly, the young man smiled. He raised a finger and casually traced a line through the air.

Boom!

In an instant, heaven and earth split open. All scenes and phenomena twisted violently. Lin Xun found himself standing upon a broken, dead-end road. One step forward led straight into a yawning abyss; one step back sank into endless darkness.

There was nothing else. Even worse, his cultivation seemed to have vanished entirely! Lin Xun's eyes narrowed.

"Abyss and darkness, one illusory and the other real, life and death...which is illusory and which is real? It is up to you to decide." A gentle and calm voice sounded.

Lin Xun fell silent.

Is the interplay of illusion and reality, life and death, the dao path mastered by Elder Golden Cicada?

He gazed into the abyss ahead. It was bottomless and profound, as though it could swallow not only flesh and bone, but one's very soul. When he turned to look behind him, all he saw was a rolling darkness. It was hazy, unfathomable and deeply unsettling.

Crack! Crack!

Suddenly, fine cracks spread across the shattered ground beneath his feet, branching like a spider's web. If this continued, the road would soon collapse entirely, and he would plunge into the abyss. At the same time, the black mist behind him writhed and surged forward, closing in without haste.

A deadly dilemma! Worst still, Lin Xun could not mobilize even the slightest trace of his cultivation. It seemed he had only two options: step forward into the abyss, or be devoured by the encroaching darkness.

Illusion and reality intertwined. Life and death stood side by side. The danger was extreme. Anyone else would believe that only by discerning which was false and which was real could this peril be resolved.

Many would even regard it as an invisible contest of the great dao itself. Fail to see through illusion and reality, or fail to distinguish life and death, and defeat would be inevitable.

For a fleeting instant, even Lin Xun almost believed this to be true. However, just as he was about to make his choice, he abruptly stopped. After a brief shift in expression, he laughed aloud.

What abyss? What darkness? What illusion and reality? What life and death? All of it was nothing more than a snare of the mind. Once caught within it, no matter what choice was made, the outcome would always be loss!

Like an ox led by the nose, one should struggle to break free. How could one follow the other's pull? As for his vanished cultivation...this was precisely the illusion!

Bang!

The broken road beneath suddenly collapsed, and behind him, dense fog surged forward, swallowing everything in its path. At that instant, Lin Xun roared in his mind. "Open!"

Boom!

As all things shifted and transformed, the black mist and abyss burst apart like bubbles, vanishing without a trace. As Lin Xun's vision snapped back into clarity, a finger that was as silent and sharp as sword qi was already inches from him!

It belonged to the golden cicada. At the critical moment, Lin Xun struck out with a single palm.

Bang!

The finger and palm collided. An ear-splitting roar erupted as light exploded outward in all directions. Lin Xun staggered, cold sweat breaking out across his back. If he had awakened even a fraction of a moment later, he would have already met with disaster. Thinking back on what had just happened, he felt a lingering chill. It was truly terrifying.

Without even noticing, he had already sunk into a mental illusion that cultivators called Appearance Bound, and it was precisely because of this that he had fallen into the killing calamity of the abyss and the black mist.

Was it an illusion? Yes and no. For whether real or illusory, it was still a lethal calamity, and all of it had been triggered by a single finger stroke. In truth, it was the golden cicada's sudden attack. The dao power contained within that finger had silently invaded and distorted Lin Xun's state of mind!

This was the true terror of the golden cicada's dao manifestation. Illusion and reality coexisted. Life and death overlapped. Killing intent shifted freely between form and formlessness! Amid the fading light, the golden cicada's figure dissolved like foam upon water, disappearing without a trace.

At Mapleleaf Crossing, ordinary travellers still waited by the ferry as before. In the distance, the watching mighty figures remained lost in a daze. Beneath the vault of heaven, aside from the absence of the golden cicada atop the auspicious cloud, everything seemed no different from before.

However, Lin Xun sensed that something was amiss. The golden cicada's dao manifestation had not truly fallen, yet it was as though it had vanished entirely from this world. No trace of it could be perceived anymore.

"That which is formless has no shape, what stands before the eyes is real, while the golden cicada is illusory..."

Lin Xun's brows lifted slightly. This was neither concealment nor invisibility, but a supreme dao technique, one that could evade not only the naked eye, but even spirit sense.

Time flowed on, but the golden cicada never reappeared.

Lin Xun's expression grew increasingly solemn. The enemy lurked in shadow while he stood fully exposed; existence confronted the unseen. In such a confrontation, countless variables were bound to arise.

The golden cicada had become the 'nothingness' of the great dao. In contrast, Lin Xun, standing openly in the world, was 'existence.' Nothingness against existence, illusion against reality, darkness against

light! This was the first time Lin Xun had ever faced such a battle, and the invisible pressure it carried was, without question, the most terrifying of all.

Suddenly, he drew a deep breath. He closed his eyes. His outwardly spreading spirit sense withdrew completely. He stood motionless where he was, his mind clear and tranquil like an ancient well untouched by even the faintest ripple. His mind was like that ancient well, yet it could still reflect the moon's illusory shadow!

Then, within his mind, a figure appeared, standing at his side. Its five fingers were gathered into a seal, raised halfway in the air, yet it seemed unable to strike, hesitating there for a long moment. That figure was none other than the golden cicada!

"So...he's been standing right beside me all this time," Lin Xun realized. "Waiting for the slightest fluctuation in my mind or qi just to raise his hand and strike..."

A chill ran down his spine. Surprise and sudden realization surged together, and cold sweat soaked his back. This formless dao that blurred illusion and reality was truly unfathomable.

Boom!

The instant Lin Xun's mind rippled, the golden cicada finally moved. His raised fist descended like a thunderbolt long held in restraint. However, Lin Xun had already captured his trace, so how could he fail to respond? Almost at once, he raised his fist and struck back.

Rumble—The collision of their fists shook heaven and earth.

The distant mighty figures, who had stood dazed, as though trapped within a dream, were violently jolted awake. Cries of alarm burst from their lips as they exchanged glances, fear and horror etched plainly across their faces.

For beings of their level, ordinary arts of illusion were meaningless, incapable of stirring their minds in the slightest. However, the golden cicada's dao manifestation had shaken the very foundation of their minds with a single cry, casting them into a nightmare-like trance!

What kind of cultivation could possibly reach such a height? In the distant heavens and earth, a battle was unfolding. Gradually, it drew the full attention of the watching mighty beings.

Of note what chilled them to the bone was how utterly bizarre the battle appeared.

The golden cicada's figure would vanish without the faintest trace, dissolving into nothingness. Meanwhile, Lin Xun stood with eyes closed, his spirit sense completely withdrawn. Despite that, each time, he seemed able to pinpoint the golden cicada's position, forcing him to reveal himself again and again...

The sight left them staring in stunned disbelief.

After a long while...Boom!

The golden cicada was forced to reveal himself once more. He shook his head, let out a soft chuckle, and then vanished entirely, leaving not even a ripple behind.

Lin Xun finally opened his eyes. He turned toward the empty void and bowed. "Thank you for your guidance, Elder."

...He won?

The mighty figures present were stunned. Some felt their hearts tremble violently, their thoughts thrown into uncontrollable turmoil. This dao contest might not have appeared especially dazzling, yet invisible killing intent permeated every moment from beginning to end.

If it had been them, they would not have found even a single trace of the golden cicada. Without even perceiving the opponent, how could there be any contest at all?

Despite all that, Lin Xun had won! He had truly won. Another dao law power vanished from the Heavenly Cycle Dao laws. This change was clearly perceived by the mighty figures present through the Jade Book of Merits.

However, the Chaos Dao Fruit that was meant to appear for Lin Xun still did not manifest, and that made the situation even more alarming. At a moment like this...how could it still be so?

If even after defeating the dao manifestation left behind by the golden cicada the Chaos Dao Fruit still refused to appear, did that not mean Lin Xun might never be able to leave the Mortal Transformation Zone?

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The Realm of All Mysteries, Hidden Domain.

The golden cicada had just lifted a chess piece when his hand suddenly paused midair. A faint, unreadable expression flickered across his brow.

“Indecisive?” the Lord of Fangchun Mountain asked with a smile from across the board. “Does that mean you’re about to concede?”

The golden cicada slowly set the piece back in its place and gave a soft chuckle. “I concede this match willingly. I truly did not expect that Young Friend Lin’s state of mind would reach such a height. Even my formless dao that blurred illusion and reality failed to hinder him.”

There was unmistakable satisfaction in his voice.

A glimmer of understanding passed through the Lord of Fangchun Mountain’s eyes. “It has only been seven months since he entered the Mortal Transformation Zone, and he has already defeated the dao manifestation you left behind?”

He understood better than anyone how profound and elusive the golden cicada’s dao path was. It was one of the most inscrutable paths in the entire All-Wonder Dominion. Given the circumstances, even the Lord of Fangchun Mountain had not expected Lin Xun to overcome the golden cicada’s dao manifestation so quickly.

The golden cicada laughed aloud. “Fellow Daoist, there’s unmistakable pride in your words. You must be delighted.”

The Lord of Fangchun Mountain smiled faintly. “One day, I may no longer be worthy to call myself his master. But the more he excels, the more content I am. I have always wished for my disciples to outshine me.”

The golden cicada grew thoughtful. “I understand your sentiments, Fellow Daoist. Yet I find myself somewhat concerned for Young Friend Lin.”

“You fear that his performance as a variable may invite unforeseen disaster?”

“Precisely.”

“There is no need for concern. Alpha Origin has not acted. As long as he remains unmoved, there is nothing to fear.”

“Let us hope it remains so.”

At this point, the golden cicada suddenly said, “Young Friend Lin will surely challenge the dao manifestation you left behind next. That trial will not be easy for him.”

The Lord of Fangchun Mountain casually remarked, “To others, the dao manifestation I left behind would be insurmountable. But for Lin Xun, it will be the easiest to overcome.”

“So there is more to it than meets the eye?” the golden cicada asked, intrigued.

The Lord of Fangchun Mountain smiled faintly. “Would I, as his master, set an impossible hurdle for my own disciple? As for the intricacies, you may ask him yourself when the time comes.”

The golden cicada paused, then nodded slowly. “Then I shall look forward to that day.”

Chapter 3163 Crescent Moon and Three Stars, The Spirit Platform

Mapleleaf Crossing.

When the gathered mighty figures finally recovered their senses, they discovered that Lin Xun had already departed at some unknown moment.

Suddenly, someone spoke, “Do you all remember how the Alpha Origin Master left the Mortal Transformation Zone back then?”

“It is said that when Alpha Origin Master first entered the Mortal Transformation Zone, there were only a few dozen dao manifestations within the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws. He challenged them one by one and defeated them all with ease. Yet even after that, the Chaos Dao Fruit did not appear. As a result, he remained trapped in this Mortal Transformation Zone for several hundred years.”

“Later, it was said that he comprehended the ultimate secret within the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws of the Mortal Transformation Zone. With a single step, the heavenly gate opened of its own accord, and thus he departed. However, it’s only a legend. No one knows whether it’s true.”

“Don’t forget, the dao manifestation of Alpha Origin Master is not among the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws. If he had not grasped their ultimate mystery, how else could such a thing have been possible?”

“There’s no need for everyone to argue over this. Don’t you think that Lin Xun’s current situation bears some resemblance to that of Alpha Origin Master back then?”

At those words, the atmosphere shifted at once. It fell noticeably quieter, and several expressions flickered with unease. How could the Lin Xun of today be compared with Alpha Origin Master back then?

“Since ancient times, Alpha Origin Master has been regarded as one of the very first to step into the pinnacle of the Immeasurable Realm. It has been countless epochs since he attained the dao. Within the All-Wonder Dominion, there are almost none who can stand shoulder to shoulder with him.”

“That’s not necessarily so,” someone countered calmly. “What about that swordsman? Did he not transform his own cultivation into a sword seal and bind Alpha Origin Master to this day?”

Another voice spoke, calm yet firm, “Let us be clear. The Lin Xun of today is naturally no match for the Alpha Origin Master as he stands now. But the Lin Xun of today already possesses the foundation to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Alpha Origin Master of back then!”

At those words, silence fell once more. Indeed, judging by Lin Xun’s present foundation and record of feats, he was fully comparable to the Alpha Origin Master when he had first entered the Mortal Transformation Zone. That was an undeniable fact that no one could refute.

After a long while, someone spoke in a low voice, “What remains to be seen now is whose dao attainment is stronger...Lin Xun’s or that of his master, the Lord of Fangchun Mountain. If Lin Xun prevails, and the Chaos Dao Fruit still fails to manifest, then his situation will indeed mirror that of Alpha Origin Master back then.”

“And if he loses...” the speaker paused. “Then there will be nothing left to discuss.”

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Between the heavens and the earth, Lin Xun rode the wind, drifting freely across the boundless mountains and rivers.

After his battle with th golden cicada, an irresistible surge of insight welled up within him. It was as though an unseen barrier had suddenly shattered, and throughout his body flowed a transformation like water brimming in a cup. Once full, it must overflow.

Only then did Lin Xun realize that his cultivation had advanced once more. He had broken through from the intermediate Immeasurable Realm into the advanced Immeasurable Realm. As he wandered freely between heaven and earth, he quietly savored the myriad transformations unfolding within his cultivation. An indescribable joy welled up in his heart.

For a cultivator, there was no greater delight than such a transformation in one’s cultivation, like a dam bursting and floodwaters roaring forth, like torrential rain pouring down from the nine heavens. Day after day passed. Lin Xun never slowed his steps. He crossed mountain after mountain, river after river, sweeping across boundless lands, silently witnessing the myriad states of mortal existences.

Half a month passed. Only then did Lin Xun come to a halt. In the vast stretch between heaven and earth ahead, a boundless blue sea unfolded, its waves surging in magnificent swells.

Above the azure waters, sandpipers wheeled and gathered, while schools of fish occasionally burst from the surface, sending sprays of foam scattering into the air. Suspended high above one stretch of water stood a solitary stone stele. Upon its surface was the image of a crescent moon and three stars.

When Lin Xun arrived, the surrounding expanse of the blue sea was already filled with countless mighty figures. Silhouettes stood in every direction, as though all the great powers in the Mortal Transformation Zone had gathered here. This battle had undoubtedly drawn the eyes of the entire world!

After all, Lin Xun had battled for nine consecutive months and had won every single battle. Now, within the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws, only one dao manifestation remained for him to challenge. Moreover, this dao manifestation bore an especially profound connection to him.

If he were to fall, all his previous victories would dissolve like water carried away by the current. However, if he prevailed, it would become yet another legend etched into the history of the Mortal Transformation Zone!

As Lin Xun arrived, he took in the scene at a glance. The shores of the azure sea were already crowded with mighty figures. Among them, he immediately spotted familiar faces such as Xing Jianxia, Fu Nanli, and other old friends.

After offering them a nod of greeting, he stepped onto the waves and strode across the blue sea, heading straight for the floating stone stele. Countless gazes followed him.

Standing before the stele, Lin Xun spoke softly to himself, “The crescent moon and three stars signify the heart-mind. The spirit platform within an inch is also associated with the heart-mind. Master, I have long understood that the foundation of Fangchun Mountain rests upon the cultivation of the heart-mind.

“You once told my senior brothers and sisters that disciples need not be inferior to their master. Today, I have come to seek guidance from the dao manifestation you left behind.”

He cupped his hands and bowed deeply.

Buzz—

The stone stele began to hum. Light rippled across its surface as it transformed into a tall, slender figure seated high as if in the nine heavens. His beard and hair were snow-white. His bearing was transcendent, like a celestial sage, like a Confucian saint, like a Buddha of boundless compassion, like a demon of immeasurable might. However, he was neither immortal nor daoist, neither Confucian nor Buddhist, neither demon nor monster.

The aura he radiated was profound, unfathomable, and indescribable. This figure was naturally the dao manifestation left behind by the Lord of Fangchun Mountain!

The moment he appeared, every mighty figure within the vast territory surrounding the azure sea felt their hearts tremble. It was as though they stood before the teacher of myriad daos, the sovereign of all heavens. A reverence rose instinctively from the depths of their souls, like they were gazing up at an insurmountable peak.

It was an invisible authority, a formless majesty that allowed no thought of irreverence, disrespect or defiance. Even Lin Xun felt that overwhelming presence surge toward him like a boundless tide.

Though he had seen his master's Will Dharma Form before, what stood before him now was entirely different, like the gulf between clouds and mud. Suddenly, the Lord of Fangchun Mountain moved, casually delivering a palm strike.

Boom!

The moment that palm descended, the mighty figures watching from afar felt their minds reel as if struck by a heavy blow. In their dazed vision, they seemed to shrink into insignificant ants, while that colossal hand blotted out the sky and pressed down to suppress all beneath it.

Only one thought remained in their hearts: this palm was like the vast heavenly dao itself descending. It was impossible to withstand. An indescribable despair began to spread wildly through their hearts. Just

as they were on the verge of breaking down, a clear and composed dao voice suddenly resounded, “Overbearing!”

Boom!

Those mighty figures felt their vision go dark for an instant. Then their state of mind that had been on the verge of collapse was suddenly torn free from that suffocating despair. Even so, the backlash struck hard. Many turned deathly pale, their figures staggering, nearly tumbling from the void.

Shock and terror were etched across every expression. What a terrifying palm strike! It targeted the mind. Even from a great distance, beings of the Greater Boundless Realm could barely withstand it. If that palm had descended upon them directly, the outcome would have been beyond imagination!

When they looked again into the distance, Lin Xun was already locked in combat with the Lord of Fangchun Mountain. The Lord of Fangchun Mountain’s fighting style was astonishingly simple. He merely lifted his palm and struck, again and again. Each movement was light and unadorned, devoid of any grand display of divine radiance or overwhelming dao momentum.

However, every palm strike fell directly upon the mind. It was almost inconceivable. The mind was the most mysterious and intangible of forces. Despite that, beneath the Lord of Fangchun Mountain’s palm, even the invisible could not hide.

Pu!

Some spectators coughed up blood, turned away and fled without daring to look again. Others tried to endure. They were watching from afar, yet even at that distance, the impact struck them mercilessly. It felt as though heavy hammers were crashing down upon their minds again and again.

One by one, they began to retreat. A few stubborn figures attempted to hold their ground, but after only several breaths they coughed up blood and cried out in agony. Their mental states were on the verge of collapse. Panic overtook them, and they withdrew in haste. In just moments, not a single spectator remained above the azure sea!

.....

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Within the battlefield, Lin Xun felt as though his mind had become a blazing furnace. Each palm strike from the Lord of Fangchun Mountain crashed down like a divine hammer, causing the furnace walls to thunder and shudder violently. The force was so fierce he nearly felt himself shattering from within.

It was a direct assault upon the mind itself. It was subtle, unfathomable and unlike any other dao confrontation in the world. At the beginning, Lin Xun was still able to resist. Gradually, he could do nothing more than defend himself.

“I never imagined that my master would have refined the power of his mind to such an unfathomable extent. With cultivation like this, how could he merely rank first among the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws?”

The pressure bearing down on Lin Xun mounted steadily, and confusion flickered through his thoughts.

The golden cicada’s Formless Dao of Illusion and Reality was already mysterious and unique beyond compare, but who would have expected that his master’s mastery of the mind would be on an entirely different level!

In comparison, the dao manifestation left behind by Ape Ancestor, Black Crow, and Chen Linkong were far easier to withstand.

Boom!

The furnace of his mind trembled ever more violently beneath the relentless blows. Lin Xun no longer dared allow a single stray thought to arise. He severed all distractions. He gathered every thread of spirit, essence and will into the depths of his mind, driving his cultivation to its fullest extent.

Then, almost instinctively, he activated the Sacred Combat Art, one of Fangchun Mountain’s nine great inheritances. At that very instant, something extraordinary occurred. Within the furnace of his mind, an unparalleled fighting spirit suddenly surged forth, as though blazing flames had been ignited from its core.

The trembling stabilized. The chaos settled.

When the Lord of Fangchun Mountain's next palm descended, the impact was still immense, but it was no longer unbearable. A surge of clarity invigorated Lin Xun.

Of course.

The Fangchun Mountain's nine great inheritances had all been created by his master. Long ago, he had already fused those nine scriptures into his own path of cultivation. It was only because he had never before faced a battle that struck directly at the mind that he had been caught off guard and suffered under the initial impact.

Realizing this, Lin Xun immediately began circulating the remaining inheritances in succession: the Great Genesis Heart Sutra, the Wandering Sutra, the Boundless Nearness, the Transformation Freedom, Unfettered Roaming, Unbounded Walker, the Sutra of Perfected Knowledge, and the Fangchun Prison.

Every inheritance encompassed the myriad phenomena of heaven and earth. Each could be traced back to its primordial source. In addition, at their root, all were intricately bound to the power of the mind.

At this moment, as Lin Xun circulated his cultivation, countless wondrous visions began to unfold within the furnace of his mind. Not only did it grow completely stable, but it also gave rise to insights that he had never before touched.

What was even more astonishing was that when the Lord of Fangchun Mountain's palm struck again, there was no violent tremor and no unbearable impact. Instead, a strange resonance rippled through him.

It was as though his mind was a block of unrefined iron, and each descending palm was a divine hammer tempering it, refining it, and forging it into something beyond words. A sudden realization surfaced in his heart. Could this...be a blessing Master left behind for me?

Chapter 3164 Mind Roaming Ten Thousand Fathoms, Mind Spanning Ten Thousand Ages

Above the azure sea, Lin Xun stood tall and still, his handsome figure bathed in dazzling dao light. Within him, a transformation was unfolding.

His mind became a furnace. As he circulated the Fangchun Mountain's nine great inheritances, the palm strikes from the Lord of Fangchun Mountain no longer felt like destruction. Instead, they transformed into a mysterious tempering force. His state of mind was like a sword edge forged through a thousand hammerings, gradually releasing an incomparable sharp and peerless radiance.

As that furnace of mind was refined again and again, the streak of sharpness within it finally seemed to shatter an invisible restraint. Together with the profound truths of Fangchun Mountain's nine great inheritances, an astonishing aura surged forth.

Sometimes it soared above the boundless firmament, roaming the vast void. Sometimes, it raced freely among the myriad phenomena of existence. This was the ultimate mystery recorded in the Wandering Sutra: 'The radiance of the mind is like a shuttle, drifting through the ten thousand workings of creation.'

Sometimes it wandered freely amid the ten thousand fathoms of the mortal world, transcending the rise and fall of mortal affairs. This was the mystery of Unfettered Roaming: when the mind reached such a realm, one could ride upon the rightful order of heaven and earth, govern the transformations of the six qi, and roam without bound.

At times, it pierced through the profound mysteries of the heavens, discerning the essential nature of the myriad dao. At other times, it transformed into mountains and rivers, into every blade of grass and tree, into the sun, moon and stars, into all living beings, experiencing the destinies of countless lives. This was Transformation Freedom: the power to become all phenomena beneath the heavens, to assume the forms of heaven and earth, to flow through the turning of thousands of ages.

In the end, that streak of sharpness born from the depths of his mind seemed to pierce through the barriers of eternity itself, traversing the shifting tides of countless epochs.

Unbound, unfettered, and free of all attachment. That was true freedom, true boundless wandering. It was as though with a single thought he could comprehend the span of eternity, glimpse the mysteries of heaven and earth, and behold all that lay between the ancient past and distant future.

It was impossible to tell how much time had passed...

Lin Xun slowly opened his eyes. When he looked again toward the distance, the figure of the Lord of Fangchun Mountain was already fading away.

“Thank you, Master, for helping me break through the shackles of the mind!” Lin Xun bowed deeply in reverence.

The mind could roam ten thousand fathoms. The mind could span across ten thousand ages. This was the Dao of Fangchun, the dao of the heart-mind!

Through this struggle, Lin Xun’s state of mind seemed to have crossed an invisible threshold. Within the Immeasurable Realm, he had attained true great freedom and unbounded wandering.

That wondrous transformation within his mind brought about an indescribable change in his aura and bearing. Although he stood suspended in the void, it felt as though he was standing above the endless river of eternity.

However, upon closer inspection, he seemed no different from anything else in heaven and earth, natural and present everywhere. He could be a speck of dust. He could be a celestial firmament. He could be a single grain that endured across countless ages!

.....

Far beyond the azure sea, those mighty beings who had retreated from the battlefield suddenly felt something stir within their hearts. In the Jade Book of Merits, the aura belonging to the Lord of Fangchun Mountain’s dao manifestation had vanished.

That change sent a tremor through them all. There was no longer any doubt. Lin Xun had won.

“For a disciple to defeat the dao manifestation his own master left behind...this is truly astonishing,” someone murmured, unable to hide their amazement.

Before coming to the All-Wonder Dominion, each of them had their own successor. Many were even founders of great dao lineages. However, among their disciples, how many could truly compare to Lin Xun? How many walked a path as unparalleled as Lin Xun's?

"The power of the Lord of Fangchun Mountain is profoundly mysterious and impossible to evade. His every movement struck directly at the state of mind, making it impossible to defend against and impossible to avoid. Such a dao could only be called the most inscrutable and supreme beneath the heavens. And yet Lin Xun defeated it. Does this mean his state of mind has reached an equally unfathomable height?"

"It must be so."

"Wait! The Chaos Dao Fruit that should belong to Lin Xun still hasn't appeared!"

"That..."

"This is no longer merely a matter of defeating the dao manifestation left behind by the Lord of Fangchun Mountain. After this battle, Lin Xun can be compared with Alpha Origin Master as he was in those days!"

A great uproar swept through the crowd. Even the mighty beings present could no longer remain composed. All five dao manifestations jointly ranked first in the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws had been defeated by Lin Xun one after another, yet the Chaos Dao Fruit still refused to appear. It was simply unbelievable.

"It is said that Alpha Origin Master was once trapped here for a full hundred years. Only after unraveling the mysteries of the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws did he take a step forward and the heavenly gate opened of its own accord. Will Lin Xun accomplish such a miracle as well?" someone murmured softly.

The crowd exchanged glances. Without another word, they stirred and surged toward the azure sea. When they arrived, they instinctively lifted their heads. High above, at the farthest reaches of the sky, Lin Xun was ascending higher and higher, as though he intended to pierce through the vault of heaven and depart this world.

“What is he doing?” Bewilderment rippled through the gathered mighty beings.

.....

The Realm of All Mysteries, Hidden Domain.

Without warning, the Lord of Fangchun Mountain flicked his sleeve. The chessboard before him overturned. Chess pieces scattered through their air like falling rain. He rose leisurely to his feet, unhurried, a faint smile playing at his lips. “The game ends here. Now...we wait for the final showdown.”

The golden cicada was momentarily startled. Then he stood as well, smiling in return. “It seems Young Friend Lin already possesses the foundation to break the deadlock.”

“Not yet,” the Lord of Fangchun Mountain replied calmly. “But as you say, the foundation is there. Just as it once was for Alpha Origin, for Chen Xi...and for that swordsman.” His gaze was clear and unfathomably deep.

The golden cicada fell silent in thought for a moment, then nodded. “Good.”

.....

Hongling Domain.

A burst of hearty laughter suddenly rang out from within a thatched hut. “As expected of the Lord of Fangchun Mountain! That dao manifestation he left behind back then...what a brilliant move!”

Not far away, Chen Linkong, who had been sitting cross-legged on the ground, trembled slightly. “Grandfather...what do you mean?”

“Long ago,” the voice from within the thatched hut said slowly, “were you not curious why, with the Lord of Fangchun Mountain’s level of cultivation, he only left behind a dao manifestation ranked first among the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws in the Mortal Transformation Zone?”

Chen Linkong nodded. “Indeed. In my view, the Lord of Fangchun Mountain’s cultivation had long surpassed the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws.”

The voice continued, carrying a trace of reflection, “At first, I thought he was concealing his strength. Only now do I understand...he was laying the path for his disciple.” There was unmistakable admiration in his tone. “As a master, he was willing to relinquish an even greater Chaos Dao Fruit for himself, all to perfect his disciple’s cultivation of the heart-mind. Such resolve...even I must bow in respect.”

“You mean...back then, the Lord of Fangchun Mountain was able to, just like you, Grandfather, step beyond the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws and draw forth a strand of a true essence from the primal chaos origin of the Mortal Transformation Zone?” A flicker of astonishment crossed Chen Linkong’s face. “If so...then the price he paid must have been immense.”

The voice from the hut replied calmly. “One must relinquish in order to gain. Without that sacrifice, how could Lin Xun have achieved the transformation he has today? That move is nothing short of extraordinary.”

“Grandfather, then what kind of Chaos Dao Fruit will Young Friend Lin obtain?”

“It cannot be predicted.”

The answer left Chen Linkong utterly stunned. Could it be something even greater than the Chaos Dao Fruit Grandfather obtained back then?

.....

In that world resembling primordial chaos, the bird in black suddenly felt a chill seize her heart. The next instant, the violent clang of chaos echoed across heaven and earth.

“Master...he...”

Before she could finish, booming laughter erupted from deep beneath the earth. “Hahaha! Bodhi...oh, Bodhi! You are truly generous!”

The chains rattled wildly. The laughter rolled on for a long while before gradually subsiding.

Then came a sigh. “This grows more interesting by the moment. Bodhi, I once believed you meant to use your disciple as a variable to contend with me. Who would have thought...you had already relinquished your move back then? But this is even better. With this variable...I am delighted...”

The girl in black trembled violently. Her master’s aura was fluctuating intensely now, rising and crashing like a storm beneath the earth. The invisible pressure made it difficult to breathe.

But she could not tell... Was he pleased? Or enraged? Or perhaps both?

.....

At this moment, Lin Xun was standing at the highest reaches of the sky. Before him stretched a boundless void, vast as primordial chaos. It was empty, silent, without form or substance. Even when he extended his spirit sense, he perceived nothing at all. However, within the depths of his mind, visions unfolded.

A towering swordsman stood within the shifting light and shadow of reincarnation. His sleeves billowed, majestic as a supreme deity. Before him stretched an immeasurable sea of swords, surging and churning with countless torrents of sword intent, all of them pouring into the depths of the reincarnating radiance behind him.

Elsewhere, a man clad in jade-green robes strode across the river of chaos as though he was its sovereign. An ancient sword rested upon his back. With every step he took, mysterious and unfathomable divine patterns bloomed beneath his feet.

Further in the distance stood a man in pristine black robes. Around him drifted strands of crystalline chains of tribulation, as numerous as the sands of the world. Yet he remained untouched by the ten thousand tribulations.

The three figures embodied three supreme and unparalleled presences. As Lin Xun sensed them, faint ripples stirred within his heart.

He understood. These were beings who had transcended the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws. The reason their names did not appear among those laws was simple: the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws themselves were incapable of bearing the weight of their dao!

Now, Lin Xun had become the fourth in history to stand beyond the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws! Realizing this, an indescribable warmth surged through his chest. He knew it was his master who had brought him to this point.

Without his master's dao manifestation tempering and refining his mind until it could roam ten thousand fathoms and span ten thousand ages, he could never have attained such a dao path in such a short time. After a long moment, Lin Xun exhaled and cast aside all lingering thoughts.

"Rise!"

In the next instant, boundless radiance erupted from him. He shone like a newborn sun tearing through dawn, illuminating the vast and formless expanse of primal chaos above.

Boom!

The entire Mortal Transformation Zone shuddered. Across its countless regions, mighty beings felt their hearts tremble in unison. One after another, they lifted their gazes toward the heavens. High above, where the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws interwove like a vast celestial canopy, a mysterious dao light appeared. It was as if a sovereign had descended above all laws, standing beyond them, releasing a majesty without equal!

"That..."

Countless stood frozen, stunned into speechlessness.

"In this world...another dao path that stands above the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws has emerged!"

“It’s Lin Xun! It must be him!”

The scene struck like a sudden storm, sweeping through the hearts of every mighty being. Their minds reeled, shaken and unsteady. It had been no more than ten short months since Lin Xun entered the Mortal Transformation Zone, yet he had already forged a supreme miracle amid the great dao contests!

Now, they were witnessing it with their own eyes.

Chapter 3165 Stepping Through the Heavenly Gate

Above the sky, as Lin Xun released his cultivation without reservation, a mysterious origin power surged forth from the depths of the void. It cascaded down upon him like a radiant storm, drenching him in a resplendent rain of light. The moment it touched him, he understood. This was a Chaos Dao Fruit.

The so-called Chaos Dao Fruit was an innate Chaos Principle born from within the All-Wonder Dominion. It was wondrous beyond measure. The more one refined, the more formidable one’s cultivation in the Immeasurable Realm became, and the closer one drew to ultimate transcendence.

However, almost at once, Lin Xun sensed something was amiss. The Chaos Dao Fruit he had obtained was different. Within it was no innate law. Instead, what it contained was true primal chaos originating from the All-Wonder Dominion itself!

Why was it called a ‘Dao Fruit’? Because those innate laws were born from the primal chaos origin, like fruit borne upon a tree. However, what Lin Xun was now refining was not the fruit. It was the origin power that gave birth to the fruit!

The realization struck him like thunder.

The primal chaos origin of the All-Wonder Dominion can give birth to a Chaos Dao Fruit. That is no different from creating a great dao. And now that I can refine such an origin power...Doesn’t that mean that, so long as I grasp its mysteries, I too could create a Chaos Dao Fruit?

The thought alone made Lin Xun’s heart surge. He could no longer remain calm. Not long ago, he had contemplated the path of creating a dao that had never before existed in this world. He had reasoned

that only by seeking out the origin power of the All-Wonder Dominion could he hope to find an answer and determine whether such a path was truly possible.

Now, the very primal chaos origin power he had drawn forth might well be the proof he sought.

Drawing a slow breath, Lin Xun steadied his thoughts. He seated himself cross-legged in the void and quietly immersed his mind in the ceaseless surge of primal chaos origin power. Gradually, waves of indescribable and profound insights arose within him.

Each of those insights touched upon the hidden origins and deepest secrets of Chaos Principles. They were obscure beyond measure. With Lin Xun's current level of comprehension, though he could perceive them, he could not yet fully digest their mysteries.

Only after the time it took for an incense stick to burn...

Lin Xun finally completed the refinement of that primal chaos origin power. When he opened his eyes from meditation, his cultivation had undergone a drastic transformation.

His dao path had always been centered upon the profound essence of Nirvana, fusing the myriad daos into a single furnace. Long ago, he had already grasped the power of 'all daos returning to one, and from one giving rise to all.'

Now, as he refined this primal chaos origin power, his Nirvana essence underwent a new transformation. As the Nirvana essence transformed, so too did his entire dao path...

Even Lin Xun himself had never imagined that after months of great dao contests within the Mortal Transformation Zone, the ultimate opportunity awaiting him would be so extraordinary. Compared to before, although his cultivation still remained at the advanced Immeasurable Realm, the foundation of his dao had already surpassed that of an Immeasurable Dao Lord!

One must understand that an Immeasurable Dao Lord was already an existence standing closest to the peak of the Immeasurable Realm. Of note, Lin Xun, at his present level, had already obtained a foundation that surpassed that threshold. From this alone, one could imagine just how immense the transformation brought about by this opportunity truly was.

Moreover, it was at this very moment that Lin Xun finally dared to conclude that the power of ‘creating a dao’ truly existed, and that it lay hidden within the origin power of the All-Wonder Dominion itself!

Alpha Origin, Chen Xi, and that swordsman...they must have understood this long ago. With my current cultivation, if I were to stand before any one of them, I likely wouldn’t even be qualified to contend. But there’s no need to rush. This is only the Mortal Transformation Zone. There will be plenty of opportunities ahead to obtain more primal chaos origin power.

After a moment of quiet reflection, Lin Xun rose to his feet and cast his gaze across the world. In that instant, scenes from every corner of the Mortal Transformation Zone unfolded within his mind.

After refining the primal chaos origin power, he felt himself become one with the Mortal Transformation Zone. It was as though he had turned into an incarnation of this world itself. Every ripple of wind, every shift of qi, every subtle movement across heaven and earth lay clearly within his perception.

“Esteemed Seniors, I shall take my leave. When we meet again in the future, I will certainly invite you all to share a drink.” Lin Xun did not speak aloud, but his voice resounded directly within the hearts of the old monsters scattered throughout the Mortal Transformation Zone, such as Xing Jianxia, Fu Nanli, and Ren Futian.

They were stunned for a moment. Then, almost in unison, they cupped their hands toward the heavens. “Take care, young friend!”

Above the heavens, Lin Xun smiled and stepped forward. With that single stride, a radiant gate surged into being before him. The moment he crossed its threshold, his figure vanished without a trace.

However, within that boundless void beyond the sky, his dao manifestation remained.

Clad in moon-white robes, his figure was tall and dignified. It stood like a sovereign presiding over the ages. At his feet revolved the phantom realms of the three dao dominions, Return Dominion, Kunlun Dominion, and Fortune Dominion. Above his head, a lotus-shaped dao diagram embodying Nirvana swirled in misty radiance, unveiling the profound mysteries of the supreme great dao.

In the distance, there was another hazy phantom, existing alongside the other three dao dominions, exuding the primordial aura of the All-Wonder Dominion. It was far too indistinct and so blurred that it seemed illusionary.

Not far from Lin Xun's dao manifestations stood the dao manifestations of Chen Xi, Alpha Origin, and the mysterious swordsman. The three supreme figures existed side by side, silent and eternal, each radiating an unparalleled majesty.

Naturally, such a scene was unseen by nearly all Immeasurable Realm cultivators in the world. Only if, someday in the distant future, someone were to transcend the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws in great dao contests might they gain the chance to behold this scene.

On that very day, the entire Mortal Transformation Zone was thrown into upheaval. In a mere ten months, Lin Xun had fought more than eight hundred battles. He swept through the five dao manifestations jointly ranked first, and in the end, rose beyond the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws themselves! This was nothing short of an unprecedented miracle!

What made it all the more astonishing was that, according to legend, when Alpha Origin Master once transcended the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws, he remained trapped within the Mortal Transformation Zone for a full hundred years. Only after unraveling its deepest mysteries did he finally cause the heavenly gate to open and depart.

Now, Lin Xun encountered no hindrance whatsoever. On the very day he transcended the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws, he soared away without obstruction! Such a contrast was impossible to ignore, and inevitably, comparisons arose in the hearts of many.

Of course, everyone also understood that such comparisons held little true meaning. After all, Lin Xun was being measured against the Alpha Origin Master of long ago.

The Alpha Origin Master of today stood as an unparalleled supreme existence within the All-Wonder Dominion. The power under his command was acknowledged as the strongest force in the entire All-Wonder Dominion!

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The events in the Mortal Transformation Zone reached the ears of the Nine Heavenly Mandate Dao Lords from the Nine Departments of Alpha Origin with astonishing speed. When the news arrived, these nine beings, each standing at the level of an Immeasurable Dao Lord, were shaken to their core.

Lin Xun had transcended the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws of the Mortal Transformation Zone! What did that signify? Did it not mean that his foundation was now no less than their master's had been when he left behind his dao manifestation in the Mortal Transformation Zone?

"Lin Xun has already broken through the first sky zone of the nine sky zones in the Realm of All Spirits." Someone said gravely. "You have all seen how heaven-defying this boy's cultivation is."

"We cannot delay any longer. If we wait until he reaches the ninth sky zone, the Xuanhuang Zone, it will already be too late!" Qing Yangzi, Heavenly Mandate Dao Lord of the Kun Department spoke, his expression dark and resolute.

He had spoken similar words when Lin Xun first entered the Mortal Transformation Zone. At the time, the other eight Heavenly Mandate Dao Lords had dismissed his caution.

Now, after hearing of Lin Xun's astonishing feat and seeing Qing Yangzi's unyielding gaze, the other eight Heavenly Mandate Dao Lords nodded one after another. They understood the severity of the matter.

"There will be no opportunity in the second sky zone, the Calamitous Zone," Pei Tu, Heavenly Mandate Dao Lord of the Qian Department, said in a low voice. "If we were to act, it must be from the third sky zone, the Dark Zone."

His gaze shifted toward Kuhe, Heavenly Mandate Dao Lord of the Xun Department. "Kuhe, within the Dark Zone, there are numerous experts under your Xun Department. Moreover, it is shrouded in layers of mist, cutting off all divine sense. Once Lin Xun enters it, he will be no different from a blind man. That will be your opportunity."

Kuhe nodded calmly. "I will do my best."

After a brief pause, he swept his gaze across the other Heavenly Mandate Dao Lords. “The forces under your respective commands are positioned between the fourth and eighth sky zones. If by chance Lin Xun survives and manages to enter any one of your domains, none of you must hesitate.”

A few of the Heavenly Mandate Dao Lords’ eyes flickered with cold light. One after another, they nodded in agreement.

However, someone frowned and said, “When Miss first informed us about Lin Xun, she never instructed us to intercept or kill him. If we act on our own now, would that not be overstepping our bounds?” The one who spoke was Tian Shu, Heavenly Mandate Lord of the Zhen Department.

“Miss called him a variable, and Master himself showed great interest in him. Is that not instruction enough?” Qing Yangzi said coldly, “Tian Shu, do not forget who granted us our fortune back then, and who brought us into the All-Wonder Dominion to cultivate. Without Master, you would have perished in the Sea of Fate dozens of epochs ago!”

Tian Shu’s expression shifted. “I would never defy Master’s decree, but the problem is that Master is currently trapped, and Miss remains by his side. With no command issued, if we act on our own and something unforeseen occurs...”

His voice trailed off. He noticed the icy gazes directed at him from every side. A wry smile tugged at his lips. “Very well, I will join you. We act together.”

Pei Tu’s voice softened. “With a formidable enemy before us, we must stand united. Tian Shu, we are all within the Realm of All Mysteries and cannot personally descend to the Realm of All Spirits. Even if some unforeseen mishap occurs, it will not threaten the nine of us. Under such circumstances, why not test Lin Xun with the strength of our nine departments?”

He paused, then let out a cold sneer, “Besides, why did Master establish the Nine Alpha Origin Departments in the first place? Were we not meant to serve him and act on his behalf? If you choose to remain idle, that would be nothing less than open disrespect! And forget Master, even Ape Ancestor and Miss would be the first to refuse you mercy!”

Tian Shu’s stiffened, his expression shifting once more. After a long breath, he said, quietly, “I understand what must be done. I will not hold any of you back.”

The other Heavenly Mandate Dao Lords exchanged glances and nodded. None of them noticed that, while this discussion unfolded, an old ape stood outside the great hall. Two swords were strapped across his back. He remained utterly silent.

Chapter 3166 Defeated Without Knowing How

The Calamitous Zone was a world plagued by constant calamities and countless disasters. The calamities here were no mere natural disasters. They were tribulations of the great dao itself. Even the most common lightning tribulation possessed destructive force enough to threaten beings of the Immeasurable Realm.

Beyond lightning tribulations, there were wind, fire, water, dust and other tribulation forces, each perilous beyond measure. Since ancient times, those who entered this zone rarely dared to roam or explore it. The calamities were strewn across heaven and earth in such numbers that any misstep could be fatal.

Shua!

On this day, Lin Xun appeared without warning upon a vast and desolate plain. The moment his figure solidified, a crimson sandstorm howled across the horizon. It swallowed the sky in an instant, its shrieking wind like the lament of fallen gods. The sound pierced the soul, cold and mournful.

Lin Xun reacted at once, shifting away in a single step. He had barely steadied himself when the nearby void suddenly collapsed with a thunderous crack. Space collapsed inward, and from the rupture burst a violent torrent of pitch-black water, surging like a broken dam. The aura it radiated was thick with a terrifying corrosive force.

Lin Xun had no choice but to move again. A chill crept into his heart. There are simply too many tribulations in this Calamitous Zone...

With his current cultivation, he could clearly sense that both the crimson sandstorm and the black deluge that crushed the void were infused with an aura capable of threatening even Immeasurable Realm beings! Ordinary experts would likely be unable to withstand, let alone counter, such forces.

“Ten months have already passed. Xia Zhi must be tired of waiting.”

Lin Xun drew a deep breath, steadying his mind and extending his senses. When they parted in the Mortal Transformation Zone, he had given Xia Zhi a talisman token. With it, the moment he entered the Calamitous Zone, he would be able to sense her location. A moment later, his eyes flashed. His figure flickered and vanished, traversing the void in a single stride.

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Xia Zhi sat quietly on a solitary boulder, eyes gently closed. Her delicate features were suffused with a tranquil, almost sacred stillness.

In the distance rose a towering mountain. Its ridges were undulating and barren, not a blade of grass in sight. Gray mist coiled around its slopes from peak to base, and within that haze, faint silhouettes could be seen standing upon it.

Each figure stood motionless at a different point along the mountain. Every now and then, a handful would suddenly take a few steps upward, only to halt once more. The movements were strange and unsettling.

This mountain was the Test of Past Life! To pass the Test of Past Life, one had to climb this mountain and transcend it. However, passing this test was far from easy.

Because the very first step upon the mountain was akin to stepping onto the path of past life itself. Every thought, every intention, every trace of consciousness would be pulled into a strange realm of reincarnation.

If one could break free from that cycle, one would sever the path of past life, and thus pass the trial. On the other hand, if one failed, one would remain forever trapped on that path. Their cultivation would gradually dissipate with the passing of time and their existence eroded until nothing remained.

To enter one’s past life was to walk toward death! Throughout the ages, there had been no shortage of cultivators who became trapped on the path of past life, their bodies destroyed and their dao extinguished.

At this moment, before the Test of Past Life, many people stood in silence. They did not attempt the trial, but merely watched from afar, as though waiting for something to unfold. Others, like Xia Zhi, were scattered across the surrounding area, seated in meditation.

“Miss.”

Suddenly, a man approached. He wore flowing purple-gold robes, his bearing elegant and refined, and his features strikingly handsome. The aura that emanated from him was equally astonishing.

“Is there something?” Xia Zhi opened her eyes. Her voice was clear and melodious like celestial music, but beneath its sweetness lingered a trace of cool indifference.

How beautiful!

The man’s eyes brightened. For an instant, an inexplicable heat surged through his chest. He steadied himself, drew a slow breath, cupped his hands in greeting and said politely, “My name is Du Canzhao. Forgive my boldness, but I noticed that when you first arrived here, you were alone. It has been ten months since then, yet you have not once attempted the test of Past Life. Might you be harboring some hesitation?”

“I am waiting for someone.”

Xia Zhi’s expression remained calm and serene. Her gaze was on Du Canzhao, but within her eyes there was no ripple of emotion. Most people, faced with such indifference, would have withdrawn long ago, but Du Canzhao did not.

“Oh?” he pressed gently. “May I ask who you are waiting for?”

“None of your concern.” Xia Zhi’s brows knitted faintly.

These words were blunt, with no attempt at courtesy of softening. It was a clear and undisguised rejection. A flicker of embarrassment crossed Du Canzhao’s face. Forcing a faint smile, he cupped his hands once more and said, “Forgive the disturbance.”

Then, he turned and left. Xia Zhi closed her eyes again.

Over the past ten months, countless people had approached her in this manner. It had long since become tiresome. She truly could not understand why these cultivators, beings who had lived for countless years, would waste their time attempting idle conversation with a complete stranger. Did they not realize how tedious it was?

She did not know that it was precisely because she was so breathtakingly beautiful. Nor did she realize that, as a woman who had attained the Greater Boundless Realm and stepped through the heavenly gate of the Mortal Transformation Zone, she carried a rare temperament and irresistible allure.

Fortunately, although many were unwilling to give up, they all knew better. After all, they were beings who had lived through countless ages. None would behave like reckless youths and resort to forceful measures. When the purple-gold robed man returned, the mighty beings who had been watching the exchange could no longer hold back their laughter.

“That makes thirty-nine, doesn’t it?” someone remarked with amusement.

“I wonder what sort of man could possibly capture the heart of such a beauty...” another sighed.

“Didn’t she say she’s waiting for someone?” someone else whispered.

“Then I would very much like to see this man,” another scoffed. “To make a woman like that wait here alone for ten months? It’s outrageous!”

Many gazes flickered with curiosity. All of them wondered who it was that this woman, whose beauty had stirred even the hearts of mighty beings, was waiting for.

“He’s certainly no formidable figure. His cultivation must be inferior to that young lady’s. Otherwise, why would she have arrived first, while he still hasn’t managed to leave the Mortal Transformation Zone?”

“If you ask me, the one she’s waiting for is likely not even our equal.”

Murmurs spread through the crowd.

At that moment, Xia Zhi suddenly opened her eyes. “In my eyes, he is a thousand times stronger than all of you!” Her voice was cold as frost. The crowd fell silent at first. Then soft chuckles rose, and many shook their heads in amusement.

“Miss, if your beloved is truly so powerful, why has he yet to appear?” Du Canzhao, unable to restrain himself, stepped forward once more. ”And if he remains trapped in the Mortal Transformation Zone, will you truly wait for him for the rest of your life?”

“He will come.” Xia Zhi’s voice was tranquil and unhurried, as though she was stating an undeniable fact.

An inexplicable unwillingness welled up in Du Canzhao’s heart, or perhaps it was jealousy, a rare and unfamiliar jealousy. “And what if he doesn’t?”

“Then I will wait.” Xia Zhi answered without hesitation.

Du Canzhao’s expression flickered repeatedly. At last, he let out a long breath and forced a strained smile. “I truly don’t know who that lucky fellow is. But if I ever meet him...”

His gaze sharpened. “I’ll be sure to measure him myself!”

Before his words had faded, a soft chuckle drifted from the distance. “You wish to spar with me?”

The voice was not loud, yet it rang clearly, echoing across heaven and earth. Du Canzhao froze. The nearby mighty figures were equally startled.

To their astonishment, the moment that voice echoed across the heavens, the celestial maiden who had sat cross-legged upon that boulder for ten long months rose to her feet at once. A radiant smile bloomed across her serene, breathtaking face. It was a smile born from the depths of her heart.

It was so beautiful that it left people momentarily dazed, as though their very souls had been gently stirred. In all these ten months, none of the mighty beings present had ever seen her smile even once!

A faint, unspoken jealousy flickered through the crowd. Then they saw him. From afar, a figure emerged through the void, clad in moon-white robes, handsome and composed, bearing an air of otherworldly elegance. It was none other than Lin Xun.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting.” Lin Xun smiled gently and reached out to ruffle Xia Zhi’s hair, his tone unmistakably apologetic.

“It was only ten months. It’s nothing.” Xia Zhi’s eyes curved slightly as she looked at him. Her serene, delicate face that had remained aloof for so long now shone with undisguised joy. That smile alone sent another ripple through the hearts of those watching from afar.

Then Xia Zhi suddenly turned around and pointed toward the man in purple-gold robes. “He said earlier that he wanted to compete with you.”

Du Canzhao froze for a moment. Then a confident, faintly arrogant smile spread across his face. “I did. The reason is simple. I pity this young lady. If it were me, I would never leave a woman waiting alone for ten months.”

His tone carried a subtle sting. Lin Xun paused, then glanced at Xia Zhi beside him, and a deeper trace of shame flickered through his expression. He cupped his hands toward Du Canzhao in the distance. “Fellow Daoist is absolutely right. I was indeed at fault.”

Du Canzhao was caught off guard for a moment. Then he let out a cold snort. “Though you appear apologetic, you were still in the wrong from the start. How about this? You and I exchange a few moves. I’ll take it as helping this young lady vent her grievance. What do you say?”

In truth, he wanted to see for himself what kind of ability Lin Xun possessed to win Xia Zhi’s heart. Beneath his calm exterior lurked a faint resentment.

Xia Zhi frowned, about to speak, but Lin Xun stopped her gently with a smile. “There is neither enmity nor grievance between us, Fellow Daoist. There’s no need to resort to blades and blows...”

Before he could finish speaking, Du Canzhao cut him off sharply, “Enough, do you dare accept or not?”

“You...” Lin Xun let out a soft sigh. “Very well. Since you insist, I shall grant your wish.”

“Good! At least you’ve got some backbone!” Du Canzhao burst into laughter. “Come, let me see what you’re capable of. I won’t bully you. Since you’re new here, you may strike first. Remember, use your full strength. Otherwise, when you lose, you might not even know how it happened!”

Lin Xun hesitated. “That...doesn’t seem appropriate.”

“Enough talk! If I tell you to strike, then do it!” Du Canzhao grew more relaxed and domineering.

“Very well, Fellow Daoist, then do be careful.” Lin Xun nodded. He extended his right hand and casually pressed down upon the void.

Boom!

A moment ago, Du Canzhao had been brimming with confidence and arrogance. Now, he felt as though an ancient divine mountain had descended upon his mind. His entire flow of qi nearly collapsed into chaos in that instant.

His expression changed drastically. Without hesitation, he drove his cultivation to its absolute limit. However, the force behind Lin Xun’s palm did not target flesh or bone. It fell directly upon the mind. How could he possibly withstand it?

Bang!

In the next instant, Du Canzhao’s legs gave way. His body went limp, and he dropped heavily to the ground, crying out in alarm, “I concede!”

Everyone froze, stunned. He lost? So quickly?

Only moments ago, Du Canzhao had been boasting, telling Lin Xun to strike first and warning him to use his full strength or he would lose without even realizing how. Now those very words echoed strangely in everyone's minds.

It seems the outcome has unfolded in exactly the opposite way.

At that moment, Lin Xun withdrew his palm and said apologetically, "Fellow Daoist, my apologies. I failed to control my strength properly and gave you a fright."

Failed to control his strength...

The corners of countless lips twitched. The gathered mighty beings looked as though their composure was on the verge of collapse.

Chapter 3167 The Mystery of Dao Building

To have one's cultivation inscribed into the Heavenly Cycle Dao Laws of the Mortal Transformation Zone and pass through the heavenly gate into the Calamitous Zone was no small feat. It was something far beyond the reach of ordinary Immeasurable Realm cultivators.

In the eyes of those present, Du Canzhao's strength was already among the finest among this realm. He stood only a step away from the threshold of the Immeasurable Dao Lord. Despite that...he had been defeated by a single palm.

The shock that rippled through the crowd was impossible to conceal. When their gazes fell upon Lin Xun again, something subtle shifted in their expressions.

"Fellow Daoist, my apologies." Lin Xun stepped forward and extended a hand, helping Du Canzhao to his feet.

Du Canzhao's face darkened briefly. Then, after a moment, he let out a wry laugh and returned the gesture with cupped hands. "I overestimated myself."

He paused, casting a glance at Xia Zhi before adding, “In the future, don’t keep this young lady waiting so long.”

Lin Xun smiled and nodded. Then he turned slightly, “Xia Zhi, let’s go.”

Xia Zhi gave a quiet nod. Together, they walked toward the distant mountain shrouded in mist, the Test of Past Life.

A stir passed through the surrounding mighty beings. They’re going to attempt it now?

Their eyes followed the pair in unison. The towering mountain loomed beneath drifting grey mist. All along its winding path stood countless cultivators, motionless like statues carved from clay. Some had stood there for who knew how long.

This was the Test of Past Life. To step upon this mountain was to tread the path of one’s former life. The mind and body would be drawn into the current of reincarnation. Through the ages, countless cultivators had been trapped here, and countless had perished!

When Lin Xun and Xia Zhi stepped onto the mountain, both of their figures paused ever so lightly. An obscure, unfathomable force enveloped them. The aura felt familiar to Lin Xun. It was identical to the aura of the Reincarnation World contained within his Nirvana profound meaning!

At the same time, Xia Zhi felt it as well. In her previous life, she was the Eternal Night Divine Emperor. In a sense, she herself was already a being who had been reborn. When she sensed the aura, she felt an unexpected familiarity stir within her. It was the breath of reincarnation!

Lin Xun and Xia Zhi exchanged a glance. Without a word, they continued upward. Step by step, they climbed the mountain path. The aura of reincarnation thickened within the drifting mist, surging again and again against their minds.

The higher they climbed, the more overwhelming that aura became, like a vast torrent cascading from the summit, crashing down without end. Any other Immeasurable Realm cultivator would likely have buckled under such pressure. However, it failed to hinder Lin Xun and Xia Zhi in the slightest.

By the time they reached the mountainside, the aura of reincarnation had swelled into a howling storm, tearing through the mist with terrifying force! Then, Lin Xun flicked his sleeves. Boundless radiance surged forth, transforming into a vast abyss. Amid thunderous rumbling, it swallowed the oncoming storm of reincarnation whole, leaving not even a trace behind.

Xia Zhi glanced at him in mild surprise. “Are you using this to comprehend the profundities of reincarnation?”

Lin Xun shook his head slightly. “The power contained within this Test of Past Life is only a fragment of reincarnation law. It cannot compare to the Reincarnation World within the mysteries of Nirvana. There is nothing here worth studying.”

As they spoke, they continued upward. Before long, they reached the summit, and their figures vanished from sight. Not far from the foot of the Test of Past Life, Du Canzhao and the other mighty figures stood frozen in place.

They have simply drifted away?

There had been no struggle, no hesitation, and no visible resistance. It had not looked like breaking through a deadly trial at all, but instead like a casual stroll through mountain paths, light and unhurried.

“That was the Test of Past Life...” an old monster muttered blankly. “How could it fail to shake them even in the slightest?”

Everyone present knew all too well just how perilous the path of past life truly was. However, who could have imagined that someone could cross it so effortlessly, as though it were nothing at all?

“Worthy indeed of the successor of Fangchun Mountain,” someone sighed with emotion. “In these past hundred years, his name has shaken the entire Mortal Transformation Zone!”

“What? He’s Lin Xun?” Du Canzhao stood there in a daze. Only then did it dawn on him who had defeated him with a single palm strike. In that instant, all his composure shattered.

Lin Xun had only arrived in the Mortal Transformation Zone in recent years, yet his cultivation had already reached such terrifying heights. Before such talent, how could these old monsters, who had cultivated for endless ages, keep their composure?

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After passing the Test of Past Life, Lin Xun and Xia Zhi stepped into a hazy, gray world. Primal chaos qi permeated the air, ancient, boundless, and exuding an aura that seemed to predate heaven and earth. Within the swirling haze, streaks of brilliant radiance shimmered faintly, like stars suspended in the depths of chaos.

On closer inspection, they were not light at all, but the figures of mighty beings! They stood scattered across the vast expanse, each radiating an overwhelming dao aura. Before every one of them hovered a great dao world!

The dazzling, multicolored dao light illuminating this gray, primordial expanse all emanated from those great dao worlds before them. It was this radiance that infused the chaos-veiled heavens and earth with streaks of magnificent color.

This was the Test of Dao Building! Anyone who arrived here had to rely on their own cultivation to draw upon the primordial chaos power permeating this realm and forge a great dao world of their own.

Only when the great dao world they built resonated with the primal chaos origin of this realm, transforming into an imprint and fusing into the fabric of this place, could they depart. Having learned of this trial back in the Mortal Transformation Zone, neither Lin Xun nor Xia Zhi showed any surprise. In essence, Dao Building was the act of creating an entire world governed by the laws of the heavenly dao.

What truly stirred Lin Xun’s curiosity was that it was said that when a cultivator passed the Test of Dao Building, the great dao world they forged would not dissipate. Instead, it would be nurtured within the origin power of the Fortune Dominion and eventually manifest as a true cultivation world within a future epochal civilization!

If that were true...it would be nothing short of astonishing.

In the All-Wonder Dominion, a great dao world created by an Immeasurable Realm being could draw upon the origin power of the Fortune Dominion and ultimately become a real world within an epochal civilization. What unfathomable mysteries must lie behind such a transformation?

Lin Xun could not help but wonder whether the cultivation worlds he had once traversed, the Ancient Nebula Road, the Great Thousand Worlds, and the Eternal True Realm, had originally begun as great dao worlds forged by powerful beings during this Test of Dao Building.

Then, he soon shook his head. “No...even if that were true, the great dao worlds forged by those mighty beings created would only be seeds. The true key lies in the nurturing of the origin of Fortune Dominion. Without that nourishment, such a seed could never take root, never sprout, and never break through the earth...”

Lin Xun fell into quiet contemplation. He himself had grasped the Principles of Fortune, and understood the mysteries of its origin. The Fortune Dominion could be said to be the mother nest of epochal civilizations, possessing the power to gestate and bring forth creation.

A great dao world forged by even the most extraordinary cultivator could never directly transform into a true cultivation world within an epochal civilization. What truly astonished Lin Xun was the All-Wonder Dominion itself.

This discovery confirmed a conjecture he had formed many years ago: the four dao dominions were not isolated realms existing independent of one another. There was, without question, some deeper connection binding them together.

Within the Fortune Dominion flowed the river of time. Within the Return Dominion stood the five mountains. Within Kunlun Dominion lay the Sea of Fate. And within the All-Wonder Dominion resided the primal chaos origin.

There must be a profound connection liking the origin powers of the four dao dominions. The power of those cultivators who perished in Kunlun Dominion would ultimately manifest within the core land of the Return Dominion.

Those who crossed the Sea of Fate in the Kunlun Dominion could arrive in the All-Wonder Dominion. The epochal civilizations born from the Fortune Dominion also corresponded, one by one, to the various epochal worlds within the Sea of Fate.

Now, even this Test of Dao Building was linked to the Fortune Dominion, like a seed waiting for the nourishment of soil. All of this unmistakably confirmed the conjectures Lin Xun had formed long ago.

Buzz—

Just as Lin Xun was lost in through, a subtle fluctuation ripple through the primal chaos world, like the tremor of creation itself. In the far distance, a snow-haired old man stroked his beard and laughed, his voice ringing with triumph. “After thirty-three thousand six hundred years...I have finally forged my own great dao world!”

Before him, the world he had constructed burst into dazzling divine radiance. It rose like a newborn star, pierced the gray firmament, and vanished into the deepest reaches of primal chaos.

“Congratulations, Fellow Daoist!”

Voice echoed across the vast expanse. The old man cupped his hands in salute to all directions. In the next instant, his figure dissolved into light and disappeared. He had passed the Test of Dao Building.

Envy flickered across the faces of many mighty beings in the surrounding regions, but they soon suppressed it and turned back to their own great dao world.

Xia Zhi watched the scene and murmured softly, “More than thirty-three thousand years to pass this trial...is it truly that difficult?”

Before Lin Xun could reply, a deep, aged voice drifted over from not far away, “Young lady, whether dao building is difficult depends on the individual. Some, blessed with extraordinary talent, can succeed and break through in less than a century. Others have remained here for hundreds of thousands of years, yet still not close to succeeding.

“The fellow daoist earlier spent only a little thirty-odd thousand years. Among all the cultivators who have attempted the Test of Dao Building since ancient times, that is already considered swift.”

The one who spoke was a young man clad in black robes. Though his appearance was youthful, his tone carried the weight of countless ages. Beside the black-robed youth were several mighty figures. Unlike the others, who were wholly absorbed in forging their dao worlds, these few had been drinking and conversing earlier, and had already taken notice of Lin Xun and Xia Zhi upon their arrival.

“Why are you not seizing the time to build your dao?” Lin Xun asked.

The black-robed youth smiled faintly. “Building one’s dao is no simple matter. Besides, what use is there in haste? In the end, the world one constructs depends entirely upon one’s own strength. There is no need to rush. Most exhaust themselves striving to pass this trial, to cross the nine heavenly gates, and to traverse the Dao Slaying Path to reach the Realm of Myriad Wonders. But for us...we would rather savor the journey along the way.”

The black-robed youth then asked, “And you, Fellow Daoist?”

“Me?” Lin Xun paused briefly, then smiled faintly. “I am not like you all. For me, even pausing to rest is a luxury.”

The black-robed youth nodded slowly, as though he understood at once. “The Immeasurable Realm is said to be a realm of great freedom and boundless ease. But when one truly reaches it, one discovers that there are still many things in this world beyond one’s control. There are burdens of grudges and enmities, the fetters of karma, and the weight of responsibility and duty. Beneath such burdens, stopping to rest is anything but easy.”

Lin Xun smiled. “Fellow Daoist speaks with profound insight.”

Chapter 3168 Crossing the River in a Single Step

“Fellow Daoists, you seem new here. Why not join us for a drink and a chat?” The voice came from an old woman in flowing purple robes. She appeared frail, almost fragile, yet her eyes were bright with warmth as she smiled in invitation.

Lin Xun returned the smile. “It would be impolite to decline.”

He and Xia Zhi stepped forward, sat down upon the ground, and began conversing with the gathered mighty beings.Before long, they had exchanged names and learned of one another's origins.

When the black-robed youth learned that Lin Xun was a successor of the Lord of Fangchun Mountain, realization dawned upon him. "So...you are that lotus."

Clearly, word of Lin Xun had long since spread among them. Next, Lin Xun produced several jars of fine wine, and they spoke at leisure of matters concerning the All-Wonder Dominion.

Before long, their conversation turned to their respective understandings of the great dao. At times, their words stirred Lin Xun, giving him moments of quiet insight. As for the black-robed youth and the others, the depth of understanding Lin Xun revealed left them deeply surprised and impressed.

At last, Lin Xun set down his cup and smiled. "Meeting you all today and sharing wine has been a great pleasure. If fate allows us to meet again, I will certainly drink with you once more."

The black-robed youth narrowed his eyes slightly. "Fellow Daoist Lin...don't tell me you already have confidence in passing this trial?"

Lin Xun thought before answering, "For Xia Zhi and me, this test should not be difficult."

A soft chuckle escaped the elderly woman in purple. "Then we shall look forward to witnessing your brilliance."

The others also revealed expressions of anticipation. Lin Xun and Xia Zhi rose and walked toward a more secluded stretch of the land.

"Xia Zhi, you first," Lin Xun said gently.

Xia Zhi nodded. A faint mist-like qi began to coil around her slender figure, subtle yet profound. She lifted her jade-like hand and traced a single line through the air.

Buzz!

In an instant, the primal chaos origin power of heaven and earth was stirred. Torrents surged in from all directions, converging beneath her slender, jade-white fingertips.

Then, the embryonic form of a great dao world began to take shape. Heaven and earth parted, sun and moon took form, and mountains and rivers surged into being. The meridians of the cosmos spread through the void, weaving the structure of creation...

Thereafter, myriad phenomena began to emerge one after another. The current of time began to flow, and the power of epochal transformation followed.

The entire process lasted less than half an hour. Before Xia Zhi, a wondrous and unfathomable great dao world hovered, already near perfection. The power of laws permeated every corner. Countless daos were woven into every blade of grass and every tree. Even the aura of fate coursed through it like an unseen river.

Buzz!

At that very moment, the entire heaven and earth of primal chaos shuddered, and a strange resonance rippled outward through the void. All around, the mighty beings who had been immersed in forging their own dao world were jolted from their concentration. One after another, their gazes turned toward Xia Zhi.

Shua! Before her, the great dao world abruptly condensed into a streak of divine radiance and shot upward into the depths of chaos.

“Come quickly.”

She had only enough time to utter those two words before her figure dissolved into light and vanished without a trace.

“She...she only arrived today, didn’t she?” someone muttered blankly, his expression frozen in disbelief.

“That’s right...she arrived barely three hours ago. She was just chatting with fellow daoists earlier. And yet...in only half an hour she forged a great dao world and passed the trial. That’s far too fast...” someone inhaled sharply.

Among them, some had been trapped here for tens of thousands of years, others for hundreds of thousands, and many more for several hundred thousand years. By comparison, Xia Zhi’s effortless success in just half an hour was nothing short of astonishing. It felt almost unreal, so shocking that many were left shaken to their core.

The black-robed youth, the purple-robed old woman, and the others who had witnessed the entire process stood rooted in place, stunned into silence, their hearts trembling from the shock.

After a long silence, the black-robed youth suddenly let out a low laugh. “I never imagined that we would witness such a miracle with our own eyes!”

The others could only marvel in agreement. During their earlier conversation, Xia Zhi had remained quiet and reserved, speaking scarcely a word. Naturally, most of their attention was on Lin Xun. Who would have thought that beneath that serene beauty lay such astonishing mastery of the dao?

“Everyone, I shall take my leave first.” Lin Xun smiled and cupped his hands from afar.

“Haha! Very well. Let us see how Fellow Daoist Lin builds his dao and passes this test,” someone said with a smile.

By now, the disturbance had drawn the attention of many other mighty beings scattered throughout this world. At those words, countless gazes shifted toward Lin Xun. Xia Zhi’s feat had shaken them deeply. Now, their curiosity burned even brighter.

Under the scrutiny of so many eyes, Lin Xun paused briefly in thought. Then he raised a hand and casually pointed into the void. Boom!

The heavens and earth trembled violently. Primal chaos origin power surged madly toward the point where Lin Xun's finger hovered, converging wildly like mountains collapsing and seas overturning.

The magnitude of the disturbance startled everyone present. They had been building their dao here for years, but never had they witnessed such a commotion at the very instant dao building began. What kind of great dao world could possibly give rise to such upheaval?

Curiosity flared in every heart. However, before anyone could see clearly what was taking shape, a streak of divine radiance flashed. Lin Xun vanished into thin air. The vast primal chaos origin power that had been gathering at his fingertips dissipated completely, disappearing without a trace.

"He..."

Everyone was stunned. What happened?

With a single gesture, primal chaos surged forth, and before he had even begun constructing his dao, he was gone? The black-robed youth and the purple-robed old woman rose abruptly to their feet, exchanging stunned glances. This abnormal scene left them unable to remain composed.

Only after a long while, when the trembling heavens had finally settled, did the purple-robed elder mutter softly, "He said he was leaving...and he really left without the slightest hesitation. This Fellow Daoist Lin is really as elusive as a ghost, appearing and vanishing without a trace..."

"Elusive as a ghost?" Someone replied with a wry smile. "I'd say this Test of Dao Building might as well not exist for him."

"Have any of you ever heard of such a thing happening before?" another couldn't help but ask.

"Never." All of them shook their heads.

For a moment, their emotions grew even more complicated. Without a doubt, this was even more astonishing than Miss Xia Zhi's feat. It was enough to overturn everything they thought they understood.

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Not only were those mighty figures stunned, but even Lin Xun himself was taken aback.

He had fully intended to construct his dao here and was confident in his ability to do so. However, the moment he drew upon the primal chaos origin power, the world itself seemed unable to withstand the weight of his cultivation. It did not grant him even the chance to begin. Instead, he was expelled in an instant.

“This is likely connected to the Principles of Fortune I have mastered,” Lin Xun murmured, deep in thought. “If I were to establish my dao here...the great dao world I create might truly take root and sprout, transforming into a true cultivation world...”

Then, his surroundings shifted. He found himself standing before a vast river. It was so mighty and boundless that it seemed to descend from the heavens themselves, surging forward through an endless void.

Meanwhile, scattered along different stretches of the great river, numerous figures stood in silence. Xia Zhi was among them. The moment Lin Xun appeared, he walked straight toward her.

“So soon?” Xia Zhi’s eyes revealed a trace of surprise. She had only just arrived, and he was already here.

Lin Xun smiled faintly. “I was worried you might have to wait too long.”

As he spoke, his gaze shifted to the vast, surging river before them. This was the third trial of the Calamitous Zone: the Test of Heart Knocking. It was said that the waters of this river carried a mysterious and unfathomable force. Any cultivator who attempted to cross it would face endless rising and crashing waves. It was not against their flesh, but directly at the mind.

If one’s state of mind wavered even slightly, disaster would follow. At best, one would suffer grievous injury. At worst, one’s mind would shatter entirely, leading to death. Among the three great trials of the Calamitous Zone, the Test of Heart Knocking was unquestionably the most perilous.

To pass it, one had to cross this river. Though many figures stood along the banks, none dared to attempt it at that moment. Some had already failed and remained stranded here, unable to advance. Others knew their hearts were not yet steady enough and did not dare act rashly.

The arrival of Lin Xun and Xia Zhi in succession drew the attention of those present. Numerous gazes turned toward them, studying them from afar. Most held only curiosity and no malice.

After all, it could take countless years for even a single cultivator to reach this place. Yet today, a man and a woman arrived one after another. That was unexpected.

Lin Xun paid no heed to the watching eyes. He said softly to Xia Zhi, “You go first. Remember, do your best. The less time you spend crossing, the more wondrous the Chaos Dao Fruit you will obtain.”

Upon passing the Test of Heart Knocking, one would be granted a Chaos Dao Fruit and step through the heavenly gate of the Calamitous Zone into the third sky zone. The swifter the crossing, the more extraordinary the reward.

Xia Zhi nodded. Without hesitation, she stepped forward. Her graceful figure rose into the air, drifting across the river like a celestial fairy descending from the heavens.

“She’s attempting it already?” A ripple of astonishment spread through the crowd. They did not know whether to call her reckless or fearless.

Shua! Within the great river, waves like flying snow surged skyward, rising in towering sheets before crashing down violently toward Xia Zhi. Despite that, not a single drop touched her body. Instead, the force bypassed her body entirely, striking directly at her state of mind.

Xia Zhi paused for only the briefest instant. Then, as though she had already adapted to the onslaught, her long, graceful legs stepped forward. In the span of just a few breaths, facing the roaring torrents head-on, she traversed the vast river and arrived upon the opposite shore.

An uproar erupted across the banks. The ancient monsters, who had been trapped before this trial for untold ages, trembled involuntarily, staring in stunned disbelief. With a single step, she rose into the air and drifted across the river. Such brilliance left them feeling ashamed.

Even Lin Xun could not help but marvel. Xia Zhi's state of mind was like a flawless mirror, untainted and unstained. Furthermore, it was precisely because of that purity that made it so terrifyingly strong. For her, this most dangerous of trials posed no challenge at all.

At this moment, on the far bank, the moment her feet touched solid ground, a cascade of mysterious primal chaos radiance burst forth, descending like a shower of light to envelop her. The power of the Chaos Dao Fruit!

Above her, a heavenly gate manifested, stretching high into immeasurable heights. This sight stirred envy in the hearts of the mighty beings present and even a faint melancholy.

For countless years, they had stood at these riverbanks, dreaming of crossing those waters and stepping through that gate. However, to this day, none of them have succeeded.

Now, Xia Zhi, who had only just arrived, had accomplished it with effortless ease. How could their hearts not be filled with complicated emotions?

Chapter 3169 The Dark Zone - The Great Peril of Mist Spirits

"Lin Xun, I'll be waiting for you in the Dark Zone."

After fully refining the Chaos Dao Fruit, Xia Zhi's voice drifted back like a lingering echo. In the next instant, her figure transformed into a streak of radiant light and vanished through the heavenly gate. All eyes turned toward Lin Xun. Is he going to attempt the trial immediately as well?

Before the thought had fully formed, Lin Xun moved. With hands clasped behind his back, he strode calmly toward the vast, surging river.

At once, the river erupted. Waves towered skyward, churning with boundless force. Then, under astonished gazes, the roaring waters suddenly split apart. The current recoiled to either side as though pressed down by an unseen authority, opening a broad, straight path that led directly to the opposite bank.

Lin Xun did not rush. He merely stepped forward. His figure blurred like a passing shadow, and in the blink of an eye, he stood upon the far shore.

Dead silence fell. Everyone's eyes were wide with disbelief. The Test of Heart Knocking was known to be perilous beyond measure. Across the ages, countless earth-shaking powers had perished beneath those very waves.

Now, the river parted of its own accord, clearing the way for Lin Xun! Such a situation was unheard of!

Buzz!

On the opposite bank, dazzling radiance intertwined in midair. A torrential surge of primal chaos origin power descended like a celestial rain, engulfing Lin Xun until he appeared half-real and half-illusory.

As expected...it is the origin power of this All-Wonder Dominion!

Lin Xun's heart trembled. Just as when he departed the Mortal Transformation Zone, what he received was not merely a Chaos Dao Fruit. What descended upon him was something more profound. It was primal chaos origin power!

Within him, his cultivation surged. He could clearly sense the astonishing transformation unfolding within his dao. Step by step, it advanced deeper into the advanced stage of the Immeasurable Realm. Only after a long period of time passed did the transformation finally come to an end.

Lin Xun sensed it clearly. Within his dao, centered around Nirvana, there now existed an additional presence: a primal, obscure origin power. It was difficult to describe what kind of origin dao it was. It resembled chaos itself, yet within it lay the potential to transform into all the myriad daos of heaven and earth!

"Could this be the fundamental law of the All-Wonder Dominion? Primal chaos...primal chaos...nameless and beyond form, yet possessing the power to nurture innate Principles of Chaos. If I could fully comprehend its mysteries...would that not mean I could grasp the power of 'dao creation'?"

Lin Xun closed his eyes and quietly sensed the changes within. Unfortunately, although he had twice obtained fragments of the primal chaos origin power of the All-Wonder Dominion, they were ultimately incomplete. All he could sense was only a faint and subtle mysterious aura, an obscure hint of the power of nurturing the great dao.

As for whether he could one day truly grasp the power of dao creation...that remained uncertain. He shook his head lightly. With a single thought, a heavenly gate manifested before him. Taking one step forward, he vanished from the Calamitous Zone in an instant.

Along the banks of the great river, the gathered mighty beings stood in a daze, as though they had just witnessed a miracle never seen before. Their hearts churned violently.

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No one realized that from the moment Lin Xun and Xia Zhi entered the Calamitous Zone to the moment they departed, less than a single day had passed. Within that short span of time, they had passed the three great trials, the Test of Past Life, the Test of Dao Building, and the Test of Heart-Knocking, and drew forth the Chaos Dao Fruit and soared away in a single bound!

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The Dark Zone.

The world was drowned in a dense, impenetrable gray fog. Even beings of the Immeasurable Realm found their spirit sense suppressed, unable to extend beyond their immediate surroundings. With sight alone, one could perceive no more than three feet in any direction.

From ancient times until now, no one had ever determined how vast this Dark Zone truly was. Within the fog lurked countless fierce and savage creatures. They moved silently, drifting through the mist without sound, striking and killing without warning.

Most unsettling of all, their bodies were like vapor, intangible, elusive, and indistinguishable from the surrounding haze. In this dim, mist-choked world, they were impossible to guard against. These creatures were known as mist spirits!

Rumor spoke of two ways to leave the Dark Zone. The first was to hunt down forty-nine mist spirits, seize their power, and use it to forge a dao altar. Then, by drawing upon the Chaos Dao Fruit, one could open a heavenly gate and depart. This method was both perilous and time-consuming.

The mist spirits possessed strength capable of threatening even beings of the Immeasurable Realm. They were terrifying beyond measure. Worse still, according to legend, there existed sovereign entities among them, creatures no weaker than an Immeasurable Dao Lord. They were known as Mist Spirit Kings.

In the past, many mighty figures of the Immeasurable Realm had fallen beneath their slaughter. In short, for any cultivator who entered this Dark Zone, there was one absolute taboo: never provoke a Mist Spirit King. If one encountered such a being, survival would be a miracle.

The second method of leaving the Dark Zone was through sacrifice. By sacrificing one's dao body, one's primordial spirit alone could escape this realm. However, doing so meant forfeiting the Chaos Dao Fruit. The price paid would be immense. Generally speaking, unless driven to utter desperation, no one would choose such a path.

"If we want to leave," Lin Xun said softly, standing beside Xia Zhi in the boundless gray haze, "we must each hunt down forty-nine mist spirits ourselves. No one else can intervene."

His gaze swept slowly through the fog. "It may be troublesome...but it's not truly dangerous."

He had already tried extending his spirit sense, but the surrounding mist suppressed it completely. Even his eyesight was reduced to a radius of barely three feet, and within that narrow range, everything was still swallowed in gray obscurity. In this place, one might as well have been blind.

There were, of course, many ways to guard against danger. One could circulate one's cultivation and let its power radiate outward, forming a protective domain. In that way, any approaching threat would be detected and repelled before it drew near. As an alternative, one could summon divine treasures, suspending them around the body as layers of defense.

However, the drawbacks were obvious. Such vigilance required one to maintain their cultivation at all times. It would be manageable for a short while, but over time, even the strongest would find their strength steadily drained.

As for treasures, though they possessed their own spirituality, Lin Xun had already tested their limits. Within this mist-shrouded Dark Zone, the moment a treasure drifted more than three feet from him, its connection would be severed instantly.

In short, the fog of this Dark Zone was profoundly strange. It suppressed the perception of all Immeasurable Realm cultivators, reducing even such beings to near blindness and placing them in extreme peril.

However, Lin Xun remained unperturbed. Danger might strike without warning, but with his current cultivation, he had nothing to fear from the sudden assaults of those mist spirits!

“Lin Xun, which direction shall we take?”

Xia Zhi remained just as composed, her clear eyes sweeping calmly through the surrounding haze.

“There’s fog in every direction. Any path will do...or perhaps...”

Before he could finish, Lin Xun’s brows lifted slightly. His arm shot out to the side in a sudden motion.

Boom!

Within the churning gray fog, a figure like a wisp of smoke suddenly twisted and writhed violently, only to be seized firmly within Lin Xun’s outstretched hand. The very next instant, it burst apart with a muffled bang, scattering into countless strands of gray light. Like drifting embers, they slipped free from his grasp and shot toward the depths of the mist.

“Come here.” Xia Zhi suddenly said in a soft voice. A vast net woven from the power of karma spread silently into the fog, like the inescapable net of heaven, letting nothing slip through.

The fleeing strands of gray light thrashed wildly, like fish caught in a tightening net, but their struggle was futile. In the end, they were seized and drawn back by Xia Zhi in a single motion. Lin Xun raised his eyes and looked closely. The scattered gray strands had already re-condensed into a grotesque creature. Its entire body was formed from eerie, mist-like dao laws.

However, from within it pulsed the unmistakable aura of life. There was no doubt that this was a mist spirit, and the power it radiated was no weaker than that of an ordinary Greater Boundless Realm cultivator.

“Let me see.”

Curiosity flickered in Lin Xun’s eyes. He extended a finger and pressed it gently against the mist spirit. In an instant, a torrent of chaotic, fragmented memories surged into his mind, forcing his pupils to narrow.

Only after a long while did he slowly exhale a breath of turbid air. His expression had grown noticeably more solemn.

“This mist spirit...” he said quietly, “was born from the remnant soul of a fallen cultivator. It awakened into a silver of spiritual consciousness, absorbed the primal chaos origin power scattered throughout this world, and gradually took form. No wonder it wields strength on par with the Immeasurable Realm...”

This was not what he had expected.

“But if that’s the case,” Xia Zhi said, faintly startled, “then the very first cultivator to enter this Dark Zone could not have encountered any mist spirits. If there were none in the beginning, how did that person leave?”

Lin Xun fell silent for a moment before replying thoughtfully, “The two methods of departure we know have been passed down since ancient times. But as you said, if the mist spirits scattered throughout this realm are all formed from the remnant souls of cultivators who perished here...then the very first person to arrive in this Dark Zone must have either been trapped here and died...escaped through sacrifice...or there exists another unknown path hidden within this Dark Zone.”

“There must be,” Xia Zhi said, nodding lightly.

Lin Xun said quietly, “We’ve only just arrived. There will be plenty of time to explore this Dark Zone. For now, this is your prey. Suppress it.”

With a casual flick of her sleeve, Xia Zhi turned the mist spirit into a streak of gray light and sealed it within her sleeve. Seeing this, Lin Xun was about to speak when his brows suddenly knit together. He turned his gaze toward the distant fog.

“What is it?” Xia Zhi asked.

“I thought I sensed someone watching us from the shadows,” Lin Xun said in a low voice. “But it vanished in an instant.”

“Perhaps another cultivator who has entered the Dark Zone like us,” Xia Zhi replied casually, unperturbed.

Lin Xun nodded, choosing not to dwell on it. “Let’s leave this place first.”

Without further delay, the two chose a direction and set off. Along the way, they remained extremely cautious. They did not teleport, but instead flew steadily forward, advancing slowly into the depths of the fog.

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On a towering mountain within the Dark Zone stood a grand palace hall. Around it, layer upon layer of restriction formations had been laid, sealing out the surrounding mist entirely. Inside the hall, lantern light blazed brilliantly, illuminating the interior as bright as day.

An elderly man in white robes, frail as a candle guttering in the wind, sat alone upon the throne in the center of the great hall. His clouded eyes were fixed on a geomantic map crafted from brown beast hide that he held in his hands.

“What exactly is hidden within that Dark Spring? Why did the Lord mark it on this map as a forbidden and ominous land, forbidding us from setting foot there?” he murmured.

He had thought about this question for many years.

Chapter 3170 Your Lives Will Stay Behind

The Dark Spring was a forbidden land within the Dark Zone known to almost no one. What terrors lay concealed within it? The white-robed elder did not know. What he did know was that beside the Dark Spring lurked a terrifying Mist Spirit King!

Many years ago, he had personally led a group to investigate that place. Yet before they had drawn near, their presence was detected by the Mist Spirit King. In the end, only by sacrificing three Immeasurable Realm experts did the rest of them manage to escape with their lives. From that day onward, none of them ever dared approach that ominous region again.

Suddenly, a voice sounded from outside the hall, “Brother Tushan.”

Seated alone upon the central throne, the white-robed elder slowly put away the geomantic map in his hands and lifted his gaze toward the figure striding hurriedly into the hall. The man wore robes the color of blazing fire. His features were sharp and handsome.

“Qingkui has sent word,” the fire-robed man announced, unable to conceal his excitement. “Lin Xun has appeared!”

Lin Xun!

The white-robed elder’s eyes narrowed. Despite that, there was no joy in them. Instead, his brows knit faintly. “So that troublesome pest has finally come...”

“Troublesome?” The fire-robed man’s smile faltered. “Brother Tushan, with all fifty-seven of us from the Xun Department stationed in this Dark Zone acting together, could we possibly still encounter trouble?”

The white-robed elder stated slowly, “If he were ordinary, the Lord would not have ordered us to act with full force. Lin Xun is no common figure. He is a successor of the Lord of Fangchun Mountain. He is regarded as an unprecedented variable in all of history.”

He paused briefly.

“Not long ago, news arrived from the Mortal Transformation Zone saying he single-handedly suppressed the five dao manifestations jointly ranked first and obtained in unprecedented Chaos Dao Fruit. His achievement rivals even that of Master back then.”

Silence fell.

“Such a person,” the elder concluded calmly, “is not easy to deal with.”

The fire-robed man’s expression changed repeatedly as he grasped the weight of the matter.

After a long moment, he said in a lowered voice, “Brother Tushan...what do you propose?”

The elder brought the beast hide map back out. “Where did he appear and which direction did he go?”

The fire-robed man stepped forward at once and pointed to a marked region. “Here...near Azure Flame Mountain. Qingkui reports that Lin Xun and a woman appeared roughly one thousand three hundred miles from there and headed southwest. If they do not change course, they will inevitably pass through Remnant Ridge, Sky Fiend Mountain, and Fire Soul Desert...”

He added, “The Dark Zone is shrouded in dense fog. They dare not teleport recklessly. If they rely on flight alone, their speed will be limited. Catching up will not be difficult.”

For over countless years, the mighty figures of the Xun Department had painstakingly explored this Dark Zone, mapping much of its vast territory. Even amid dense, obscuring fog, they could still discern the precise contours of mountains and rivers.

“Southwest from Azure Flame Mountain...” The white-robed elder murmured. A strange glint flickered in his eyes. “What if we mobilize our forces and lure them toward the Dark Spring? We could make use of the Mist Spirit King’s power to deal with them. In that case, we would not need to engage Lin Xun in close combat and we would naturally avoid unnecessary casualties.”

The fire-robed man’s eyes flashed. “Borrowing another’s blade is indeed a clever strategy,” he said. “But how do we draw them there?”

The white-robed old man fell silent for a moment before speaking. “When dealing with such a figure, we either do nothing at all...or if we act, we must strike in one breath and end it swiftly. If the first blow fails, we will only alert the snake.”

He rose slowly from his throne. “Youjiang, deliver the order: gather all members of the Xun Department at the foot of Sky Fiend Mountain.”

Youjiang’s heart jolted. “Are we truly prepared to stake everything on a single battle?”

The white-robed elder’s clouded eyes suddenly sharpened, gleaming like unsheathed blades. “When dealing with such a dangerous figure, we must go all out!”

Youjiang nodded.

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The fog hung thick and heavy, impossible to dispel.

Two hours later—Boom!

The mist churned faintly. A mist spirit drifted silently closer, stealthy as a shadow. Before it could strike, Lin Xun’s palm swept out as though he had already foreseen its approach. His palm descended like a bottomless abyss.

Though the mist spirit possessed strength comparable to that of a Greater Boundless Realm cultivator, it could not withstand such terrifying force and was instantly suppressed and seized.

“That makes five,” Lin Xun said with a faint smile.

Over the past two hours, he and Xia Zhi had continued forward in the same direction. Along the way, mist spirits had struck repeatedly from the depths of the fog. However, without exception, every one of them had been subdued with ease.

So far, each of them had captured five. At this rate, within twenty hours they would each gather forty-nine mist spirits and thus earn the opportunity to leave the Dark Zone.

“Aside from the fog suppressing our spirit sense, this place doesn’t seem particularly dangerous. Compared to the Mortal Transformation Zone and the Calamitous Zone, it’s rather dull,” Xia Zhi remarked softly.

Lin Xun chuckled. For ordinary Greater Boundless Realm cultivators, this place would be perilous beyond imagination. In contrast, for the two of them, it posed little real threat.

Just then—Shua!

A streak of sword qi suddenly burst forth from the dense fog, like an unrivaled beam of light cleaving through the gloom. It was dazzling, blinding, and boundless in ferocity.

Almost at the same instant, an azure battle spear was thrust out from another direction, a vast silver sea of flames surged into being, a black furnace descended like a crushing mountain, and a bolt of golden lightning split through the haze.

Each radiated immeasurable laws and might. All of them converged at once upon Lin Xun and Xia Zhi.

Rumble—

The heavens trembled and the fog roiled violently. Dazzling dao light intertwined with terrifying murderous intent, erupting as though a hundred thousand volcanoes had exploded at once. There was no doubt that this was a long-prepared killing strike!

In this mist-shrouded world, where spirit sense perception was completely suppressed, such an ambush could be fatal. However, Lin Xun and Xia Zhi remained utterly composed. Not the slightest ripple disturbed their expressions.

As the killing force closed in, Lin Xun stepped forward. With a sweep of his sleeve, boundless sword intent surged forth, like countless stars bursting into existence across an endless night sky. At the same time, Xia Zhi raised her slender hand. A vast river of time surged into being, rolling and boundless, encircling both her and Lin Xun within its flowing current.

It was the profound power of the Seal of Temporal Restriction.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Thunderous explosions erupted one after another, as if heaven and earth were being torn apart. The blazing sword qi shattered into dust, the silver sea of flames collapsed like a torrential rain, and the golden lightning split apart inch by inch.

As for the azure battle spear and black furnace, they suffered devastating, irreparable damage, shrieking as they were violently blasted backward. With the sweep of Lin Xun's sleeve, boundless sword intent continued to surge outward. From within the surrounding mist came a chaotic chorus of sharp screams, furious shouts, and muffled groans of pain.

In the next instant, the fog in the surrounding region was crushed and swept away by the collision. The world became clear and several figures could be seen gathered together in the distance, already turning to flee. Seeing their strike fail, they fled without hesitation!

"Why did they target us?" Xia Zhi asked

"Catch one and we'll have our answer," Lin Xun replied.

Even as he spoke, Lin Xun had already moved. Xia Zhi followed close by at his side. Moments later, the fog rolled back in once more, swallowing the battlefield as though nothing had ever happened.

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The enemies fled at astonishing speed, seemingly unconcerned about colliding with the mist spirits scattered throughout the fog. Lin Xun frowned slightly. His spirit sense was useless in this place, greatly hindering his pursuit.

Fortunately, when the enemies broke through the air in their retreat, they had caused considerable disturbance in the fog. By following those trails, he would not lose them.

During the chase, he determined that there were six attackers in total. They clearly belonged to the same faction and were also extremely familiar with the terrain of the Dark Zone. Moreover, such coordinated withdrawal when the ambush failed indicated that they had likely conducted similar operations here many times before.

Something isn't right!

Then, Lin Xun's eyes narrowed.

If they were seasoned Greater Boundless Realm cultivators accustomed to ambush tactics, how could they leave such obvious traces during their escape? Even an ordinary cultivator would deliberately stir the fog and erase their trail when fleeing.

Unless...they're trying to lure us...

Lin Xun halted abruptly. "Something's off. Let's not chase after them."

"You think they're baiting us?" Xia Zhi asked calmly.

"Most likely." A sharp light flickered in his eyes. "In the All-Wonder Dominion, I have no shortage of enemies, but those stationed within this Dark Zone and also come from the same faction...there are only a few. If my guess is correct, those people just now were Heavenly Mandate Apostles under the Alpha Origin Master."

He paused briefly before continuing, “When we first arrived here, I sensed someone watching from the shadows. That person must have belonged to their faction. They relayed our movements, which led to the ambush earlier.”

Xia Zhi frowned slightly. “Then why lure us into pursuit instead of confronting us directly?”

Lin Xun pondered for a moment. “If they can defeat us through strategy, why risk their lives in a head-on battle? In short, these opponents are undoubtedly harboring malicious intent. If we continue chasing them, what awaits us may be an unpredictable and deadly calamity.”

“What should we do?” Xia Zhi asked.

Lin Xun’s eyes were cold and unfathomable. “Their plan has failed, so they will not give up. We just need to wait. We can’t let them lead us by the nose.”

“Then shall we continue hunting Fog Spirits?”

“That was my thought exactly.” Lin Xun smiled faintly, and the two turned back into the depths of the fog.

After no more than the time it takes to brew a cup of tea...

A group of figures appeared at the very spot where Lin Xun and Xia Zhi had stood earlier. Each of them bore injuries of varying severity, and every wound was inflicted by sword intent. These were none other than the enemies Lin Xun had pursued moments before.

“I didn’t expect them to see through our plan...” One of them muttered, his expression dark and unsettled.

The others’ faces shifted as well, their expressions flickering with unease. After a long silence, one of them finally spoke in a low voice, “In my opinion, we should head to Sky Fiend Mountain first and report the matter to Brother Tushan. Let him decide.”

“Agreed,” the others responded.

Unexpectedly, just as they prepared to depart, an indifferent voice suddenly echoed from within the surrounding fog, “You may leave...but your lives will stay behind.”